



**Texas Bandmasters Association
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**The Secret to Establishing a
Fundamentally Fabulous Flute Section**

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Sponsor: WBDI

The Secret to Establishing a Fundamentally Fabulous

Flute Section

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TBA, July 2023

After over 131 combined years of teaching, Sharon, Charlotte and Mary *highlight* several perspectives that are reliable and successful in developing outstanding flutists. Flute pedagogy does not end after beginner band class. Building on excellent skills is an ongoing process.

Beginning Basics

Seating, Posture

General posture-keeping feet flat on the floor, shoulders soft and sloped, head floats, gives the player a sense of balance and calmness.

- The chair or body should be angled so that the foot joint is slightly forward.
- The body of the flute should never be placed behind the player next to them.
- Start standing, bring the flute to the face and turn slightly.

Hand Position

Balance is so important, maintaining soft and relaxed hands/ fingers is vital to avoid injury and improve technique.

Using “markers” for correct placement of hands is very helpful and maintains consistency. (Tape, dots, pads.)

Beginning Finger Exercises

- Start with body of the flute propped on right knee and left shoulder.
- All fingers-up and down, left hand only, right hand only.
- By numbers-7//1/thumb/2/3/4/5/6-
- When adding 6, also lift 1 at the same time/then lift 7
 - Adding 7 first helps with balance and tension

Beginning Notes

- F G A B(b) C
- F G Ab Bb-Keeps Left pinky involved
- C B(Bb) A G F- (Add songs on these fingerings)
- Octaves on these notes after students can show flexibility on the head joint.

Starting Sounds-Embouchure, Tone

Practice directing air across make believe headjoint

- All students should have a plastic locker mirror on their stands (Buy them in bulk on Amazon).
- Have students take their right index finger and place it where the red flesh of the lips meets the flesh below the bottom lip. Index finger should be parallel and not at an angle. Stay relaxed and don't press.
- Make natural "tv" face (drama, junior kids are good at that)
- Tubby bottom lip on the lip plate
- Breathe in as if you are yawning and blow straight across your finger and slightly down
 1. Exception to this if the student is creating a giant aperture and is having trouble making the aperture smaller.
 2. Shift to breathing from mouth as soon as the student is successful making a smaller aperture.
- Think "pooh" when blowing out air.
- Can tell who will have trouble with this by this exercise.

Placing the Headjoint

- Teacher places the headjoint at the beginning until students are able to consistently place the headjoint in the correct place.
- All students should have a plastic locker mirror on their stands (Buy them in bulk on Amazon).
- Hold the headjoint with thumb, pointer and middle finger on both ends like it's corn on the cob.
- Edge of the aperture hole touches where red flesh meets the flesh below the bottom lip.
- 1/3-up to a 1/2 of embouchure hole covered depending on the fullness of the bottom lip.
- Breathe same way as when they used the finger to practice.

Sounds on headjoint

- Uncovered- work for smooth and clear sounds.
- Covered bottom of headjoint.
- Covered bottom of headjoint- Low and high sounds.
 1. Develop flexibility
 2. Understand where to place the air

3. Bottom lip or jaw moves forward, top lip directs down
- NO rolling in or out or using the “kiss and roll” method
 - Students need to start recognizing how it feels and sounds when headjoint is in the correct spot so they can develop consistency. Teacher diagnoses and shortly thereafter starts asking students what they hear so they are listening and learning what to do to correct.

Things to do if a student is having trouble making a sound

- Aperture too wide- make tv face and breathe through the nose and blow back out across headjoint.
- Use piece of paper with a “X” on the bottom in the middle and blow air to develop a visual for air speed and steadiness.
- Keep reminding students to keep their tongue down. Tongue DOES NOT stay up in the mouth!
- Use a pneumo pro for your visual learners. Helps with air direction, placement of air, and air speed.

