



# A Modern Guide to Teaching and Playing the Bassoon



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Carol Cope Lowe

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# Introduction

## A bassoonist on a mission:

I decided to write this book because the world needs more bassoonists. I have written it for current and future music educators and bassoon students. While it is always best for a student to work with a teacher, this resource provides the necessary written information, illustrations, videos, and exercises for a student to make progress on their own.

The goal of this resource is to provide depth and breadth of information in a single, complete, and easily accessible resource. There are dozens of websites and videos that offer excellent tips and suggestions for playing the bassoon. Unfortunately, music teachers don't have the luxury of time to visit all of these sites looking for much needed information. It is my hope that this volume will empower more teachers to confidently promote the bassoon and recruit more students to play the bassoon in their ensembles.

This book began as a course pack I developed for Bassoon Techniques, a course I have taught every semester since joining the faculty at SUNY Potsdam's Crane School of Music in the fall of 2006. The course is required for all band track music education majors and covers the fundamentals of teaching and playing the bassoon. The class is made up of a mix of woodwind, brass, and percussion students with an occasional string, piano, or vocal student. The class is capped at 12 so that students do not have to share instruments.

Band track music education majors at Crane take individual courses on each instrument rather than the typical one-size-fits-all woodwind and brass methods courses. In its current format, Bassoon Techniques, meets twice a week for 7 weeks. I am grateful to have the luxury of just under 12 hours of instruction time dedicated solely to the bassoon. But even 11+ hours is not enough time to cover everything a future teacher needs to know. This book serves as a reminder of the information covered in class as well as an extended resource to cover what we don't get to during the semester.

## Why are there so few bassoonists?

I remember it like it was yesterday.

“It is 9:15 on a chilly Friday morning and I am sitting on the stage in the cafeteria of an elementary school watching 3rd graders stream into the room. They're talking excitedly to their friends as they sit on the floor. As members of the Augusta Symphony Orchestra's Reed Trio, my colleagues and I are waiting to begin our 30-minute performance titled “A Musical Time Machine.” As part of the presentation, we talk about our instruments. When I stand up to talk about the bassoon, I hear some of the students say “wow” and “cool” and their reactions get even better as I move through my spiel.

The instruments in our ensemble are oboe, clarinet, and bassoon and we play for around 25-30 schools every year. At the end of our presentations the students are hooked! They ask lots of questions and are obviously excited about playing an instrument.”

Why then are young bassoonists so rarely a part of middle and high school music programs? What happened between the Augusta Reed Trio's elementary school

presentations and beginning band that dimmed all of the wonderful enthusiasm students had for the bassoon?

This problem is not unique to Georgia. In 2020 Shannon Lowe surveyed music directors across the United States about bassoons in their programs and received responses from 402 directors from 45 states. This survey revealed that 60.7 % of music programs across the US have *only one or no student bassoonists.*”<sup>1</sup> The answer to why so few bassoonists is varied and complex, but it usually focuses on three areas: 1) cost, 2) availability of instrument(s), and 3) the director’s lack of confidence teaching the bassoon.

Cost: The bassoon is an expensive instrument to purchase and maintain. Bassoon reeds are fragile and expensive.

Availability of instrument(s): School music programs often don’t have bassoons, and if they do, they are rarely in playable condition.

Addressing cost and availability is beyond my means, but I can address the lack of confidence experienced by music teachers. Empowering music teachers and students by busting the myth that bassoon is “the hardest instrument” is the purpose of this book.



## Acknowledgements

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With great appreciation to the musical colleagues who taught me so much over the years.



I

# Getting Ready to Play



# 1.

## Inside the Bassoon Case

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**These items should be in your bassoon case. If any are missing tell your music teacher right away.**

1. Four Joints of the Bassoon



These four joints should stay in the case when the instrument is not assembled for use.

2. At least one, preferably two bocals of different lengths.



3. A seat strap that will attach to your bassoon.



Seat strap

#### 4. Swab(s)



Boot swab and Wing swab

OR



Silk swab for both boot & wing

#### 5. Cork grease or paraffin wax to lubricate joint tenons.



cork grease  
(use on cork tenons)



paraffin wax  
(use on string tenons)

### Additional Equipment You Will Need

**At least 3 bassoon reeds.** Information about buying reeds is the focus of chapter 3.



You will need a **reed case** to protect your reeds. You can make your own or buy one; more information about reed cases is included in chapter 4.



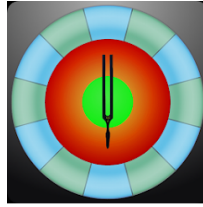
You will also need a **container for water** to soak your reed. I use my empty prescription bottles after they get a good cleaning. Make certain the lid does not leak. If the bottle will stay in your bassoon case, it should be kept in a plastic bag that seals to prevent water leaking inside of the case. You will need to change the water every day and wash the bottle once a week.



A metronome and tuner (or Bluetooth speaker and apps for your phone)



metronome



TonalEnergy App



Tunable App



bluetooth speaker

## Other items

You might have a right-hand crutch in your case that looks something like this:



More information about the right-hand crutch is included in [Chapter 22 “Accommodating Large Hands.”](#)



## 2.

### A Bassoon for Small Hands

A player with **small hands** will need a **short-reach** bassoon.

#### Standard Reach versus Short Reach Model

##### The Left Hand

The short-reach bassoon was created to reduce the stretch between the left thumb and ring finger needed to play the second space C. This note requires the player to press the whisper key with the left thumb while also covering the third hole (C) on the front of the wing joint with the left ring finger. The stretch is reduced by placing a covered key with a tab over the C hole. This ensures the C hole will be fully covered for good response on the C and all successively lower notes.

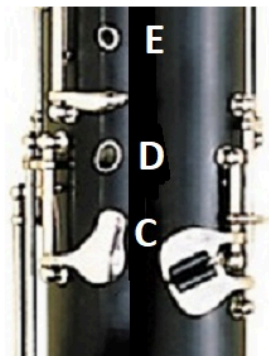
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Standard Reach Bassoon



open C

Short Reach Bassoon

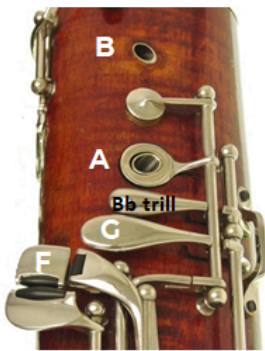


covered C

## The Right Hand

The standard reach model will have a b-flat trill key which is not included on the short reach model. The distance between the A tone hole and G key is smaller on the short reach model, making it ideal for smaller hands.

Standard Reach Bassoon



Bb trill key

Short Reach Bassoon



no Bb trill key

**NOTE:** The b-flat trill key is not commonly used so if your bassoon has one, ignore this additional key for now and **be sure your ring finger stays on the G key** which is wider and flatter than the b-flat trill key.

## Buying a short reach bassoon



### Nobel bassoons.

The least expensive short reach models are **Nobel bassoons**. They are made in China but are available in the US. I've used these instruments for music teacher "Come and Play" sessions and was impressed by their quality and price.

#### [Bassoons – Nobel Instruments](#)

Nobel Bassoons are ideal for beginning players who desire flexibility and durability at an affordable cost. These bassoons have been tested and proven by professional bassoonists around the world. These instruments are ideal for starting players, professionals who want an option to play outdoors, or school programs looking for durable, reliable and quality bassoons at a better price point than the competition.

Additional information at [Nobel Bassoons](#)

### Moosmann bassoons

**Moosmann bassoons** are generally slightly less expensive than Fox bassoons. They are made in Germany but are available in the US.



Note: I appreciate the flexibility and richness of the

tone quality of these instruments. However, with flexibility comes responsibility. That means the flexibility of tone quality comes with flexibility of intonation.

[Moosmann Student Compact Bassoon M20C | Miller Marketing \(millermarketingco.com\)](https://millermarketingco.com)

## Fox bassoons

Fox bassoons are the most expensive student instruments by a small margin. They are made in the United States (Indiana).

Fox bassoons are consistent and reliable and are the most popular student bassoon in the US.



### [Short reach bassoons – Fox Products](#)

The **Renard Model 41** provides a unique combination of playability, practicality, and durability. It is built with the full German key system with a short reach plateau key for the left-hand ring finger. The Model 41 is suitable for beginning or middle school students and for budget-conscious schools and institutions.

The **Renard Model 51** provides a unique combination of playability, practicality, and durability. Built with a short reach key configuration for small hands, this model is suitable for beginning or middle school students and for budget-conscious schools and institutions.

Note: Chip Owen wrote an article titled [“Bassoon Modifications for Small Hands”](#) for the Fox Products Corporation. It describes the many modifications available on Fox bassoons.



