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# The Wide World of Flute Pedagogy

## Topics Covered

- Body Awareness, Physiology and Posture
- Patience and Overcoming Frustration
- Developing A Technical Foundation
- How To Practice
- Embouchure
- Breathing and Dynamics
- Musicality and Phrasing
- Tone - colors, problems, etc.
- Vibrato
- Repair Techniques
- Audience Member Eitquette
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- Instrument Options
- Care and Maintenance
- Nervousness
- Reference Material
- Fingering Charts and Alternate Fingerings
- Tuning
- Emotional Involvement

Close Ad

A word before you begin reading this. This is my junior pedagogy project. I was enrolled in a pedagogy and literature class and our project was to answer the question "What is a teacher required to teach". We got down to the nitty-gritty and made a huge list of things. We had to describe everything we knew about or had ever heard and we did some research. The results are here on this page hopefully, to help you. If you are a musician, some of these might me of use to you, but the great majority of these things are of use only to the flutist. One quick note, the subjects are not necessarily in the order that they are listed above. I sincerely hope this helps and that my semester of effort will not have been in vain. As I learn more, I will try to add to this page. If you have any other questions, post them to the board on the main page or email me, although I can't guarantee a quick response. Enjoy and happy fluting!



## Body Awareness and Physiology

It is important to develop a good sense of body awareness in order to establish good practicing and performance skills. Talk at length with the student about better ways to stand, sit, hold the flute, etc. Employ the Alexander Technique whenever possible. Show them the stretching exercises and the correct way to sit and stand.

• The Commands:

1. Let My Neck Be Free
2. Let My Head Go Forward And Up
3. Let My Back Lengthen And Widen

• When sitting, point out that the weight should be centered over the sitting bones and that having a straight back does not mean sticking the chest out and curving the spine.

- To stretch a tired back - tilt pelvis back and roll forward, head first, letting arms hang limply by the sides till the hands touch the ground and the head is between the knees. Have them take several deep, audible breaths, then slowly roll back up starting from the lowest vertebrae and moving up.
- Another stretch is to have a chair in front of the student. The student stands, unlocks the knees, tilts the pelvis back and then leans forward, placing the underside of the knuckles just over the chair. The student then pushes the chair away from them to stretch out the back and arms pretending that the hips and head are going in opposite direction. Take several deep breaths, releasing tension, and then slowly return to the standing position.
- This can be done sitting down as well. Student sits in chair and leans forward with back straight. Hands are placed on the chair. Let the mouth drop open and place the tongue on the back of your lower teeth and smile. Exhale audibly and then inhale, all the while thinking "lengthen". To return, let the elbows go out and come up.
- A stretch without the chair. Stand with arms out to each side, seeing both arms in the peripheral vision. Look at one hand, wiggle the fingers and watch them go away from you. Repeat on the other side. Raise palms and slowly lower arms to sides.

Have the student play in several positions (standing, sitting, slouching, lying down) point out to them the ways that they hold the instrument naturally when not even thinking about it. Then show some different ways of holding the flute, of standing, sitting, etc. Ask them how it makes them feel. Get them to write down exactly what it is that they feel that is different. Tell them to look in the mirror and see if they can see a change as well, and have them write that down too. Constantly encourage the student to practice in front of a mirror as this will improve body awareness and mistakes will be corrected more quickly.

Try to release excess body tension in every way. Before playing, or when pain occurs, think through your body "relax" at certain spots. Let tension go at:

- 1) Jaw hinges
- 2) Fingers

- notice how the back of the hand, forearm, shoulder and back feel

- feel how much pressure you have when you hold the flute. You don't need much, don't press it into the lip.

- 3) Flute against chin

Does there feel like there's tension in any of these spots? If so, think "relax."

There are several techniques that can be employed to using the body in a visible, or not so visible, physical way to increase ease of playing overall or certain passages.

- Moving the right arm forward to help "push" a phrase forward over difficult fingerings
- Rolling out and blowing down for high notes
- The head moves down naturally on low notes – keep HEAD UP, don't look down and keep the head up for speaking low notes
- Lean outward and to the left to increase depth and resonance in soft spots, etc.

## Posture

Pay considerable attention to the student and their posture. Put them in front of a mirror and ask the student if they notice anything about the way they stand/sit. Take notice in the student's attitude and how that is portrayed in their stance.

If you're sitting down, you should be turned with your knees to the right slightly and preferably on the edge of your chair, this helps you to sit up totally straight and so you don't whack the person next to you with your flute. Hey, it happens to all of us, doesn't it? If you sit up straight, you will have better breath support and a better sounding tone. This frees your chest area to let your organs all work properly and so you can have more breath. A few no-nos: Never play with your legs crossed or slump in your seat.

Standing: the weight should be evenly distributed, but you should be able to move. Keep a lot of space in the chest.

Stand with the body at a 45 degree angle to the right so the flute is perpendicular to the audience. Notice the right elbow's relationship to the shoulder, the elbow should not be behind the shoulder nor in front, but in line with the shoulder.

Standing up is a better way to practice because when you stand up, you don't have the aid of a chair to help your breath support. This teaches you to breathe correctly and really find out where your vibrato is coming from. Also, when you perform, you will probably be standing up and what you practice becomes what you actually do. When you stand up to practice, your weight should be fairly evenly distributed, but please move around quite a bit and DO NOT LOCK YOUR LEGS! You'll pass out! However, you should have a tendency to stand a bit more on your left foot. The reason for this is because when you stand on your left foot your arms naturally come away from your body because your body is turned in the other direction. When your arms come away from you, this opens up your chest cavity to let your lungs expand more when you breathe. Whenever you play, you should avoid having your arms very close to you, don't let your arms hug your body.

