



Reeder's Digest: A Comprehensive Guide to Beginning Clarinet

CLINICIANS:

**Christine Cumberledge, Manuel San Luis,
Jessica Shin**

Texas Bandmasters Association 2017 Convention/Clinic

**JULY 20 – 22, 2017
HENRY B. GONZALEZ CONVENTION CENTER
SAN ANTONIO, TEXAS**

Texas Bandmasters Association

Reeder's Digest: A Comprehensive Guide to Beginning Clarinet

Equipment

Clarinet

Low cost to high cost

- Vito/Jupiter/Yamaha 200-300 series
- Yamaha (higher the series number, higher the professional level)
- Buffet E11 or equivalent
- Buffet R13 or equivalent

Best and ideal starter instrument is an intermediate wood clarinet (Yamaha/Selmer/Buffet).
Otherwise a good plastic clarinet does the job as well.

*If you can have a good horn invest in one, if not at least invest in a good mouthpiece, ligature, reed set up.

Mouthpiece

Low cost to high cost

- Fobes Debut
- J.D. Hite
- D'Addario Reserve
- Vandoren - 5RV

Anything that isn't a basic factory mouthpiece. Usually a hard-rubber material.

Ligature

Low cost to high cost

- Standard Yamaha
- Bonade (*unfortunately doesn't fit well on Debut mouthpieces)
- Rovner Versa or BG equivalent
- Metal BG
- Vandoren Optimum

*I prefer my students to use metal ligatures and inverted

Reeds

Low cost to high cost

- Mitchell Lurie 2.5—>3
- Rico Royal 2.5—>3
- D'Addario 2.5—>3 (generally Blue Box is on softer side compared with Vandoren Blue Box)
- Vandoren (Blue Box) 2.5—>3
- Have 3-4 reeds at once in rotation.

(Demo: Reed Check!)

Clarinet Fundamentals

Posture/Body Awareness and Alignment

Prior to holding a clarinet

- Posture
- Hand position
- Head position
- Embouchure
- Lungs, abdomen, shoulders while breathing correctly.

With clarinet

*Review above checklist with instrument in hand

Add on:

- thumb lift vs thumb rest/thumb position
- curved vs flat fingers/finger position
- position of top lip/position of bottom lip/lip pressure
- corners forward vs smiling/back corners
- (Additional info)

1. Tool for the Toolbox

Posture when seated

- Hand on stomach to push stomach/pants button/etc. out first to fill up bottom of stomach to top of lungs.
- Lay on ground with hand on stomach breath in and fill up bottom to top like a glass of anything. Feel the muscles in the back expand as well. *Great for marching band and older students as well. Keeps student aware of what their body should be doing and to imitate that feeling while sitting.

2. Tool for the Toolbox

Hand Position

- Have students hold a water bottle to imitate a C shape with the hand. Recreate that shape in the left and right hand on the clarinet.
- Carefully drop one hand at a time next to them to see the natural shape of their hand. Now bring the hand to the clarinet. Helps understand hand/finger/thumb position.

Before the mouthpiece and barrel

- Breathing Gym: long phrases for strong, steady, consistent air streams—>tone
- (Thank you Barbara Lambrecht!)-16 total: In 8/Out 8, In 7/Out 9, In 6/Out 10, etc.
- Hand Blade—>Hand Target

*All to a metronome (~75bpm)

3. Tool for the Toolbox

Embouchure

- USE AN 'EE' SYLLABLE.
- Blow out a low candle or a small object below eye level. Fast and short at first (1 or 2 counts). This helps form that distinct flat chin, firm forward corners. Experiment with different tongue placements (tip of tongue on bottom teeth-anchor tonguing not ideal, tip of tongue higher by back of top teeth-ideal tongue position with sides of tongue on molars=ideal).
- Next try with a longer period of time (a short 4 beat-8 beat phrase).

*Candle analogy can be used for different dynamic ranges later on as well.

Tone

With mouthpiece and barrel only

- Concert F# pitch with proper embouchure. (using 'ee' syllable, just start with fast, cold air, no articulation yet).

*Quick around the room (i.e. pass the musical ball for a predetermined number of counts).

- Now, try with a 'tee' syllable. Start with an articulation. This helps distinguish tongue placement. "Tip of the tongue, tip of the reed".

With clarinet assembled

- Try adding first line E (concert D). *This note helps stabilize clarinet to embouchure.
- In time, start adding RH for more resistant notes. Notice: ring finger in RH tend to stick together with middle finger or to picky. Sometimes can only play a low A but work the right hand to a low e.

Work long tones for a long time.

(Thank you Mrs. Vin Richards!)

At 60bpm at forte keeping the note/air is the goal. Using TE tuner for its analyzer and recording capabilities.

- 2 notes rest for a measure
- 3 notes rest for a measure

*Recording yourself is the best way to hear flaws and help analyze yourself and each student.

4. Tool for the Toolbox

Tone Production/Strong Tones to Start

- (Thank you, Robert Quintanilla from Irvin HS in El Paso!)

He suggested is for a student to blow up a balloon while fingering low e to help imitate the form ab muscles needed for good solid tone, crossing the break and just overall good support for fundamental clarinet musicianship. Replace bell with a 9in balloon onto lower joint and try to blow it up in one breath in a single motion. The bigger the balloon the longer the phrase. Try it with metered counts.

*This helps create a harder resistance student isn't used to but will experience when going lower or crossing the break. Result will be a stronger clarinet section with good air support and characteristic clarinet tones.

- Same thing while laying down, fill up horn to lowest capable resistant note at quarter note equals 60-80, no faster.

Tonguing

- Using a 'tee' articulation
 - Go from slow to fast, start with quarter notes then gradually move faster while maintaining an even rhythm with legato/back to back sound. No gaps in between notes. *Check with an air pattern first if need be.
- *Tongue is a muscle and must be worked on in conjunction with tone!

5. Tool for the Toolbox

(Demo for different articulations)

Technique

- Chromatic/Scales, Chromatic/Scales, Chromatic/Scales!
 - 5 note scales are great for beginners. Eb concert/F scale
 - Just popping fingers just to get use to moving fingers quickly on clarinet keys is a small way to have beginners familiarize themselves on the clarinet and all its keys, which helps expand and relax fingers from note to note. Goal is to have clarity from note to note and eventually having finger dexterity for those faster 16th note passages like the Festive Overture clarinet solo.
 - Technique resources: Klose, Fundamental Blue Book options, Rose studies and just noodling.
- *Working up to first register chromatic scale E to E.

6. Tool for the Toolbox

(Demo)

- Working LH/RH alone then both together, with/without clarinet.
- *Hearing the rhythm in the fingers is good for a listening check to see if each note is being heard before playing a passage.

Crossing the great divide

The Break: B flat to B natural!

“One small leap for the clarinet, one giant leap for clarinet kind”

- Goal: Low e and pop the register key to jump the 12th interval (B natural).
- *If it doesn't come out right away don't worry and assure your student it'll come with time. Once it happens, it will happen.
- If not, try fingering it yourself and start at C scale down to low e and pop register key.

7. Tool for the Toolbox

Singing octaves with an 'ee' syllable helps younger clarinetists to understand how the tongue position works between registers. (I never tell *them* that!) I have students do it by singing then just working the tongue on the clarinet to maintain the higher feeling shape in their mouths while playing a g on the staff or higher like a c above the staff.

Jessica Shin: Assistant Band Director, Coronado HS - jcshin@episd.org