### 3.

## Buying Bassoon Reeds

A good bassoon reed will make playing the bassoon fun and rewarding while trying to play on a reed that isn't working is frustrating. It is important to find a reliable source of good reeds and keep several on hand, so you don't get stuck having to play on a damaged or bad reed. This chapter presents a variety of sources for buying bassoon reeds, tips for choosing a good reed, and an explanation of the categories of reed strengths you will encounter when buying bassoon reeds.



## Sources for Bassoon Reeds

### Professional Bassoonist

**The best option** is to buy reeds from a professional bassoonist who sells the reeds they make. If you live in

or near a large metropolitan area, you can probably find a local bassoonist who makes and sells their reeds or knows someone who does. Make friends with bassoon players everywhere you go so that you can either buy reeds from them or get their recommendations for current brands of reeds to use and which to avoid.

There are many excellent professional reed makers who sell their reeds online through personal websites and through Etsy. I have my Bassoon Techniques students buy reeds from [Bel Canto Reeds 2.0](#). They sell excellent reeds for beginner to intermediate students. Some advanced students like these reeds but others find them too soft.

## Double Reed Supply Shop

This is the **next best option**. Music stores that cater specifically to double reed musicians sell reeds that have been handmade by their team of bassoonists. These double reed supply stores primarily operate online so you'll need to determine when you are likely to need reeds and order them four to five weeks before you need them. The major benefit is that these reeds are made by professional bassoonists who know the difference between a good reed and a bad reed, and they stake their livelihood on the quality of the reeds they sell.

Three double reed stores I recommend are:

[Miller Marketing Co. | Double Reed Instruments & Supplies](#) in Wayne, PA

Miller Marketing Co. carries a wide variety of supplies, tools, instruments, and accessories for the double reed musician.

[Forrestsmusic.com](#) Berkeley, CA

Forrests Music is a wind instrument sales and repair shop situated in Berkeley, California. Their primary focus is on double reed instruments, reed making supplies, music, accessories and gifts.

[Bocal Majority Store Homepage – Bocal Majority Woodwinds](#) in Richardson, TX

Bocal Majority's store rents and sells double reed instruments, and their website includes information on financing for these instruments. They also carry reeds and some basic supplies for the double reed musician.

## Local Music Store

Your local music store can be a good option, especially if you can get them to stock reeds from your preferred reed maker or brand of reed. The advantage of buying reeds in person is that you can see the reeds before you buy them.

You will not be allowed to play the reed before purchase, but a visual inspection can be helpful in choosing reeds that will play.

## Online General Music Stores

Online music stores that sell a wide variety of music-related supplies (think Music & Arts, Sam Ash Music, Musicians Friend, Sweetwater, Guitar Center) and even major online stores like Amazon and Walmart generally carry commercially produced bassoon reeds. These stores purchase reeds in bulk and no one checks the quality of the reeds they purchase and sell. The price per reed is generally lower with this option but that is mitigated by the fact that not all reeds will work, and the reeds can be very inconsistent. You might get lucky with some, but you

might not. If you must use this option, I suggest buying a couple of different strengths in a couple of different brands to start. Keep trying new brands and strengths until you find something you like.

## Visual Properties of a Good Reed

1. Check the reed blade for **chips or cracks**. Avoid buying a reed with a chipped or cracked blade and throw away any cracked reeds in your case.
2. Make sure the **tube opening** (the part that will go on the bocal) is completely round and the tube wall has no gaps or thin spots.
3. Choose a reed with a **symmetrical tip opening**. It will be more consistent across registers and dynamics.
4. Check the **sides of the two blades** to make sure they line up. If the side of one blade sticks out beyond the other blade the reed will probably leak.
5. Make sure the **string wrapping or other binding** (heat shrink tubing, hot glue, wax) is snug. The reed will probably leak and the blades can slip if the binding is loose.
6. The grain of the cane should be **smooth** and there should be **no splinters** of cane in the tube or along the sides of the blades.

**Note:** Many handmade reeds will have the corners of the

tip clipped at an angle. This makes the corners of the tip less likely to split or tear. These reeds are not damaged.



Blade with no chips or cracks.



round tube opening  
no gaps  
no thin spots



Tip opening is:  
Symmetrical  
Elliptical (space between  
blades is widest at center and  
decreases to edges)



Blades align at side edges.



Tube binding is secure.

## Reed Strength

Commercial reeds are sold according to their level of strength or hardness. Reed strength is a measure of the resistance you have to blow against, and how much lip pressure the reed requires to play. The commercial industry has influenced some bassoonists to add a strength designation to the reeds they sell; others sell their reeds without a strength designation.

There are five categories of reed strength. However, there is no industry standard for these categories.

- **Soft** (very easy to blow but will close up with

any more than light embouchure pressure).

- **Medium Soft** (easy to blow, will close up with moderate embouchure pressure).
- **Medium** (requires more air and embouchure, closes with strong embouchure).
- **Medium Hard** (requires good breath support, moderate embouchure pressure, and firm articulation).
- **Hard** (requires strong breath support, strong embouchure pressure, and firm articulation).

I do not recommend buying reeds in the soft or hard categories until you have tried reeds in the middle categories. Start with a medium reed and a medium hard reed and see which gives you the best response, intonation, and tone quality.

- **When starting on bassoon** with no previous wind instrument experience I suggest starting on a medium reed.
- **When transferring from another instrument**, especially from clarinet or saxophone, I recommend starting on a medium hard reed.
- If you've been playing bassoon for a while and **want to try another brand of reed**, I suggest trying a medium-hard reed in the new brand.

You might need to move up a category as the muscles of your face and core (embouchure and breath support) develop. If the reed makes your embouchure tired quickly (after only 5-10 minutes of playing) you can either adjust the reed or try a softer reed.

## **Synthetic and Plastic Reeds:**

Jones, Emerald, Chartier, Opus One, and other music companies sell relatively inexpensive plastic reeds. However, the tone quality created with these plastic reeds is not desirable and they can be hard to control. The best, and likely only use for these reeds is for young beginning students who might not be ready to handle a reed properly. I do not suggest plastic reeds as an alternative to cane reeds, but only as a possible first step until the students have enough control and awareness when handling the instrument and reed to avoid constantly having to replace their reeds due to damage/breakage.

## 4.

### Ways to Help Your Reeds Last Longer

Bassoon reeds are expensive. These days one bassoon reed can cost anywhere from \$12 to \$35 dollars. This means you will want to take very good care of every reed. If you handle, rotate, soak, rinse, and store reeds properly you can easily get 4 to 6 weeks of use out of a reed. Here are some rules for dealing with the bassoon reed:

#### Handle It Carefully!

**ALWAYS** know where your reed is. This is especially important when counting rests, waiting for rehearsal to start, or packing up after rehearsal when the reed is not in your mouth.

**NEVER** let your reed hit against your chair, your music stand, the wall behind you, your teeth, your neighbor's teeth, etc. It will crack. Keep the reed in visual range when it is on the bocal.

1. When assembling the bassoon, **add the reed last** (after the bassoon is in playing position).
2. When disassembling the bassoon, **remove the reed first** and place it in a safe location.
3. The reed **will not** crack from the force of your

tongue (articulation), but it will crack if it hits your teeth or some other hard object.

## **Rotate It!**

**ALWAYS** have at least three reeds in your reed case. Reeds that are cracked or that don't work do not count!

**NEVER** let your "favorite reed" be the only one in your case. Get new reeds when you are down to just one or two.

1. If you only have one, it will most likely give out or crack before or during the concert.
2. If you only have two you will always play on your favorite one, it will crack, and then you will have to play the concert on a brand-new reed.

**ALWAYS** follow the *Rotation Principle*:

1. Have at least three or four reeds in your reed case.
2. Play a different one each time you practice or rehearse so you know how each reed feels and plays.

Benefits of the *Rotation Principle*:

You will learn pretty quickly that playing on a brand-new reed is not as easy or comfortable as playing on one that has been broken in from being played for a few days.

1. Rotating will allow you to become familiar with

how each reed in your case feels and plays. This means never having to play a concert on a brand-new reed because all of the reeds in your case will be broken in.

2. Rotating through a set of reeds keeps you from becoming too dependent upon the “feel” of a certain reed.
3. Rotating helps you to play correctly rather than adapting to the tendencies of a “favorite” reed.
4. Rotating will also extend the life of each reed by allowing it time to dry and rest between uses.

### Soak It in Water!



**ALWAYS** soak the reed adequately before each use.

**NEVER** leave the reed sitting in water for more than 10 minutes. Over-soaking will cause the reed to swell and warp, and the reed will become waterlogged and hard to play.

1. Soak the reed for a minimum of 2-3 minutes in room temperature water. The reed needs to absorb the water, so a quick rinse in a fountain or under a faucet is not enough.
2. Soak the entire reed (blade and tube).