A note about performing. When you stand up to play in a soloist position, the stand should be as low as possible but you should not slouch to see it. Keep the stand as low as possible while maintaining an erect posture.

## Patience and Overcoming Frustration

It's something that everyone has to deal with and we all have those days when we just don't want to practice because we think we sound like utter crud. You may have one of those days, or several days in a row, but regardless, you still need to get things done, and we can't always just quit while you wait for yourself to sound better. Even if you can't force yourself to pick up the instrument and make a sound, there are things you can do.

- Visualize - this helps a lot. Visualize the type of sound you want to make, visualize the perfect tone in every way that you can think of. Think about yourself picking up your flute and effortlessly making the most gorgeous sound. Hear the sound in your head. Visualize the technical passage with which you are having problems. Visualize yourself playing that perfectly. Think about every single note and how it's played correctly. In your mind's eye, see yourself playing the most difficult thing totally effortlessly. Visualization is a powerful tool and should be used more often.
- Leave the room. If practicing is doing nothing but frustrating you to no end, take a break and totally leave the room for a few minutes. Go have a conversation with someone, relax, think calm thoughts, think about something else, think about how you want to sound, how you want to play, get a drink of water, anything. Just leave the problems behind and imagine them dissipating into the air so when you come back the air is clear and you're free from frustration and difficulty.
- Take a deep breath and relax. If frustration is building up, step back, put down your flute, close your eyes and breathe deeply. Imagine your favorite spot in the whole world. Imagine that you are there, relaxing. Now, think about why you are playing, recall what it is about music that you love so much that you love to do it, why do you love to play? Take that emotion and infuse it with that picture, and imagine yourself having so much fun playing in your favorite spot.
- Let the music take control. If you've gotten all worked up about a passage and it has ceased to become fun and musical step back for a minute. Look at the overall picture of the music. Think about the grand scheme of what the piece is trying to convey and imagine that storyline in your mind's eye. If it's something you know well, then decide to give yourself over to the music and loose yourself in it. You're not giving yourself over to the NOTES, you're giving yourself over to the MUSIC. There's a distinct difference. Let the music flow through you. It's coursing through your veins just waiting to be let out through your instrument. You pick up the flute and begin to play: the music comes out of your fingers, it flows through your embouchure, it courses down your arms, runs all through your entire body. You are one with the music and it is the music that is controlling you. Your body should serve only as the vehicle for expression, you don't necessarily create the music all the time, sometime the music just needs an outlet and you are it.
- Remind yourself of past victories and of tasks that seemed daunting at the time, but were later overcome. This helps put things in perspective.

## Developing A Technical Foundation

A technical foundation is oh-so-important. You will not be an adequate player if your fingers are constantly fumbling all over the place. The best way I know to cement a firm foundation is to start off playing scales with a metronome. Make sure each note is even and clean before moving up a notch. Start off as slowly as you need to because you don't want to practice mistakes. Practice your major scales, then minor scales, all three versions: melodic, harmonic and natural. After awhile these should become memorized without a problem.

## Materials

Scale Books: Taffanel and Gaubert, Reichart, Andre Marquarre, Moyse, Perez  
Extended Scales: Geoffrey Gilbert

Etude Books: Anderson op. 15 (2 pagers) op. 33 (one page) Berbiguier 18 studies

Arpeggios

Scales:  
Major, melodic minor, harmonic minor, natural minor, diminished (octatonic), pentatonic, blues, modes, whole tone, Hungarian

Modes:  
C – Ionian  
D- Dorian  
E- Phrygian  
F- Lydian  
G - Mixolydian  
A - Aeolian  
B - Locrian  
Dorian on E – 2nd degree of D – start on E play D scale Lydian on C – 4th degree of G -#1

## Repair Techniques

Identify the problem exactly

Be ear oriented, practice singing, hear the notes, if you can hear it you can play it.

Change the rhythm

swing the rhythm, then swing it backwards

8ths, 16th triplet

dotted 8th, 32nd note triplet

go back and forth between 2 notes twice at the same speed

Do ½ tempo 3 times and then take it up to tempo.

Play The Game

You win when you get to the end error free. If you mess up you have to start over.

You can do it in sections.

## PHYSICAL REPAIRS

to fix a loose cork

1) push out through the bottom

2) screw top off cork before you boil it

3) boil cork

4) let it dry overnight

## Sight-reading

I am of the mind that sight-reading should be done everyday. For so many students, this is their weak point. A student may be outstanding in every other aspect of playing, but many times, even the best student has big problems with sight-reading. The only way to get better at sight-reading is to do it constantly and consistently. A great way to start every lesson is to sight-read. That should be the first thing done at every lesson. This gets the student used to the idea of sight-reading and soon it becomes easier.

When I was in 8th grade, my band director was new and had just acquired an entire band room full of old military academy music. She was new at the whole band director thing and since band class was just me and her, we did nothing but sight-read every day, all period long. She didn't know what was too hard for me to play or not, so, even if I said it was too difficult she said "no it's not, let's play it" so we did, and by sight-reading things much harder than my ability level, I quickly became adept at sight-reading and could basically sight-read almost perfectly anything that was set in front of me. However, it is very easy to lose one's ability in this if it is not done frequently enough. Sight-reading duets with the students is another way to get them over their fear of sight-reading. Most of the time it's a fear of looking bad because they're not sure they can play the music and think that they will look bad in front of the teacher, so if you play with them, this might encourage them.