Articulation

- Start out by using a “pooh” syllable.
- When making a clear sound, move to using a “too”, “tah”, or “dah” syllable. DO NOT let them use a “pooh” syllable too long. It’s a hard habit to break. Do not wait to start articulation unless they are having tone production issues.
- Draw airstream on the board and show how air is interrupted by the tongue, but tongue does not stop the air. Practice tonguing with four quarter notes and a whole note on notes they know. Write a daily warmup.
- No “lizard” tonguing, and make sure students are tonguing and not air starting.
- Tongue creates clarity of the tone and rhythm.
- Do some articulation everyday
- Beginners- play legato style at first to get them to hold out notes and hold full value, then teach staccato. Important to make flute players to hold out their tones. They will breathe more often at first, and more than your other woodwind players.
- Older kids-teach legato staccato, marcato, long lifted notes, accents, etc.

Teach top band kids to double tongue. I start with tu-ku working on the ku syllable more. Also use du-gu for more legato tongued passages. Use in scales and faster technical passages.

The 3 Bb’s

This is NOT so controversial. Flute players by high school level should not only know all three and be able to correctly use them but should have an idea of WHEN it is appropriate to use them.

- Start with Bb natural fingering. This is the 1/1 fingering. It promotes the balance that was mentioned earlier. The flute is BIG to some little beginners. We need to do everything we can to make them feel like they are holding on to the flute and not like they are going to drop it.
- Remember when teaching a beginner class or section rehearsal, you are teaching a variety of ability and commitment. So, clarity and step by step instruction is important.
- Add Thumb Bb when playing in flat key signatures and scales, otherwise leave the thumb on the B natural side. It is not an ALWAYS situation.
- Lever Bb/A# for chromatic fingerings (not necessarily the chromatic scale) and special circumstances only

Teaching Vibrato

Vibrato is one of the most important characteristics of flute playing. It is imperative to start this process in the beginner season of learning to play the flute. When students begin to learn to pulse and progress to vibrato, you will see a huge change in the overall flute tone in your section. The better the flute tone quality, the better their intonation will be down the road.

- When to start and when to start

Begin the process of beginning flute vibrato when:

- The students consistently make a clear tone
- The students can produce a note of 8 counts or more

Starting too early could be very frustrating. Late January through February is a good window.

- Start with isolating the pulse and use of the air and diaphragm with simple pulses. You can use a supplemental pulsing exercise with a specific number of pulses per note. Once pulsing is taught, the students begin to always use pulsing.
- Start with quarter note pulses and apply to whatever you are teaching. Begin with pulsing on the whole, dotted half and half notes in scales. Apply the quarter note pulses to those same notes in any music they are learning. Make doing the pulsing a requirement not an option.
- Gradually increase to eighth note then triplet pulses. It will become second nature.
- If pulsing and vibrato instruction is delayed, learning becomes more difficult and willingness to do it a problem.

2nd Year and Beyond

Seating

In ensemble, flutists should sit on the left of the conductor, possibly using two rows. Flutists should never place their flute behind the player next to them. Flutists should have plenty of room. The other upper woodwinds can sit closer together.

Articulation

- Teach legato staccato, marcato, long lifted notes, accents, etc.
- Teach more experienced students to double tongue. Start with tu-ku working on the ku syllable more. Also use du-gu for more legato tongued passages. Use in scales and faster technical passages.

Tuning

- Take the time to develop characteristic sounds. You can't tune a bad sound and it will trash up the sound of your section.
- Make sure headjoints aren't pushed in all of the way. Headjoints should be pulled about an 1/8 to a 1/4 of an inch. Teach the kids this from the beginning.
- Check corks in the headjoint
- No rolling in and rolling out. Pitch center will never be developed because of constant moving of headjoint
- Tuning adjustments should be made by placing the air higher or lower on the back or bottom wall of the headjoint.
- Tuners are a great tool, but ultimately, they must learn to listen and adjust to others in the ensemble.