3. “Mouth soaking” a bassoon reed is not enough to allow optimum vibration and flexibility. No one has that much saliva!
4. Room temperature water is best but if cold is all you have access to, increase the soaking time by a couple of minutes. If warm water is all you have, decrease the soaking time.

**\*Note:** warm water will sometimes do wonders for an old reed.



*One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here:*

<https://lowecc.pressbooks.sunycreate.cloud/?p=549#oembed-1>

## **Rinse It in Water!**

**ALWAYS** rinse the reed and gently pat it dry before putting it back in your reed case. This will help the reed last much longer.

1. Swish the reed around in the reed water (assuming the reed water is clean).
2. Lightly shake or blow through the reed (make certain you aren't facing anyone).
3. Gently brush it along your sleeve or pant leg to remove excess moisture.

## Store It in a Reed Case!



**ALWAYS** store the reed in a case that provides protection AND ventilation. A completely sealed container will grow mold/mildew – ick!

**NEVER** leave your reed loose in your bassoon case, backpack, purse, etc. That is like throwing away money because the reed will crack. Keep your reeds in a protective reed case.

Your reed case does not have to be fancy or expensive, but it does need to provide protection for the reeds. I repurposed a small metal Sucrets tin for my first reed case. The larger size Altoids© tin will also work. The tins that sometimes come with Celestial Seasonings tea are also a good size. Here's how to create your own reed case from a tin that is approximately 3.75" x 2.5" x .75"

1. Empty and wash the tin and let it dry completely.
2. Use an ice pick or drill to make 3-4 holes in the lid.
3. Line the top and bottom of the tin with Kleenex or cotton balls to provide cushioning for the reeds.
4. Check the cushioning material regularly for discoloration (mold/mildew). Replace the

material if it begins to discolor.

### Online Sources for Bassoon Reed Cases

- [Bassoon Reed Cases – Charles Double Reed Company \(charlesmusic.com\)](http://charlesmusic.com)
- [Bassoon Reed Cases from Forrests Music](#)
- [Reed Cases Archives | Miller Marketing \(millermarketingco.com\)](http://millermarketingco.com)
- [For Your Reeds – Reed Cases – Hodge Products, Inc. \(hodgeproductsinc.com\)](http://hodgeproductsinc.com)

**TIP:** Make sure your reeds dry out from one day to the next. If you open your reed case and the reeds are still damp from the previous day you will need to do something to help them dry out.

- Put your reed case in a safe location and leave it open overnight.
- Leave your reed case open under the light from a desk lamp for a couple of hours every day.

### AFTER AN ILLNESS

The best action is to throw away any reeds you played while you were sick and wipe down your reed case with rubbing alcohol and let it dry before adding new reeds. Your health is worth more than the cost of a reed. However, if it was a mild illness and the reed is a good one, you might consider disinfecting the reed using a sanitizing product such as hydrogen peroxide or Sterisol germicide.

- Combine 1 part hydrogen peroxide to 3 parts water.
- Soak the reed in the solution for 15 minutes.
- Rinse the reed thoroughly with water.
- Gently pat dry and leave in under a desk lamp for 1-2 hours until completely dry.

Follow instructions for use on the bottle of Sterisol germicide concentrate.

[Sterilizer Liquids | Miller Marketing \(millermarketingco.com\)](http://www.millermarketingco.com)

Don't forget to **clean your bocal too!**



*One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here:*

<https://lowecc.pressbooks.sunycreate.cloud/?p=549#oemb-ed-2>

1. I do this by pouring antibacterial hand soap into the cork end of the bocal.
2. Tip it up until the soap begins to drip out the tip end of the bocal.
3. Run a bocal swab through a few times and rinse well with hot water.
4. Use a soft cloth to dry the outside of the bocal, taking special care to dry the cork.

**Note:** I prefer a pull-through cloth bocal swab over the bocal brush with bristles because I've never had the end of a drop swab come off in my bocal and I can't say the same for a bocal brush.

Sources for Bocal Swabs (and swabs in general)



- [Bassoon Swabs \(forrestsmusic.com\)](http://forrestsmusic.com)
- [Swabs & Brushes | Miller Marketing \(millermarketingco.com\)](http://millermarketingco.com)
- [Silk Bassoon Bocal Swab by Hodge – Charles Double Reed Company \(charlesmusic.com\)](http://charlesmusic.com)

## 5.

### Helpful Daily Habits

1. **Have fun playing your bassoon!**
2. Rinse your mouth well, or better yet, brush your teeth before you play your bassoon.
  - Food particles can clog your reed.
  - Food particles will make your reeds gross.
  - Food particles can build up on the inside of the instrument and will become a breeding ground for mold or bacteria.
  - Food particles can build up on the surface of the pads causing them to harden and leak.
3. Take time to carefully assemble your bassoon so that nothing gets bent.
4. Think about what you want to accomplish in your practice session.
5. Set at least one **SMART** goal for every practice session.

- **S**pecific
  - **M**easurable
  - **A**chievable
  - **R**elevant
  - **T**ime-based
  - Examples:
    - I will count through the first two lines of my solo and mark the spots where I have trouble or am uncertain of the rhythm.
    - I will play my slurred, one octave F major scale in quarter notes with metronome on 60, 3 times in a row with no mistakes.
6. Take at least a few minutes of every practice to play something you enjoy. Scales and etudes are important, but having making practice enjoyable will keep you coming back every day.
7. Your bassoon and your reeds are your friends. Show them you care by taking time to carefully disassemble your bassoon, swab the wing and the boot joints, and rinse and dry your reeds before storing them safely in their cases.

### Things to Practice without the bassoon:

1. **Rhythm, Meter, and Tempo:** learn to count your bassoon music while keeping a steady beat. The

notes will be much easier to learn once you understand how they fit within the time.

2. Aural Skills (Hearing what you play): When the best bassoonists perform, they aren't just blowing and wiggling their fingers, they are singing. This allows them to play with precision while staying focused on giving a beautiful and engaging performance. Learning to sing your music will make playing it so much easier.

### Memorize the order of sharps and flats

Sharps: FCGDAEB

Flats: BEADGCF

### Memorize the names of the keys and their key signatures

#### SHARPS:

- G has 1 sharp, F sharp
- D has 2 sharps, F and C sharp
- A has 3 sharps, F C and G sharp
- E has 4 sharps, F C G and D sharp
- B has 5 sharps, F, C, G, D and A sharp
- F# has 6 sharps, F, C, G, D, A and E sharp
- C# has 7 sharps, FCGDAE and B sharp

#### FLATS:

- F has 1 flat, Bflat

- Bb has 2 flats, B and E flat
- Eb has 3 flats, B, E, and A flat
- Ab has 4 flats, B, E, A and D flat
- Db has 5 flats, B, E, A, D and G flat
- Gb has 6 flats, B E, A, D, G, and C flat
- Cb has 7 flats, BEADGC and F flat

### Learn some Italian musical terms

- Tempos (Largo, Andante, Moderato, Allegro, Presto)
- Dynamics (pianissimo, piano, mezzo piano, mezzo forte, forte, fortissimo)
- Articulations (staccato, legato, marcato, leggiero, tenuto, sostenuto)

II

## Creating the Sound



**6.**

## **Breathing and Blowing**



## AIR

Air moving through the reed causes the blades of the reed to vibrate; without those vibrations there is no sound. AIR is the essential element for making sound on the bassoon, and breathing is how we manage our air supply so we can blow the steady stream of air needed to play well. That makes breathing and blowing the two most important things we do as bassoon players. The way the air moves through the bassoon affects all elements of the sound. Strong breath support and control of the airstream are fundamental for good response, intonation, and tone.

### KEY POINT #1: Start with an Exhale

Breathing out gets rid of any stale air in your lungs. “Stale air” is air with less oxygen.

1. **Breath Out:** Exhale to get rid of the stale air in your lungs and make room for fresh, oxygenated air.
2. **Relax** your neck, shoulders, and torso.
3. **Inhale** easily while forming the word “how” in the back of your mouth and throat and let your body (belly, sides, back, and ribs) expand naturally as you fill with air.
  - The abdomen (belly) and muscles of the abdominal wall (belly, sides, and back) should expand as you inhale.

- Relax and let this expansion happen naturally.
  - At the end of a complete inhale, the lower part of your chest will expand, and your shoulders may move slightly. Make sure any motion in your shoulders is due to air pressure in the lungs and not tension in the upper torso.
4. **Exhale:** The abdomen and muscles of the abdominal wall will contract inward as you exhale.
- Maintain an upright posture and let your spine support your skeletal structure, upright but relaxed.
  - Do not let your chest or abdominal region collapse onto itself as you exhale.