As for techniques to sight-reading there are several vital things to look for.

Take time to look over the piece. Things you should note are:

- key changes
- tempo markings
- phrases
- accidentals
- time signatures
- tricky fingerings
- difficult looking runs
- specifically noted articulations
- dynamics

Unless you are really sure that you can play a piece perfectly, play the piece a little slower than the temp indicates. This gives the performer time to analyze things as they come and give a better performance.

Another approach to good sight-reading is to visualize. Picture performing the piece before you actually play it. Look it over, not the important things and then visualize yourself performing that piece.

## How To Practice

One way to practice is to have another person critique you while you play. This person might offer valuable insight that you yourself would never have realized. Play in front of a mirror, this will force the student to see what exactly they are doing and be able to correct some things more easily.

Bring a tape recorder to your lesson and tape record the lesson. In practice, go back over the tape and try to fix the things that were critiqued in the lesson. This helps you remember more from the lesson. If you don't have a tape recorder, keep a notebook, which I recommend doing in addition. Later, you can look back over it and it will help you. Where do you think I got a lot of this stuff on this page? My notebook! :)

Always find the specific problems and identify them right away. Work on one specific thing – focus your attention on one thing at a time and remove the other considerations. If something is difficult to find but you know the problem is in a certain area, work slowly all around that area until you find the exact problem. Solutions:

- 1) You may not be hearing the notes correctly. Sing it. If you can't sing it correctly, you're not hearing it. Plunk it out on the piano or play the notes slowly and individually and then sing them back until you can sing them correctly.
- 2) In a run, it may be only a few notes that are giving you the problem. Isolate those notes and go back and forth between them very slowly. Play the run backwards and then forwards until you can play it both ways up to tempo.

Follow your curiosity in your practice session. If you get curious about how something sounds, work on different tone colors, or if you wonder if there's a different way to finger something, you might end up working on alternate fingerings or harmonics. This is all valuable and the time is not wasted simply because you didn't stick to the schedule you made out. As long as you are learning it will benefit you in the long run. However, if you have certain pieces you are preparing for a lesson or concert or competition, you should work on them more or less, every day. But don't let that stifle your creativity. Experiment with something new each practice session. You'll become more familiar with your instrument, your sound and yourself.

Don't practice faster than you can play comfortably and accurately. Work things up to tempo using a metronome to insure evenness. Get a real early start on raw speed pieces – play as slow as it takes to play it note perfect, then move up notch by notch.

Expand your feeling of pulse.

Don't feel like you have to "get there" by the end of your practice session – you don't have to play things up to temp every time.

Practicing 2-4 hours a day is suggested to actually accomplish something.

## Warming Up

Long tones have been a standard for a long time. Pick a note and play that note with the most gorgeous tone you can make. Crescendo and then when you reach the top of the cresc. Go down a half step, letting your tone and volume spill over into the next note, then decrescendo. This can be done both going up and down the chromatic scale.

Establish some sort of routine, something that you do every time you play. Whether it be a pattern of notes, a scale, long tones or whatever, the purpose of warming up is not only to literally warm up the instrument and muscles but also to cement in your mind the right tone and sound that you want to aim for every time you play. So pick something that you are comfortable with, I like to play a slow excerpt from a movie score and play it the most musically way you know how with the most beautiful tone. The sounds you make during warm up should be the sounds you want to make all the time. Cement them in your mind.

If one is in a band setting and will not need to play for a long time, a good thing to do is to blow warm air into the horn to keep it relatively in tune. A basic warm up technique is to run through the scales. Usually major scales are the easiest, but it's good to go through all the different types of scales on a regular basis.

## Tonguing

Tonguing is something that seems so basic but can initially be a little difficult to get the hang of. When starting out with a beginner, tell them to say the letter "t" and notice where the tip of their tongue is hitting on the roof of their mouths. This is the spot where single-tonguing should take place. Typically, that spot is on the ridge right before the spot where the gums meet the teeth. However, some teachers say that the tongue should hit right at that point where the gum meets the back of the teeth, this brings the tongue more forward in the mouth which helps things a bit.

For Double-tonguing:

Have the student say "duh-guh duh-guh" several times in a row. This is the basis for double tonguing, bringing the tongue forward in and backwards in the mouth with two places for it to create the articulation. Another method is to say "tuh-kuh" which produces a harder articulation. Both are fine for use depending on the style of the piece being played.

For Triple-tonguing:

Typically, triple tonguing is done with the sounds "tuh-kuh-tuh" or abbreviated "t-k-t". In sequence it would be: "t-k-t t-k-t". Triple tonguing is needed for a three pattern, such as fast triplets or 3 fast eighth notes.

A method to increase speed and accuracy in double and triple tonguing:

Select a scale, then proceed to play that scale in this way: 4 double tongued notes on the same pitch followed by that pitch in a quarter note, then work the way up the scale.

It would look like this: "t-k-t-k tah, t-k-t-k tah". Then, on they way down, start one note above the top note of the scale double tonguing all the way down in a two pattern "t-k, t-k" etc. This can also be repeated in any number of variations. An 8 pattern going up with a 4 pattern going down, or if triple tonguing, 3 up 3 down, 6 up, 3 down, etc.

