

# Woodwind Teaching Tips: Tone, Tuning, Tonguing, Technique

## For Flute, Clarinet, & Oboe

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### Flute

#### Tone



- Relaxed corners
- Elliptical aperture
- Fast air stream, blow into the flute without rolling in
- Head up
- Tongue low in the mouth, open oral cavity and throat

#### Tuning

- Headjoint alone produces A
- Pull headjoint out  $\frac{1}{4}$  inch for A440
- Flatness = cold instrument, too rolled in, slow or unsupported air stream, wide aperture
- Sharpness = high direction of air, pinched corners, tight embouchure, over blowing

#### Tonguing

- Single Tongue: "Tom, To, Ta"
- Forward Tongue: Tip of tongue, between the teeth, touches inside of top lip & releases air
- Double Tongue: T-K "Take, Took"
- No stop tongue the end of the notes

#### Technique

- Three points of balance: 1) chin; 2) LH 1<sup>st</sup> finger bottom joint; 3) RH thumb
- No gripping
- Diddle Dump
- First Finger Up on D & E-flat

### Clarinet

#### Tone



- Belly Breathing & Expanding Cone
- Secure top teeth on mouthpiece (get patch)
- Too much mouthpiece = spread sound, too little = pinched & reedy
- Voicing "EE"
- Bottom lip firm, chin flat & firm
- Corners in and firm (sour pucker) like a firm whistle

#### Tuning

- Mouthpiece alone produces C6

- Tuning pitches: open G, low C, third space C (pull barrel joint first, then middle joint)
- Flatness = cold instrument, loose embouchure, low tongue position, too much mouthpiece inside the mouth
- Sharpness = warmed-up instrument, tight embouchure, poor quality instruments, too little mouthpiece inside the mouth.

### Single Reed Tonguing

- Tip of tongue to tip of reed (use a “DEE,” “TEE” or “THEE” syllable)
- Avoid anchor tonguing, slap tonguing, and TA syllable
- Horizontal tongue motion creates distorted tone (work to maintain “hiss” while tonguing)

### Technique

- Secure holding of the instrument (right hand thumb and upper teeth)
- Work for relaxed curved finger shape with pads of fingers covering holes
- Watch right hand index finger (use neckstrap)
- Watch for five-fingered throat A (practice rolling from low C to A)
- Left thumb at two o'clock position
- Pinky fingers: alternate left & right, watch for hooking under keys

## Oboe

### Tone



- Keep the corners of the lips in - visible vertical lines
- Say “tomb” to make the right shape. Then, roll your lips in.
- Chin muscles should be flattened and firm.
- Lots of air pressure!
- Air spins out forward across the reed, not down into the instrument.
- Breath out excess air: alternate out and in breaths.
- Low notes have an “ahhh” feel. High notes have an “eee” feel.

### Tuning

- The reed should both CROW and BEEP a C.
- Do not pull out the reed or any joint to lower oboe pitch.
- Flatness = too little support, too loose embouchure, too flexible reed, flat reed, cold instrument
- Sharpness = too little support, biting in embouchure, old reed, closed reed, hot space
- “A” is a good tuning note on the oboe

### Tonguing

- Constant air pressure and embouchure.
- Start notes with your tongue on the reed rather than with your breath.
- Think “too” for long notes and just “t” for short notes.
- Touch the reed as little as possible - think taste buds.
- The tongue comes slightly up and forward to connect with the reed.

### Technique

- Balance with your right thumb and left index finger (not your left thumb!)
- Hold the oboe at about a 45 degree angle: bring the oboe to you, and keep your head up.
- Nice round fingers, soft wrist like you are holding a flag pole.
- Three octave mechanisms! Half-hole C# to Eb. Back octave E to Ab. Side octave A to C.

# Diddly Dump



1 2 3 4      4 3 2 1      1 2 3 4 3 2 1      1 2 3 4 5 6 5 4 3 2

- This warm-up can be played in any key and on any instrument in any combination
- Introduce the warm-up by having students sing the numeric pattern with echo calls
- The pattern moves up by whole tone
- The last note in the pattern [2] becomes the starting note for the pattern repeat [2 = new1]
- Play the entire patterns and repeats in one key or for advanced students have them change keys as they move up by whole step. Each [1] becomes the new DO.



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