### Breathing Exercise: Feeling Expansion and Contraction as you Breathe

1. Place your hands on your sides between the bottom of your ribs and the top of your hips.
2. Breathe out until you feel like you don't have any air left to exhale. Can you feel your stomach and sides shrink as you exhale?
3. Breathe in until you feel completely full of air. Can your hands feel the expansion in your sides?

and stomach as you fill with air?

## **KEY POINT #2: Fill up from the bottom to the top.**

Think about filling a glass with water. The water collects at the bottom first and the water level rises as more water enters the glass.

Do the same with your air. Pull the air into the bottom of your lungs and let the air level rise as you continue to inhale.

## **KEY POINT #3: Inhale should be mindful but effortless.**

1. The harder you work to “take a good breath”, the more restricted your body will feel.
2. If breathing makes you stiff or tense, let the air go and start over.
3. **Breathing should be a relaxed, natural activity.**
4. Starting with an exhale will help you relax for a good inhale.
5. Once you develop good breath support and control of your airstream it will become the source of energy and stability in your sound.
6. Let your breath energize your body, mind, and sound.

## KEY POINT #4: Breath Support takes Effort!

**The effort happens after** you draw in the air.

1. Awareness and muscular effort are needed to **pressurize, direct, and maintain the airstream** as you blow air into the bassoon.
  - This muscular effort comes from engaging the lower abdominal muscles.
  - If you feel pressure in your chest and/or throat you are working too hard. Back off until you only feel the engagement in the muscles of your lower abdomen.
2. **Support needs to increase** as you reach the end of your air.
  - When you start blowing after taking a full breath your lungs are full of air and the airstream is naturally pressurized. As you blow, the volume of air in your lungs decreases and the pressure naturally decreases. At this point breath support from your abdominal muscles is needed to

maintain the pressure in the airstream.

3. **Maintain good posture as you exhale** and prepare for another inhale.
  - It is easy to let your upper body collapse along with the lungs as you use up your air. Don't let that happen. Maintaining good posture as you blow (exhale) will make it easier to quickly and completely refill your lungs with your next inhale.

*How to Breathe When Singing: Inhalation* by Ronia Peterson



*One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here:*

<https://lowecc.pressbooks.sunycreate.cloud/?p=31#oembed-1>

This video demonstrates three exercises to increase awareness and control of the muscles involved in breathing:

1. Hand on your belly breathing.
2. Breathing through your fist.

*How to Breathe When You Sing: Exhalation* by Ronia

## Peterson



*One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here:*

<https://lowecc.pressbooks.sunycreate.cloud/?p=31#oembe-d-2>

This video demonstrates two exercises to increase awareness and control as you exhale:

1. Opening the Rib Cage
2. Keeping The Rib Cage Open as You Exhale

## **Breathing Exercises for Health and Wellness**

The next two videos are focus on two helpful breathing techniques. Although they seem simple, they take some time to master. Ideally, you should practice both exercises about 5 to 10 minutes every day.

Out with the old, stale air and in with new fresh air. That's the theme of two useful breathing exercises—pursed lip breathing and belly breathing. Like aerobic exercise improves your heart function and strengthens your muscles, breathing exercises can make your lungs more efficient.

## Pursed Lip Breathing by The American Lung Association



*One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here:*

<https://lowecc.pressbooks.sunycreate.cloud/?p=31#oembed-3>

This exercise reduces the number of breaths you take and keeps your airways open longer. More air is able to flow in and out of your lungs so you can be more physically active. To practice it, simply breathe in through your nose and breathe out at least twice as long through your mouth, with pursed lips.

## Belly Breathing, aka Diaphragmic Breathing by UCLA Health



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<https://lowecc.pressbooks.sunycreate.cloud/?p=31#oembed-4>

Start by breathing in through your nose. Pay attention to how your belly fills up with air. Place one hand on your chest and one hand on your belly and notice which hand

moves as you inhale. Make your exhale longer than your inhale. Be sure to relax your neck and shoulders as you retrain your diaphragm to take on the work of helping to fill and empty your lungs.

## 7.

### Embouchure



*One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here:*

<https://lowecc.pressbooks.sunycreate.cloud/?p=37#oembed-1>

*Embouchure* is the term for the way the lips and the muscles around the mouth form around the reed. The goal of the embouchure is to support the reed with your lips while allowing maximum vibrations in the reed to create a full, resonant tone. I think of my lips giving the reed the perfect hug, not too weak and not too strong.



### Forming the Embouchure

1. Open your mouth.
2. Form an “O” shape with your lips.
3. Place the soaked reed on your bottom lip.
4. Close your lips around the reed forming an “O” around the reed.
5. Give a gentle hug your lips to apply equal pressure around the reed.
6. Hug with the corners of your mouth in addition to your top and bottom lip.

### Features of a Good Embouchure

- Equal pressure around the reed (*O shape*)
- Both lips show a little pink (*perfect hug*)
- Relaxed lower jaw w space between the teeth (*not pushing up on the reed*)

- Open oral cavity (*hot pizza mouth*)

### Jaw Alignment:



The alignment of the upper and lower jaws should be as close to parallel as your natural jaw alignment allows. The top teeth should close just in front of the center of the bottom teeth. An exaggerated overbite (lower jaw pulled back behind upper jaw) or an underbite (bottom teeth in front of top teeth) will create problems for response, intonation, and tone and will need to be addressed and modified.

### Lip Shape & Pressure:

The lips should close around the reed to form an “O” with equal pressure around the reed. This is like the feeling when drinking through a straw, whistling, or blowing

bubbles through a bubble wand. The lips function as a gasket around the reed to make sure the air being expelled goes into the reed. Very little pressure is needed in the lower two octaves. Lip pressure will need to increase for notes just above the bass staff and in the third octave. However, too much pressure from the lips will create problems for response, intonation, and tone.

In addition to steady breath support, a good bassoon embouchure will support the reed to produce:



- A full, resonant tone quality,
- Centered/accurate intonation,
- Easy response in all registers,
- A wide dynamic range.

## Common Embouchure Issues

*“Exaggerated overbite”*



The *exaggerated overbite* has the lower jaw pulled far back or upper jaw pushed far forward. This creates uneven pressure on the blades of the reed (near the back of the top blade and near the tip on the bottom blade). This closes the reed and creates a sound that is small, and sharp. Low notes are difficult with this jaw alignment.

*“Biting” the reed*



This is what we call “biting the reed”. While the teeth aren’t actually touching the reed, the jaws and lips squeeze so hard that the reed can’t vibrate well. This creates a small, pinched tone that is very sharp. Response on low notes is almost impossible with this tight an embouchure.

This problem has the following telltale signs:



- Lips folded in tightly over teeth (no pink showing on bottom lip)
- Excessive pressure from upper and lower jaws
- Closed oral cavity, no space between the teeth

*“Smiling Embouchure”*





This embouchure is similar to the “biting” embouchure. Flexibility is extremely limited; the tone will be small and muffled; and the pitch will be sharp. Due to a lack of flexibility, the response will be difficult in all registers and the dynamic range will be severely limited.

This problem has the following telltale signs

- *corners are pulled up and out*
- *lips are stretched thinly across the teeth*

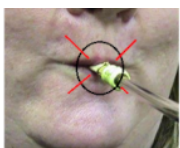
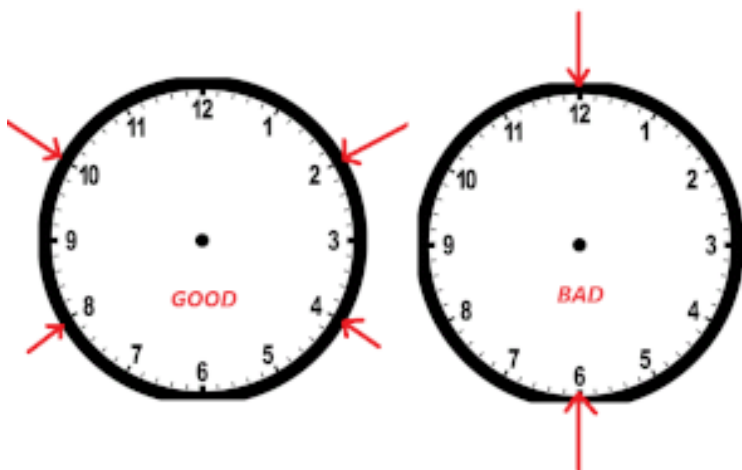
### Helpful Analogies for a Good Embouchure

1. Give the reed a perfect hug with your lips.
2. “Hot pizza mouth” opens the oral cavity by putting space between the back teeth.
3. Milkshake face (form lips like you are drinking a thick milkshake through a straw).
4. Whistle gently (not the hailing a cab whistle).
5. Say the letter “O” and use that shape for your lips and jaws.

## Four Primary Points of Engagement (Pressure)

Visualize an analog clock face. Think of your top lip engaging the reed with pressure directed in toward the center at 10 and 2, and your bottom lip at 8 and 4.