The ideal speed for double tonguing that one should be able to do is 170-180, at least.

**Flutter tonguing:** There are two methods to flutter tonguing. One is to flip the tongue up and down very fast imitating the sound of a cat purring, do this while playing. For those who are not able to do this, or have difficulty doing this in a particular range, flutter tonguing may also be done in the back of the throat. The tongue is up in the back and the uvula is down, blow through them, almost like clearing the throat, but not quite. One can also use saliva in the back of the throat: gargle it a bit for flutter tonguing.

## Embouchure

For beginners

say “do it like this”

don’t give any extra directions unless you have to, do it completely by ear and let their bodies figure it out

Tell them “it’s like spitting a watermelon seed”

technicalities

- upper lip down
- lower lip out – like an aircraft carrier
- inside corners against teeth
- air direction changes for different octaves
- air speed is increased and the blowing angle is raised or lowered

embouchure setup

\* if you’re cracking notes notice which way the note is cracking, up or down?

\* think about keeping your angle down – across or down

create a small aperture

- think of letting your air create the hole
- close mouth
- keep lips together but move teeth apart
- blow
- think of your lips being the resistance

Questions to ask:

notice what the upper and lower lips are doing

How do they work together?

How far apart are your teeth? (probably no more than ¼ inches)

What about your corners, what are they doing? (should be fairly uninvolved but slightly frowning)

Embouchure check:

bring the head joint up and move it back and forth with the lip to make sure the lips are loose.

Upper and Lower note setups:

- pout lower lip more for upper notes – everything comes forward
- to increase speed – aperture smaller – give the example of a water hose and putting your finger over the mouth of it, what happens to the water stream?
- The lower lip should be more relaxed on higher notes than on lower notes
- For low notes think of air going all the way to the end of the flute, think “oo”

## Teaching Rhythm

For those students that are NOT intrinsic:

relate it to some kind of body movement

For triplets:

sound rhythm into a word: trip-uh-let or el-e-phant

have them play quarter notes and the teacher plays triplets in the background

## Breathing

Whenever possible one should not gasp – try to take in an “ah” breath

When you breathe in listen for NO sound to be made.

Think of air as water being poured into a pitcher:

- Taking a breath is like pouring water into a glass
- Be aware of a floor in your lungs so your air goes straight to the bottom

- The bottom of lungs is a dry sponge, so when you take a breath you saturate your air space
- Keep the underside of the sponge wet so the top doesn't get wet first
- Let the air just DROP in

To make the tone clearer, think of breathing to the base of your spine, listen for clear.

Don't try to fill up the top of the lungs

Think about breathing into your armpits – Fill your armpits with air

Be aware of your waistband

Keep the sensation of pushing out while you blow out, you get a better tone longer

- not hard pushing because you get your throat involved because of excess tension
- don't make it be really open because that creates excess tension

Explain to the student where the diaphragm is and what it does.

Give the example of a baby sleeping on its back. Its stomach goes up and down when it breathes, not its shoulders. That is how we should breathe; our stomachs should go out not our shoulders up.

To cure breathing with the shoulders call attention to it.

Breathing exercises:

in for 4 – hold for 4 – all out in 4; in for 5 – hold for 5 – all out in 5, etc. till 8

Keep your sternum elevated!

Building Breath/Intensity Velocity:

Take an index card, put it against the wall and hold the card on the wall with the breath.

Lie on the floor with a heavy book. Put the book on the waistband – bell button. Breathe in and notice how the book rises. Keep book up while you exhale.

## Vibrato

It should initially come from using the diaphragm. It is the same motion you use to say "HA", like laughter. Or like a dog panting – then connect the dots. Or like a car trying to start with a running down battery.

Start with short "Ha's" and then bring the "ha's" closer together.

Once that has been mastered bring it more into the throat where it can increase in speed.

The throat should be kept gentle and relaxed

Work for a perfect mixture between the diaphragm and the throat.

Think of your air space being completely sympathetic to the pulsation...it helps with resonance.

The student should have a variety of speeds of vibrato. A more intense vibrato with faster air and faster vibrations all the way to a slow pulse. Practice vibrato with a metronome using triplets to start.

## Vibrato Style

Vibrato style should vary depending on the style of the piece.

- slow movement = slow vibrato

- fast movement = fast vibrato

More energy is required for faster works while less energy is generally required for slower works.

Experiment:

What type of expression do I get when I vary my vibrato speeds?

## Tuning

Tuning is vitally important and most beginners don't realize that.

Play a note in unison with the student out of tune asking them to listen to the beats in the sound, then demonstrate how to eliminate the beats.

Tuning methods,br> 1. Pull head joint out if sharp

Push head joint in if flat

2. Roll head joint out if flat

Roll head joint in if sharp

(In performance roll very little)

3. Adjust embouchure

push corners forward and back, etc. have the student experiment to find what works for them.

One has to HEAR the pitch. You have to be EAR ORIENTED. If flat sounds like it's in tune, hear sharp, give the example of a slide whistle. Listen for beats – you stay on pitch and then fix it, then they stay on pitch and they fix it. ALWAYS tune without vibrato  
Play with good support, not hunched over.

## Dynamics

The dynamic range

fff – fortississimo

ff - fortissimo

f - forte

mf – mezzo forte

mp – mezzo piano

p - piano

pp – pianissimo

ppp – pianissimo

sf = sforzando

sfp = sforzando to piano

fp = forte piano

crescendo = to increase in volume

decrescendo = to decrease in volume

To control dynamics

- inside of lips, both lips

- play on the inner surface of your lips, think of there being a lip tube. Have a channel and control the inside of it.

