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 ¼ 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\(^{st}\) finger bottom joint; 3) RH thumb
- No gripping
- Diddly 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.
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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