Pressure straight down at 12 and up at 6 will pinch the reed closed and result in a thin, sharp sound and poor response.



*Top: 10 & 2  
Bottom: 8 & 4*



*Top at 12  
Bottom at 6*

**8.**

## **Articulation**





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<https://lowecc.pressbooks.sunycreate.cloud/?p=39#oembed-1>

*Articulation* is the term for the way you start a note, and it *involves the front of the tongue*. There are many types and styles of articulation and articulation plays an important role in creating musical moods and characters.

Your tongue should tap the front of the reed at the beginning of each note as you blow air into the reed. The picture below shows the point of contact between the tongue and the reed. Contact is not tip to tip but is just behind the tip of the tongue touching the front edge of the lower blade.



## Every Articulation Has Two Parts

1. Consonant (T or D and occasionally L)
2. Air

To find the point where your tongue and the reed make contact (the consonant), do this exercise:

1. Say the syllable “too” several times and notice what part of your tongue touches the ridge behind your top teeth. This part will touch the reed.
2. Use the same quick flicking motion with your tongue, say “too” against the tip of the reed.
  1. The “t” comes from your tongue flicking against the reed.
  2. Your tongue will contact the lower blade of the reed just on the underside of the tip.
  3. The “oo” is the stream of air you release (blow) into the reed.

**NOTE:** Articulation without Air will not create sound so be sure you are blowing a steady stream of air into the reed as you articulate at the beginning of each note.

### Choosing a Consonant



The consonant you use will change the sound of the articulation.

- “T” creates a clearly defined articulation that works well in all registers and dynamics *mezzo forte* and louder. “T” is created close to the tip of the tongue.
- “D” creates a less defined, less punctuated articulation that works well in the middle and upper registers and is especially helpful when playing in softer dynamics and for *legato* style. “D” can also work well in the lower register, but it takes the right kind of reed and a good bit of practice. “D” is created a little farther back on the tongue than “t”.

### Establishing Good Articulation Technique

- The tongue should be relaxed, with the back generally low in the mouth and the tip resting lightly just behind the top of the bottom teeth.
- Begin every note with the tongue unless the music says otherwise.
- The tongue must touch the reed for proper articulation. Do not worry. You will not break the reed by tonguing on it.
- Lighter contact with the tongue will create a softer, lighter articulation and heavier/stronger contact with the tongue will create a heavier, more accented articulation.
- Rapid articulation requires the tongue to remain

at the front of the mouth and only a small part of the tongue will move.

## Teaching Tips

Because articulation happens inside of the mouth, it is impossible to see and easy to ignore. Faulty articulation is hard to fix once bad habits have developed.

1. Listen: Notice how the notes begin. Do they begin immediately and seemingly without effort? Or are they delayed, loud, and uncontrolled?
2. Talk: Make sure your students understand what they should be doing to articulate notes.
3. Demonstrate: Model good articulation for your students. It will be easier for them to replicate the sounds if they hear them.
4. Discuss: Ask students to describe what they hear and what they feel is happening.



## 9.

### Voicing

*Voicing* is using different vowel shapes to improve intonation and response. These vowel shapes are created with your tongue in the same manner as when you speak. Voicing is the best way to change the intonation of notes without sacrificing the dynamic or tone quality. While it is easy to make a sound on the bassoon, playing with a full tone and accurate intonation in all registers requires voicing. Voicing includes the full continuum of vowel sounds from the lowest (“aah”) to highest (“eee”) and all possibilities in between. The two most extreme vowel positions bassoonists use are “aah” and “eee.”

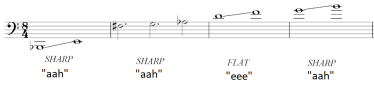
“*Aah*” (as in the word “hot”, back of the tongue is low and oral cavity is fully open). When you have a sore throat, the doctor will ask you to stick out your tongue and say aah. Why do doctors choose this vowel? Because it puts the back of the tongue in its lowest position, resting against the floor of the mouth. This allows the doctor to see your throat. “Aah” is the lowest, most open vowel; the back of the tongue is relaxed against the floor of the mouth and the oral cavity is as open as possible. This vowel lowers the pitch and is the default position for most notes on the bassoon.

“*Eee*” (as in the word “see”, back of the tongue is high and space in oral cavity is small). This vowel places the back of the tongue near the roof of the mouth and decreases the space in the oral cavity. The sides of the tongue will

touch the back teeth in this position. The “eee” vowel raises the pitch without negatively affecting the timbre of the notes.

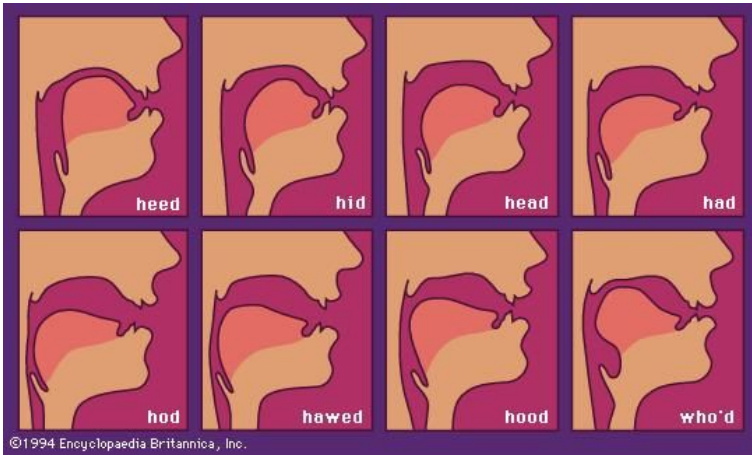
The following chart includes the most problematic parts of the range and the suggested voicing. This chart is intended as a guide to the general pitch tendencies for most bassoons and players. The pitch tendencies for notes not included in the diagram are not as consistent from player to player and are more dependent on individual instruments, reeds, and players.

Experimentation will be needed to find the best voicing. You will need to adjust your voicing according to your own specific tendencies.





Tongue position and shape for eight common vowel sounds.



Encyclopædia Britannica, inc. (2024, March 6). Vowel. Encyclopædia Britannica. <https://www.britannica.com/topic/vowel#/media/1/633094/3598>

Say the word in each square and notice where your tongue is in your mouth. The difference between the syllables/shapes will be in the middle and back part of the tongue, not at the front or tip. This means you can still articulate notes with the front of your tongue while forming any of these shapes to change the intonation.

## Remember:

Lower the back of your tongue to lower the intonation of a note. Choose a shape like “hot”, “putt”, or “awe” if you are sharp.

Raise the back of your tongue to raise the intonation of a

note. Choose a shape like “heed” or “hid” if you are flat. Voicing is a skill that will take time to develop. The vowel shapes presented are widely accepted. However, modifications may be needed based on the equipment (bassoon, reed, bocal) and the player’s physical attributes. You may discover that some of your notes are more in tune when your tongue is not quite as low as possible or as high as suggested. Let your ear and tuner help you find the voicing that creates the best intonation and tone quality for the different registers on your instrument.

**10.**

## **Playing On the Reed**





*One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here:*

<https://lowecc.pressbooks.sunycreate.cloud/?p=42#oembed-1>



1. Soak the reed in room temperature water for 2 minutes.
2. Remove the reed from the water and shake off the excess.
3. Hold the reed with your fingers on the tube covering and the tip opening close to your lips.
4. Take a good breath (exhale-inhale).
5. Form your embouchure around the reed:
  - Open mouth.

- Place about half of the reed's blade inside your mouth and let it rest on your bottom lip.
- Close your mouth and hug the reed with your lips while holding on to the reed tube with your fingers.

6. Blow air into the reed.



You should get a high, kind of squeaky sound. If you don't get a sound, checkout the troubleshooting suggestions below.

## **Troubleshooting**

If you don't get a sound right away check the following things:

1. Try to play louder by blowing MORE AIR into the reed.
2. Is your tongue still touching the reed? The

tongue only touches the reed to start the sound. It should pull slightly back immediately after tapping the reed.

3. Keep space between your teeth; imagine you have a huge marshmallow between your teeth.
4. Articulate with your tongue to start the sound. Some reeds won't vibrate with just an air attack and need contact with the tongue to begin vibrating.
5. Check the reed:
  1. Are the blades dry? **Soak the reed in water** for another minute.
  2. Is the cane swollen from soaking too long? Let the reed dry out a little
  3. Tip Opening of the Reed: Your air must enter the reed. Check the size of the reed's opening at the tip. It needs to be about the thickness of a nickel.
    1. Too Closed: If the tip opening is less than the thickness of a nickel your embouchure might be closing the space between the blades so no air can go into the reed. Try these suggestions:
      - Soften your lips (squeeze less around the reed)
      - Soak the reed

longer.