- for loud low notes, think of a round, flat coin inside the upper lip

- never hold back air – should ALWAYS be GIVING air

- blow harder

Embouchure Exercise:

Play a scale with the metronome at 100 – 2 octaves, eighth notes

Take a full breath, take in more, more, more until you can't take in any more and then let it out. Once you've found out how much air you REALLY can hold, take another breath and take it all in at once.

## Oral Cavity

The dimensions of the oral cavity have a huge impact on tone quality and production. The tongue should, for the most part, be kept very low in the mouth. The jaw should also be kept low. When the tone sounds tight or closed off, the best solution is to tell the student to “drop the jaw”.

Also tell the student to “feel the space between your back teeth.”

Let the throat be open. The throat should be relaxed and downward. Think of getting a shot of Novocain to the throat, the throat is INACTIVE. Take in a deep breath and let it out in a sigh or a yawn – that is the feeling you should have.

When the jaw drops, the angle of the air lowers

Lower the angle to lower the pitch

Raise the angle to raise the pitch

f = more open

p = more together changes the volume of air

# Musicality and it's aspects

## Musicality

Music is not just the notes on the page, in fact, it's not the notes on the page. The notes are there only to help guide you along. Just like a painter expresses himself/herself with canvas and paints, a musician expresses himself/herself with his/her instrument.

If you did nothing but focus on the technical part of the music and played that perfectly, without any musical expression at all, that would be really boring. The dynamics in a piece of music are there to help us out and to understand how the composer wanted the music to sound like but it is our job to put our feelings and emotions into a piece. By the way, it is always helpful to know some history of the music you are playing and what time period it came from. For ex. trills done in Mozart's music and time period were started on the note above, rather than the note below.



You use different styles and tones for different types of music depending on the time period, composer, feeling, or history of the piece.

Whenever you play a piece, play with feeling and emotion. Add little dynamics within things, let yourself go and just play what you feel. It's like what Mr. Holland said to the clarinet player in the movie "Mr. Holland's Opus." Mr. Holland asked the girl, "when you look at yourself in the mirror, what do you like best about yourself?" The girl answered "my hair". When asked why, the girl replied "because my father says it reminds him of a sunset." Mr. Holland then said, "Play the sunset." Take something that has meaning to you, something special, and put the feelings you have about it into the music. Express yourself in the music. Music is a vehicle for expression, not notes on a page.

## **Tone**

Tone is one of the most important aspects of playing the flute. The flute is viewed as a beautiful instrument and people expect you to play beautiful simply because of the nature of the instrument. However, with any instrument, no one wants to hear an instrument played badly. You can have the best articulation in the world and be perfectly accurate in everything else, but if you don't sound good, no one will want to listen to you.

There are many aspects of tone and how it is produced. The oral cavity plays a part, tone color play a part, imaging (how you imagine the sound) plays a part. On the whole, you should listen to great flute players and find a tone you like and then try to imitate that. Think of the inside of your mouth being a large cavern and you want to fill it with space and sound. Then that large resonant sound comes through a little hole in your lips.

Tone is a big issue. Tone is the quality or type of sound you have. When you play, you should visualize extensively.

Try this exercise when warming up to develop good tone: play long tones. Say you're playing middle Bb. Visualize the sound oozing out, then when your sound is oozing, pick a spot on the wall and focus the ooze at the spot. Your tone will be completely different from what you started at and absolutely beautiful.

### **REGISTER PROBLEMS:**

For trouble with the high notes:

First of all, relax. Have you ever noticed how relaxed you are playing the low notes? You have to be to just get them out! We think that when we play high, we have to tense up, but the result is squeaky, thin, unpleasant sound. Try this: play a low note, say a Bb. Notice how your body feels when you play that note, then play the octave and keep the same feeling in your body, relaxed. Take that note, and then play the octave above that, keeping the same relaxed feeling you had on the lowest Bb. You should be able to get that note out much easier, the only difference is that your lips should be doing a little more work, the bottom lip should be out farther, reaching for the note and the hole smaller. Also, your should drop your jaw as far as you can get away with, but the key here is to relax and you'll be surprised at the beautiful, whole, rich sound you can come away with.

For trouble with low notes:

The low register is a problem especially for beginners. Most find that they cannot get a note out at all. What you should do is drop your jaw low, make a large opening in the lips for the air and aim the air stream down. You should also roll your bottom lip out and frown big time.

Make sure that whenever you play, you are blowing over the wet part of your lip, meaning the inside part of your bottom lip. You should relax your mouth, but not so much that you lose control. The trick is all in the lips, not the breath, so don't blow too hard or you'll pass out or see spots or something. You have to learn how to manipulate and control your lips to get the sound you want.

When you have gotten the notes out and would like a better tone in the low register, you can try to buzz your low notes. To buzz, you need to aim your air stream even lower, pretend that you are blowing against the far wall on the inside of the head joint. Draw your lower lip in slightly. Find what works for you. You should experiment to find what works with you and if none of these things help, fiddle around until you find something. And when you do, remember what you did and how you did it and try to do that every time.

## **Phrasing**

Good phrasing is essential to playing music, otherwise the student will only be playing notes.

Phrasing is the organization of notes into a musical line.