Reasons My Flutes Are Out of Tune

Playing Flat and Stuffy

- Student is rolling in the headjoint
- Pressing headjoint into the bottom lip.
- Headjoint not lined up correctly
- Head is down and covering too much embouchure hole. Raise up stands.
- Directing air too far down the back wall of the flute

Playing Sharp and Thin

- Rolling flute out with the hands, or the headjoint is lined up too far out
- Teeth too close together. Put more space between back teeth for pitch and a more vibrant and centered tone
- Lip plate is too high up on the bottom lip.
- Direction of air is too far up the on the back wall of the headjoint.
- Unfocused air

Developing Tone and Technique

Supplemental Materials-Generally for use in Sectionals

- **Remington is not a flute warm-up when in sectional setting**
- Descending Long tones
- Ascending Long tones
- Harmonics
- Octaves-Flexibility
- Throat tone “pass-throughs”
- Vibrato
- Technique-special fingerings (Finger Busters)

Score

CP Flute Warm-Up

C Royall

♩ = 65

Flute

The musical score is written for a flute in 4/4 time. It consists of 38 measures across six staves. The key signature is one flat (B-flat). The tempo is marked as quarter note = 65. The score includes various musical notations such as slurs, accents, and dynamic markings. Measures 1-6 are a descending eighth-note scale. Measures 7-11 are an ascending eighth-note scale. Measures 12-13 are a repeat sign. Measures 14-20 are a descending eighth-note scale with slurs. Measures 21-27 are a descending eighth-note scale with slurs and accents. Measures 28-34 are a descending eighth-note scale with slurs and accents. Measures 35-38 are a descending eighth-note scale with slurs and accents, ending with a double bar line.

Perform with and without vibrato

Perform with dynamic contrasts

Flute Tone Builders

Flexibility Exercises

C Royall


Flute

Covered Headjoint



A single musical staff in treble clef with a common time signature. It contains a sequence of notes: G4, A4, B4, C5, followed by a repeat sign. After a whole rest, there is another repeat sign, followed by G4, A4, B4, C5.

Uncovered Headjoint



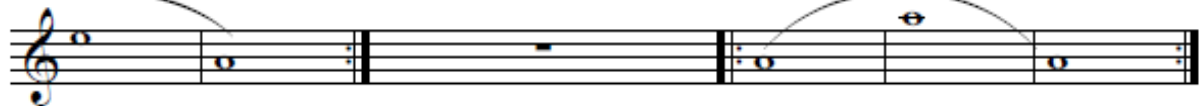
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Covered



A single musical staff in treble clef with a common time signature. It contains a sequence of notes: G4, A4, B4, C5, followed by a repeat sign. After a whole rest, there is another repeat sign, followed by G4, A4, B4, C5.

Uncovered



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Perform very slowly at first
Perform tongued and slurred

Score

Finger Busters for Flute



C Royall

$\text{♩} = 60$

Smooth and Even

Flute

1 2 3 4 5

6 7 8 9 10

11 12 13 14 15

16 17 18 19 20

21 22 23 24 25

26 27 28 29 30

31 32 33 34 35

36 37

Flute Harmonics

Overtone Exercise

C Royall

1.

The exercise consists of six staves of music, each containing a sequence of notes with a slur over them, indicating a single breath. The notes are: Staff 1: C4, G4, Bb4, C5, G4, C4. Staff 2: C#4, G#4, Bb5, C#5, G#4, C#4. Staff 3: C4, G4, Bb5, C5, G4, C4. Staff 4: C4, G4, Bb5, C5, G4, C4. Staff 5: C#4, G#4, Bb5, C#5, G#4, C#4. Staff 6: C4, G4, Bb5, C5, G4, C4.

Harmonic notes are "overblown" from the fundamental tone. This exercise develops flexibility and strength in the embouchure. You must use a combination of aperture shape, corners and top lip to get the desired note change.