- [Chapter 89 Reed Adjustments](#) covers how to adjust the tip opening.

2. Too Open: If the tip opening is larger than the thickness of a nickel you'll have to work harder with your lips and your air to get the reed to vibrate.

- Blow a stronger stream of air into the reed.
- Increase the strength of the hug from your lips around the reed.
- [Chapter 89 Reed Adjustments](#) covers how to adjust the tip opening.

## Have Fun Playing the Reed!

Make sound with the reed, experiment with long, short, high, low, loud, and soft sounds.

Now let's play these sounds one at time.

1. Play a loud sound.
2. Play a soft sound.
3. Play a short sound.
4. Play a long sound.
5. Play a long loud sound.
6. Play a long soft sound.
7. Play a long low sound.
8. Play a long high sound.

What did you with your mouth/air/tongue/lips to make these different types of sounds?

What changed between the lowest and highest sound? If you don't know, play #7 and #8 again until you can tell what is changing.

Describe what changes for each item in the list above.

### Developing Control of the Sound

1. Create a steady pulse in your mind.
2. Play four bars of whole notes on the reed.  
Articulate the first beat of each bar.
3. Keep your air stream steady. Do not let it stop until the end of bar 4.
4. Don't worry about what pitch to play on the reed. Just try to keep the sound steady from the note you get when you start.



What do you have to think about and do to keep the sound steady?

## Articulation Practice

1. Create a steady pulse in your mind.
2. Play 15 beats of quarter notes on the reed.  
Articulate every quarter note.
3. Keep your air stream steady and let your tongue create each pulse.
4. Create a low pitch on the reed and maintain that pitch for all 15 beats.

Is the articulation clear or it is muddy?

Is the articulation heavy or light? Difficult or easy?



### **Tips:**

Rely on your AIR to create and maintain the sound. Your tongue should just lightly flick the end of the reed on each beat.

Aim for a clear and immediate response as you articulate each quarter note.

Keep the pitch as steady as possible for the entire exercise.

## Troubleshooting

If some beats end up silent, Blow More Air!

If your tongue gets too heavy and slow: Blow More Air!

If the sound hesitates, make sure the front of your tongue flicks the front of the reed.

Imagine (HEAR) the sound you want BEFORE you play it.



# **11.**

## **Playing with the Reed on the Bocal**





## Pitch

Playing the reed on the bocal should produce a concert middle C.



*One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here:*

<https://lowecc.pressbooks.sunycreate.cloud/?p=44#oembe-d-1>

1. Take your bocal out of the case.
2. Hold your reed at the wrapped end.

3. Center the opening of the reed tube on the hole at the smaller end of the bocal.
4. Gently twist the reed onto the bocal.
5. Play middle C on the piano to get the pitch in your ear.
6. Sing the middle C with the piano.
7. Stop singing but keep hearing the C.
8. Play the reed on the bocal and try to match the middle C.

**Tips:**

If your pitch is LOWER than middle C:

- Make sure to hold the bocal so the cork end is the same height as the reed.
- Blow more and/or faster air.
- Put a little more of the reed blade in your mouth.
- Raise the back of your tongue as if saying “bee”.
- Decrease the amount of space between your teeth.
- Increase the hug with your lips while keeping some space between your teeth.

If your pitch is HIGHER than middle C:

- Make sure to hold the bocal so the cork end is the same height as the reed.
- Maintain adequate air flow for a full sound.

- Increase the amount of space between your teeth.
- Lower the back of the tongue as if saying “aaah”
- Increase space in the oral cavity as if you just took a bite of very hot pizza. (“Hot pizza mouth”)



[tuningdrones.com](http://tuningdrones.com)

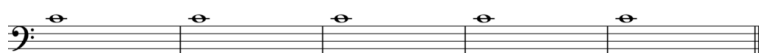
Practice matching pitch on these whole notes with a drone on C

### Sustained Whole Notes

This exercise addresses sustaining notes at the same pitch level.

1. Create your aural target. (Listen to the first bar of the drone to get your ears tuned to the pitch you’re aiming to match.)
2. Exhale on beats 1-2.
3. Inhale on beats 3-4.
4. Articulate beat one of each bar.
5. Sustain a supported air stream for 16 beats.
6. See **Tips** above for reminders of what to adjust if your pitch is higher than or lower than the drone.

Listen                      Play - - - - -



## Things to Notice

As you play the sustained C whole notes, pay attention to the following:

- Is your pitch staying steady? If not, how does it change?
- Does the pitch change when you articulate? If yes,
  - Move only the front of your tongue and move it as little as possible.
  - Maintain air & breath support, especially at the end of each bar.
  - Is the back of your tongue moving/ changing? If yes, work to move only the tip of your tongue when articulating.
- Does the space in your oral cavity (inside your mouth) change as you sustain each note?
- Does the pressure from your lips change as you sustain each note?

## Rhythms

This exercise adds more articulation.

1. Create your aural target. (Listen to the first bar

of the drone to get your ears tuned to the pitch you're aiming to match.)

2. Exhale on beats 1-2.
3. Inhale on beats 3-4.
4. Articulate the rhythm pattern while keeping your air steady.
5. Sustain a supported air stream for 16 beats.
6. See **Tips** above for reminders of what to adjust if your pitch is higher than or lower than the drone.

Listen      Play - - - - -

Focus on matching pitch with the drone the first time through the exercise.

On the repeat, keep listening to the drone but shift your primary focus to clarity and accuracy of your articulation.

If the articulation is fuzzy or muddy sounding:

- Move your point of contact closer to the tip of your tongue.
- Flick the reed with a quicker motion.
- Make sure your tongue is contacting the reed (not the roof of your mouth).
- Blow a constant and supported air stream.

## Improvise

Play rhythms on the reed and vocal while paying attention to intonation and clarity of articulation.

## 12.

### Dynamics

**Always** play with your **best breath support**, regardless of the dynamic.

- Using your best breath support will help keep the tone and intonation stable.
- Dynamics do not change your breath support.
- Dynamics are created by the volume of air *released into the bassoon*.
- Loud comes from more air and soft comes from less air being released, but both require full breath support.
- The loudest dynamics require a slight relaxing of embouchure to allow reed to vibrate as much as possible.
- Soft can be helped by a slight firming of the embouchure to mute the vibrations and close the tip opening.
- Changes in volume of air and embouchure affect intonation. Adjust voicing to compensate.

Playing long tones is the best way to develop control over these elements and parameters.

- Choose a note that is comfortable for you. Play with a drone to highlight pitch tendencies at various dynamics and in all registers.
- Sustain dynamic for 16 beats.
- Crescendo for 8 beats, Decrescendo for 8 beats.
- Decrescendo 8 beats, Crescendo 8 beats.
- Crescendo 16 beats
- Decrescendo 16 beats.

Choose different notes for your long tone practice each day and gradually add long tones on some of your less comfortable notes.

III

# THE BASSOON



**13.**

## **Bassoon Joints**



This chapter includes labeled images of each of the four joints of the bassoon. Areas needing special attention during assembly and disassembly are pointed out on each joint.