Take a piece of music and point out to the student the musical lines of the piece and point out the skeletal backbone of that line. Show what embellishes the line and what is the foundation of the line.

Determine the motion of the phrases. Ex. is the motion forward or backwards?

To figure out where the phrases are and to help put expression into them try these techniques:

- 1) sing it
- 2) put a story into it
- 3) associate colors, feelings or smells with it (If it's music for people to dance to, what kind of dance is it?)

To get examples of proper phrasing, listen to good string players and singers.

A phrase in music is like a sentence in writing. You can feel punctuation – play through it and feel where the commas and periods are. Use your intuition.

If someone doesn't have a foundation for any aspect of their playing, will it be more effective to dictate matter of intuition to the student or should you just ask leading questions to nurture their intuition?

Should it be teacher guided or student guided with regards to discovery?

## Breath Points

Where to breathe should be the first thing the student notices in a piece of music. The student should mark breath marks after a first run through.

Breath points ideally should be at the end of phrases.

- If the phrases are too long for the player to complete the phrase in one breath, an adequate substitute breath should be found
- breath should be quick
- usually not taken on a bar line
- not taken under a slur, but at the end of a slur
- if the breath is taken in a very fast piece with lots of running, moving notes, if it is not noticeable and not a crucial note, a note may be omitted and a breath taken.
- When trying to find a place to breathe ask yourself "Do you want to point out the division or mask the division between phrases"?

Also need secondary breath spots for when you get nervous. Pick spots and experiment with finding good ones, thing "can this be broken down into smaller chunks?"

You can also listen to recordings for ideas of where to breathe.

## Dynamic Usage

Dynamics should always be followed where they are written on the page, but there is room for variation and interpretation within the dynamic markings:

in a solo passage:

- if playing in a small group, or just being accompanied by a piano, it is good to stay close to the dynamic marked.
- if in a small chamber group, you may stay close to the marking, but in general, the solo line should be brought out more so that it is not covered up, whatever that dynamic may be.
- if in a large ensemble, soft seldom means as soft as in a completely solo situation. In a larger group, play as loudly as needed so that you are heard, but keep it within the context of the piece and the level of the ensemble.

When there are several notes repeated in a row, to avoid stagnation, crescendo slightly, think of moving forward. Give the notes direction.

Dynamics in relations to intonation

When do you start demanding dynamics:

- 1) get some consistency of tone production, encourage fullness of sound. Tell them to "fill the room with sound."
- 2) decent concept of breathing and breath support

Good phrase shape is bigger in the middle

The secret to expression

--->v<---

Pick a song (.x. America the Beautiful)

Sing the words, pick one word as the point of arrival and sing it with that phrase shape to that word, usually one place will sound the most logical.

## Tone Colors

Have a variety of tone colors on the palate.

Different styles of music call for different colors of tone.

Romantic era = dreamy (Debussy) less focused

March = bright tone

adjectives to describe tone colors  
bright, dreamy, hollow, buzzy, airy, focused, harsh

It may help to associate REAL colors with the color of tone that is desired to be produced.

### **Emotional Involvement**

Have the student become involved, give the piece meaning – relate particular sounds or passages to experiences in the student's life.

Know when to play sad, happy, melancholy, joyous, curious, etc.

Don't have to feel like you have to experience the emotional roller coaster you are taking the audience on. You might want to initially feel that but it's difficult to play a piece when you want the audience to cry if you're crying. But you have to have experienced the emotion before you can recreate it.

Dynamic shape helps.

Relate the music to something in past experience – did you ever have a dog? What did that dog mean to you? How did you feel about that dog? Did it die? How did you feel? – sense recall.

Visual imagery helps a lot too. Put a picture or a story with it. Think about it, is it background music for a scene? If it is, what would be happening? Who's in it, what are they wearing, etc. Relate it to movies and/or a scene.  
If this were music for dancers how would they be dancing?

### **Audience Member Etiquette**

- If you arrive late, don't enter the room in the middle of a performance. Wait until the piece is finished. Entering between movements is generally not acceptable.
- Hats should not be worn in the hall and audience members should refrain from putting their feet on chairs, walls, etc.
- Do not clap between movements of a piece
- It is considered rude to carry on a conversation during a performance. Loud noises such as the shuffling of papers, etc. should also be avoided.
- Please turn off all electronic devices during a performance. Flash photography and cameras with bright lights should be turned off and avoided.
- Be on time and come to stay the entire concert
- If you have a child that is making noise or crying, carry it out immediately.

### **Performance Etiquette**

You should not huff and puff at the end of a piece. Never let on to the audience that you are anything but confident. This includes after the performance. You can whine at home but when people are trying to compliment just smile and say thank you.

**BOWING:**

- 1) have a pleasant attitude
- 2) smile and acknowledge the audience
- 3) lean forward enough so that the top of your head is visible

When bowing with an accompanist:

talk about it beforehand, do you want to bow at the same time or separately? Have a bow leader and trust your peripheral vision, not necessary to look at the other person directly. Always be oriented toward the audience more than each other.

When walking on and off stage walk with a purpose.

### **Nervousness**



About playing in front of people, I usually don't get nervous until when I start walking to the stage, then I feel some butterflies. But, I just think to myself "hey, I've done this plenty of times before. Yeah, I'll probably mess up, but let's not dwell on that. I'm going to do my best and just play like I love the music." So I do. Sometimes toward the end of the piece my hands start shaking and so does my embouchure. I really hate that but, there's nothing you can do about it that I know of, just think to yourself that hey, this will pass. They'll shake for a while and then stop. You can think very calming thoughts and think that the audience is on your side, they feel bad if you mess up, even if they're judges, they still sympathize with you. We're all human.

I also like to listen to my favorite music to relax. That just happens to be the soundtrack to "Braveheart". Try listening to your favorite music, as long as it is calming and puts you in a peaceful state of mind.

What I do before I go up is mentally prepare myself. I visualize myself playing everything perfectly, and I try to slow down my breathing and imagine my heart rate decreasing. It doesn't always work, but I try! Visualization is a powerful tool. In fact, there was a man, a POW, who was put in solitary confinement for years and years and the only way he could keep himself from going crazy was to visualize himself playing his favorite game: golf. He would imagine the feel of the grass, the smell of the air, the way the sun felt on him, the grip of the club, everything. Then, in his mind, he would play all 18 holes, not leaving one out, and at every hole he would visualize himself hitting the perfect swing. Years later, the man was released. He went to play golf and that first day, he played the best game of his entire life. Give it a shot.

The more you perform the less nervous you will get and the more prepared you will be.

If nerves strike in the middle of a performance – keep going!

## Auditioning

Don't go into the room thinking "I am going to do this to win" instead think "I am doing this for fun. This is fun for me, I've worked hard, I deserve it and I'll do well. I'm going to show them how much fun I can have."

Overcoming Performance Anxiety: • know your music • don't worry about messing up, mistakes happen, but it's not the end of the world • don't focus on one thing in the audience – what happens when that thing moves or is blocked? • Don't eat something sugary or with caffeine before you play, you'll get the jitters. • Make sure you are warmed up well. If you are nervous right before you go onstage – skip once. You can't skip and be in a bad mood.

## The Instruments



Brands:

### BEGINNER MODELS:

Gemeinhardt, Yamaha, Selmer, Jupiter, Blessing, Emerson

Specifics:

closed hole (plateau), C foot, off-set G key, usually either silver plated or nickel plated. This is a C foot joint:



### STEP-UP MODELS (Intermediate):

Gemeinhardt, Yamaha, Jupiter, Emerson, di Medici, Pearl

Specifics:

more open than closed holes, more B foot than C foot, head joints usually solid silver with silver-plated bodies and foot joints

### PROFESSIONAL MODELS:

Emerson, Gemeinhardt, Powell, Pearl, Pearl/Quantz, Prima Sankyo, Yamaha

Specifics:

Open Holed, B foot, SS head joint, body/foot usually SS, springs options of either Std. or Gold, Gizmo key, French points

### PERFORMANCE MODELS:

Haynes, Muramatsu, Powell, Prima Sankyo, Miyazawa, Yamaha, Brannon-Cooper

Specifics:

Open holed, B foot, SS or gold or platinum head joint and body/foot, Springs usually std. or white gold, gizmo key, C# trill, D# roller

## Options

**B Foot** - adds one key to the bottom of the flute enabling the range to go down to low B natural, also helps (when pressed) in making the 3rd



octave C more in tune.

Bb Foot Joint



Split E Mechanism

**Split E key** – makes the high E lower in pitch. Instead of two keys staying open, it closes only one.

**Donut** – a ring that is put in the tone hole to make the hole smaller

**Eb roller** – roller on the Eb key, making the slide from C# to Eb smoother

**C# trill key** – makes it possible to trill from high G to A and also B to C#

**Lower G Insert** - A much less expensive alternative to the Split E mechanism on Brannen Cooper Flutes, this insert also provides a more secure



G Insert

high E natural. Some players notice a slight flattening of the A natural in the first and second octaves.

**Normal springs/ white gold springs** – white gold has less resistance, it is more even in tension through the motion of the keys up and down, also more expensive. The motion is lighter at the top and there's more tension at the bottom.

**French pointed arms** – 1) are aesthetically pleasing 2) puts pressure on the middle of the key instead of at the back.

**Brögger Acoustic Modification** – only on Brannon-Cooper flutes and maybe Pearl. It is a pinless mechanism, it makes action more even and lighter and it is easier to work on. According to Brannon: "A different way of cutting toneholes to produce a more consistent tone quality over the register break. Those who prefer this modification find it creates a freer blowing flute."

**Adjustment screws** – Professional models don't have them. They affect the F-F# mechanism. Can fix the Bb 1 & 1 key by adding scotch tape or cassette tape label on the cork underneath.

**Kicker** – they are the little feet on the back of the flute. If the key height doesn't match, could be missing a felt or it could be bent.

**Conical/cylindrical bore** – refers to the inside bore of the flute. Conical bore is more expensive. The low end of the flute is smaller – adds resistance, low notes easier. Now, all flutes are cylindrical.

**Parabolic head joint** – all head joints are parabolic. There is a slight curve to the shape of the cone.

**Straubinger pads/normal pads** – normal pads are felt – soft. They require shimming, which is when the pad is being installed, little pieces of paper are put underneath the pad to make it seat correctly.

Straubinger pads are felt too but they are much, much harder. They are virtually impervious to temperature and humidity.

## Care

When putting the flute together:

- 1) hold the body at the top with the left hand, not pressing any of the keys.
- 2) Take out the head joint and, not grasping the lip plate, twist it gently into the body
- 3) Put the foot joint on, carefully making sure that the keys are not being pressed, holding the flute at the top.
- 4) If it is really tight going together, polish the tenons (the ends of the joints) and the inside of the other side. NEVER USE LUBRICANT.