LONG joint

WING joint

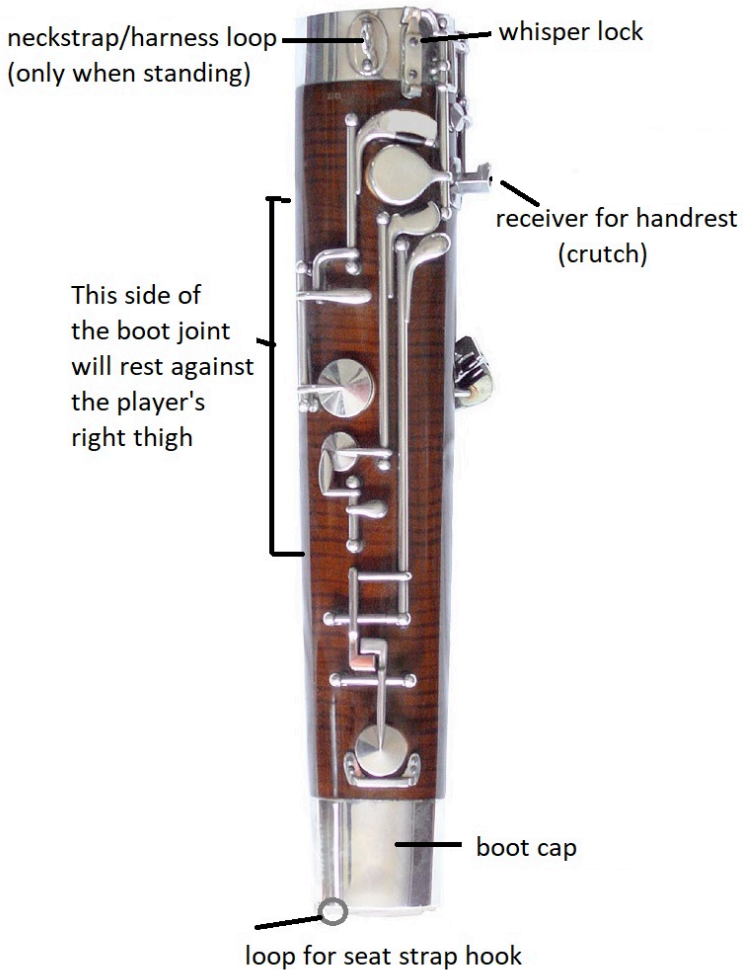
BELL

BOOT joint



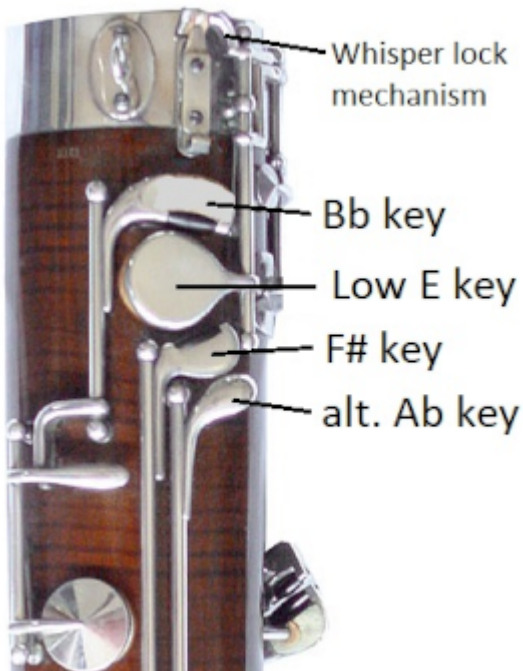
## THE BOOT JOINT

The right hand operates the holes and keys on the boot joint.



## Back View (Boot Joint)

There are four keys on the back of the boot joint (the side that faces you). These keys are operated by the right-hand thumb.

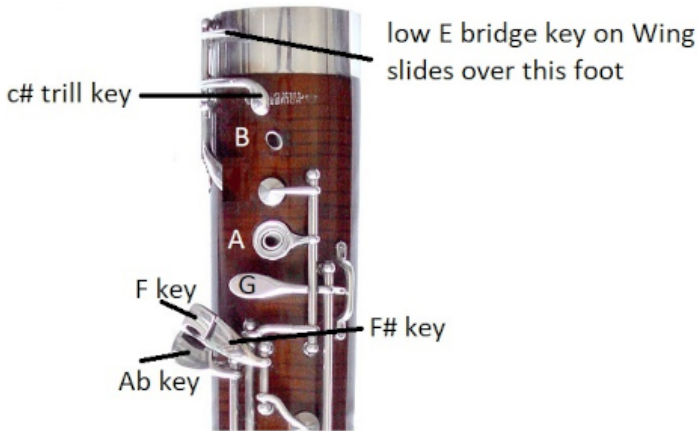


### Things to know:

- The low E key is primarily used when playing notes below the staff.
- This b-flat key is used for all b-flats in and above the bass staff.
- This f-sharp key is part of the standard fingering for low and middle f-sharp.

- This a-flat key is a minimally used alternate option for playing low and middle a-flat. Some bassoons do not have this key.

### Front View (Boot Joint)



### Things to know:

- There are two open tone holes and five keys on the front (the side that faces away from the player).
- The B tone hole is covered by the index finger.
- The A tone hole is covered by the middle finger.
- The G key is operated by the ring finger.
- The cluster of three keys at the bottom are operated by the pinky.

**NOTE:** On some bassoons there is an additional key between the A tone hole and the G key. It is a b-flat

trill key, but in my 40-year career I have never used it. **BEWARE** the tendency to use this key as a standard fingering for b-flat. Good bassoon technique depends on developing agile and accurate use of **both** thumbs.



## The WING JOINT

The wing joint needs to be handled with careful attention paid to the whisper-key pad (at the top), the whisper/low E bridge key at the bottom, the long, unsupported rods along the sides, and the tenon at the bottom end of the joint. These parts are especially prone to damage from careless handling when putting the instrument together and taking it apart.



**TAKE CARE:**

- Avoid putting pressure on the rods.
- The metal rod extending beneath the wing joint's body is a component of the whisper/low E bridge key. Due to its position, it is susceptible to bending. If this key is bent, the lower notes may not play correctly. Ensure that the bridge key avoids contact with other keys, rods, or posts on the top of the boot joint during the wing's insertion into the boot.

- The whisper-key pad is designed to cover the bocal vent located on the nub near the bocal's base when the whisper key is engaged. It is important to avoid contact between the bocal's nub and the whisper-key pad while inserting the bocal into the wing joint. The replacement of this pad is a frequent necessity in bassoon maintenance.
- The wing tenon, a component of the wing joint, is designed to fit into the upper section of the boot joint. Due to its thin walls, the tenon is quite delicate. To insert the wing joint properly, ensure the tenon aligns directly with the opening at the top of the boot joint. While a metal tenon cap offers additional protection, careful handling is still necessary.

### Back View (Wing Joint)

The left thumb operates the keys on the back of the wing joint.



### Things to know:

- The whisper key is used when playing notes on and below the bass staff.
- The thumb c-sharp key is used when playing c-sharp in or just above the bass staff.
- The high A key is used for the A-natural at the top line of the bass staff as well as some higher notes.
- The high C key is used for the C between the bass and treble staff as well as some higher notes.
- The high D key is used for the D just above the bass staff and some higher notes.

The left thumb does a good bit of hopping around from key to key. For this reason, it is especially important to support the weight of the bassoon with the seat strap. The boot joint of the bassoon should also rest securely against the right thigh. The base of the left index finger should rest against the long joint to act as a point of balance for the upper part of the bassoon. There should be little, if any, weight on this balance point.

### Front View (Wing Joint)

The fingers of the left hand operate the holes and keys on the front of the wing joint.

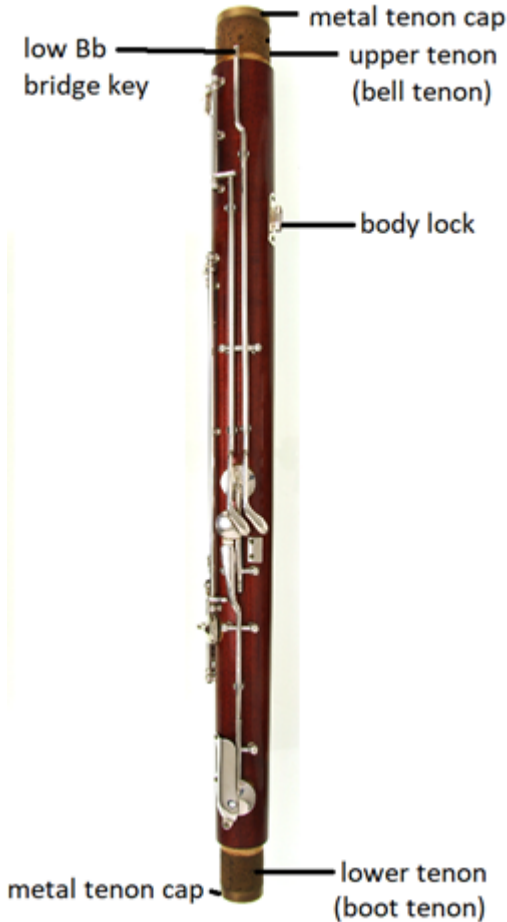


### **Things to know:**

- The left index finger operates the G trill key (or high E key). Student model bassoons will not have this key.
- The left index finger covers the E tone hole.
- The left middle finger covers the D tone hole.
- The left ring finger covers the C tone hole. On “short reach” models this hole will have a key over the hole instead of an open tone hole. This decreases the stretch required between the left thumb and left ring finger and allows people with smaller hands to play the bassoon.

## **THE LONG JOINT**

The long joint is easier to manage because there are fewer keys. However, care should still be taken during assembly and disassembly. The tenons at the top and bottom, the low Bb bridge key, and the body lock need special attention.



**TAKE CARE:**

- The long joint has two tenons, one at the top which goes into the bell, and one at the bottom which gets inserted into the top of the boot joint. The walls of the tenons are thinner than the body of the long joint and this makes them especially fragile. Be sure to keep the long joint parallel to the wing joint when inserting this tenon into the boot so that it goes straight in

rather than from an angle.

- Bassoon tenons are covered in either cork or string. If the joints become difficult to put together or take apart the tenons will need lubrication. Apply a small amount of cork grease or Vaseline on cork tenons but not string tenons. String tenons need to be lubricated with a thin layer of wax because petroleum products will rot the string.