The best place for storing the flute is safely in the case.

After playing, the flute should be swabbed out with a cloth on a cleaning rod. Take care not to hit the sides of the flute with the rod. The cloth should be as lint free as possible, preferably a piece of silk or a hanky. Wrap the swab around the stick (a wooden stick is better than a metal stick).

If you don't clean your flute it will tarnish. Use a special cleaning cloth, if it's a treated cloth, don't let it touch the keys. NEVER USE SILVER POLISH – if it gets on the pads it will dry them out, they'll break, if it gets in the mechanism it will bind it.

Don't leave the flute in extreme temperatures, it will melt/crack the glue.

When putting the flute down, make sure the keys are facing upwards so they are not at risk of being bent.

Don't put the flute on a music stand, it could fall over.

Don't grab the flute by the lip plate because it's soldered on and is possible for it to be ripped off.

Oil the keys every 6 months to a year:

For beginners: if you see key oil, don't buy it and don't use it, let the teacher show you how first. Use a needle or a toothpick to apply the oil. It should be applied between all the joints in the rods and balls, NOT on the keys.

Too much oil is as bad as not enough oil.

Don't get a "pad saver", it keeps moisture in the keys which will cause them to corrode.

If the pads are sticky use ungummed cigarette paper. Put it under the pad and press, don't pull it out, this can tear the delicate skin membrane on the pad. Don't use dollar bills either because they're too thick, plus, they're dirty.

Don't eat or drink right before playing and if you do, wash your mouth out with water as best as possible or brush your teeth.

Don't put all kinds of stuff in the case; it's not a locker. The only thing that should be in there is the flute. Keep the cleaning cloth out of there if possible, otherwise the moisture will stay in there with the keys and ruin the pads.

If a film develops on the strike wall, use rubbing alcohol on the end of a Q-tip to clean it out, or just use your cleaning cloth (if your finger will fit) to clean around the inside of the hole.

## Head joints

No two head joints sound alike

There are different cuts of the embouchure hole.

Gooseman Head joint – you get better articulation response if the far side is flat.

Different metals have different tones to them. Gold tends to have a warmer tone, silver a brighter tone. With gold you have more darkness.

You can have a gold riser on your lip plate. This is the "chimney" that connects the lip plate to the tube of the head joint. Gold risers are usually 24 karat gold.

Wall thickness has an impact on the amount of resistance there is when you play.

The strike wall and the back wall need to be close to even, but with anything, the strike wall should be longer than the back.

short strike wall – easy high notes, difficult low notes

long strike wall – easy low notes, difficult high notes

Get the precious metal closest to the sound production point for the best sound and the most difference.

Wing embouchure plate – it raises the plate so that the strike wall is really long. It makes it easier to get a focus.

There are also curved head joints. The head joint on a flute had been curved around in a U-shape instead of being straight. They are especially useful for very young players who cannot easily reach all the keys on a normal flute. These head joints do not affect the sound at all, they sound the same as a straight head joint, they just make it easier to reach the keys, which is why some alto flutes and all bass flutes have them, it would be next to impossible to reach the keys with out them!

## Piccolos

made of: plastic, metal (silver or nickel) or wood (usually Granadilla wood)

Plastic: cheapest, nice sound, mix between silver and wood, can be used for marching band.

Silver: average cost, high pitched sound but can be tempered (good for intermediate player), can be used for marching band and symphony band.

Wood: Expensive, very rich deep sound, used in orchestras, should NOT be used for marching band or outdoors.

## Attitude Shaping/ encouragement/ motivation

- Musicians should be aware that failure DOES occur and that it is ok to fail.
- When critiquing a student there should be 3 positives for any negative.

- Share personal stories with the student of particular people or events that have helped or encouraged you and apply them to the student.

### **Role modeling**

Show them how things should be done and how good they can become without getting a big head.

Remain humble in your acknowledgement of your talents, show them how and encourage them to do the same.

Don't let the student try to compare his/her ability with your own. If you get "but you're so much better than I am" just remind the student that you were in their spot once and we all have to start somewhere. If they want to do well, they will have to work at it, and leave it at that, then praise them for how good they have done so far and for their accomplishments.

### **Accountability**

Have something specific you want accomplished and hold them to it for next time. If they don't practice the things you are trying to teach them, you're both wasting time and money.

Have incentives and consequences.

My very first piano teacher definitely gave me incentives to practice. At the end of every lesson if I had done a good job and obviously worked hard at learning what she had wanted me to learn she let me go to her candy jar and pick out a candy bar, and it was full size! However, if I didn't do well, I would either not get anything or only be allowed to get something small.

### **Books to read**

The Inner Game of Tennis by W. Timothy Gallwey

A Soprano On Her Head by Eloise Ristad

The Art of Practicing: A Guide to Making Music From the Heart by Madeline Bruser

### **Fingering Charts and Alternate Fingerings**

websites:

[http://www.wfg.sneezy.org/fing\\_noframes.html](http://www.wfg.sneezy.org/fing_noframes.html) – The Woodwind Fingering Guide  
a list of all woodwind fingerings including trills, tremolos and alternate fingerings

<http://mypage.uniserve.ca/~lwk/whedrick.htm> – Practical Alternate Fingerings for Flute  
includes pictures

[http://www.wfg.sneezy.org/link\\_fing.html](http://www.wfg.sneezy.org/link_fing.html) – A List of websites to visit that have alternate fingerings

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