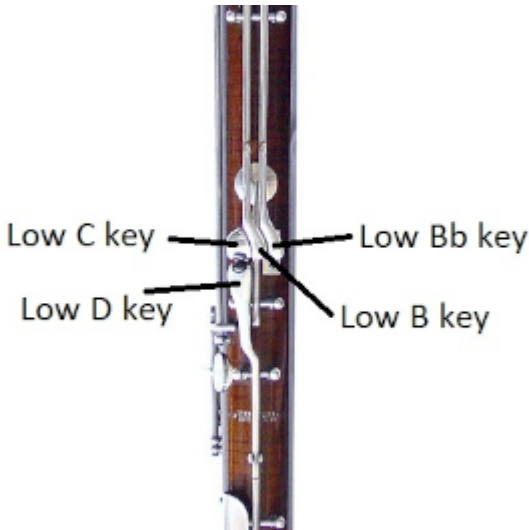
**TIP:** When lubricating the tenons, wipe off any old grease or wax before applying a new coat. If the grease or wax builds up on the tenon, it will bind the joint rather than lubricate it.

- The long joint pictured above has a protective metal cap on each of the tenons. This is extremely helpful. Unfortunately, these protective caps are not a standard feature on many bassoons.
- The low Bb bridge key extends a little above the body of the long joint. The other half of this bridge key is on the bell joint. Be sure to align the two halves carefully when sliding the bell joint onto the bell tenon so that the two halves don't bang against each other.
- The body lock locks the long and wing joints together and prevents them from separating when playing in the low register. The screws that attach the lock hardware to the wall of the long joint can be easily stripped out because they are extremely small. When taking the bassoon apart, be sure to disengage the body

lock between the long and wing joints before attempting to take the long joint out of the boot joint. Do not engage the body lock when putting the bassoon in its case unless the case offers enough blocking and padding to prevent the joints from shifting in the case during transit because shifting joints are likely to tear the screws out of the wood. If you do lock the joints together when they are in the case, be sure to disengage the lock before removing the wing or long joint from the case prior to assembling the bassoon.

### Back View (Long joint)

The keys on the back of the long joint are operated by the left thumb.



### **Things to know:**

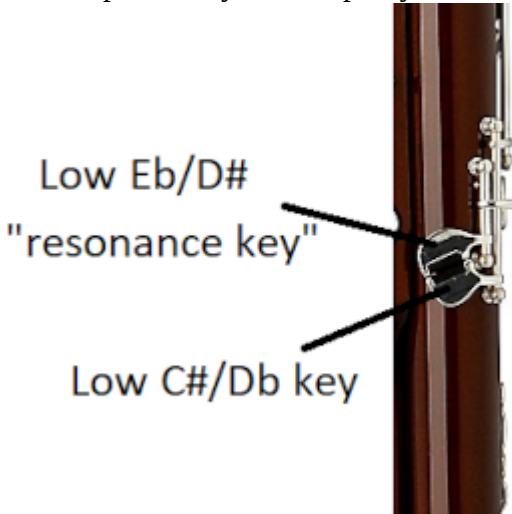
- The low D key is pressed to create D below the bass staff.
- The low D and C keys are pressed to create C below the bass staff.
- The low D, C, and B keys are pressed to create B below the bass staff.
- The low D, C, B, and Bb keys are pressed to create Bb below the bass staff.

### **Keys labeled “low” are used when playing notes below the bass staff.**

- There are two b-flat keys (b-flat on the back of the boot joint, and low b-flat on the back of the long joint). They are not interchangeable.
- There are two c-sharp keys (thumb c-sharp on the back of the wing joint, and pinky c-sharp on the front of the long joint). They are not interchangeable.
- There is a D open tone hole on the front of the wing joint and a low D key on the back of the long joint. They are not interchangeable.
- There is an E open tone hole on the front of the wing joint and a low E key on the back of the boot joint. They are not interchangeable.

## Front View (Long joint)

There are two keys on the front of the long joint, and they are both operated by the left pinky.



### Things to know:

The upper pinky key serves two functions.

1. It is pressed to create low E-flat/D-sharp below the bass staff.
2. It is also used to improve tone (increase resonance) and intonation for specific notes that tend to be stuffy and/or sharp.

The lower pinky key is pressed to create low C-sharp/D-flat below the bass staff.

## THE BELL

The bell of the bassoon extends the bore to create the lowest note on the instrument which is Bb below the bass staff. The sole key on the bell is operated by pressing the low Bb key on the long joint.



**TAKE CARE:**

The low Bb bridge key on the bell will overlap with the low Bb bridge key on the long joint when the bell is added to the long joint. Be sure to hold the low Bb key cup on the bell down to raise the bridge key and allow it to slide over the top of the bridge key on the long joint.

**14.**

## **Bocals and Seat Straps**



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## THE BOCAL

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The bocal is a thin metal tube that connects the reed and the bassoon. There are many brands and models, each with unique properties. The standard bocal that comes with the bassoon will be fine for the beginner to intermediate bassoonist. However, an advanced player will want to try different bocals with their bassoon to find the one that is the best match to facilitate the best response, intonation, and tone quality.



### Take Care:

Other than the reed, the bocal is the most fragile part of the bassoon. It is a single thin piece of metal that has been forged into what looks like a seamless tube. However, stress or pressure at the wrong place will cause the seam to open, rendering the bocal useless. This long tube of thin metal is also easily bent or dented, and any dings or dents

will negatively affect response, pitch, and tone. Bocals are expensive so handle them with great care.

**CAUTION:** Never try to alter the bend of a bocal! The seam will split open, and you will end up with an expensive piece of trash.

### Things to know:

- Always hold the bocal as close to the cork as possible, NOT at the tip where the reed fits.
- The cork needs to be secure and in good shape. A loose cork will tear, and any missing pieces of cork will create a leak. Any leak will make response, intonation, and tone challenging if not impossible.
- The bocal needs to be free of dents and creases. As with leaks, any dent or crease can make playing with good response, intonation, and tone difficult.
- The shape of the bocal plays a role in determining the angle at which the reed enters the mouth. If the bocal has a very steep downward slant from the curved part to the tip, the player will need to rest the boot closer to the hip than the knee to minimize the downward angle of the reed as it enters the mouth.
- Avoid putting the tip end of the bocal into the wing joint. It can scratch the bore of the wing joint and/or bend the bocal.



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<https://lowecc.pressbooks.sunycreate.cloud/?p=65#oembed-1>

## THE SEAT STRAP



*One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here:*

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The seat strap supports the weight of the instrument, allowing the hands and fingers to move without having to support the weight of the bassoon. There are several different styles of seat strap, and the three most common styles are described below.



*Clip style seat strap*

Simple leather strap with a closed clip on one end. The strap must be moved to raise and lower the height of the bassoon.



*adjustable clip-style  
seat strap*

Adjustable leather strap. The adjustment mechanism allows the player to sit still while adjusting the height of the bassoon.



*Cup-style seat strap*

Leather strap with an adjustable cup at one end. The strap must be moved to raise and lower the height of the bassoon.

The first two straps pictured above have a hook that will connect through a metal ring or feed through a hole at the bottom of the boot joint.

*Clip-style  
seat straps*



*attach here*



With a cup-style strap, the boot cap at the bottom of the boot joint will sit inside of the adjustable leather cup.

*Cup-style  
Seat strap*



*slides  
over the boot cap*



**\*TIP:** If using a clip-style strap, feed a sturdy keyring through the hole or loop on the bottom of the boot cap. This will make

the point of connection between the strap and the boot joint more flexible.



### Things to know about the seat strap:

1. The seat strap should be the first thing taken out of the case and put on the chair. This will keep the player from having to juggle the assembled bassoon while putting the seat strap in place.
2. Place the seat strap on the chair with the hook or cup hanging off the right side of the chair (close to where the player's right knee will be when seated).
3. The height of the bassoon – where the reed comes to when the bassoon is in playing position and the reed is on the bocal – is adjusted by increasing or decreasing the amount of seat strap that extends beyond the right side of the player.
  - If the bassoon is too low (if the reed comes to a place below your lips), move the seat strap to the left by

pulling on the left-side end of the strap.

- If the bassoon is too high (if the reed comes to a place above your lips), move more of the strap to the right by carefully shifting your weight off of the strap and letting it slide to your right.
  - The strap needs to be long enough to hang off the left side of the chair, within easy reach of the player's left hand.
4. Proper positioning of the seat strap will allow the player to hold the instrument in a balanced, comfortable position.
  5. Improper positioning of the seat strap will make the bassoon difficult to hold and may prevent lower keys on the boot joint from operating correctly.

**15.**

## **Putting the Bassoon Together**



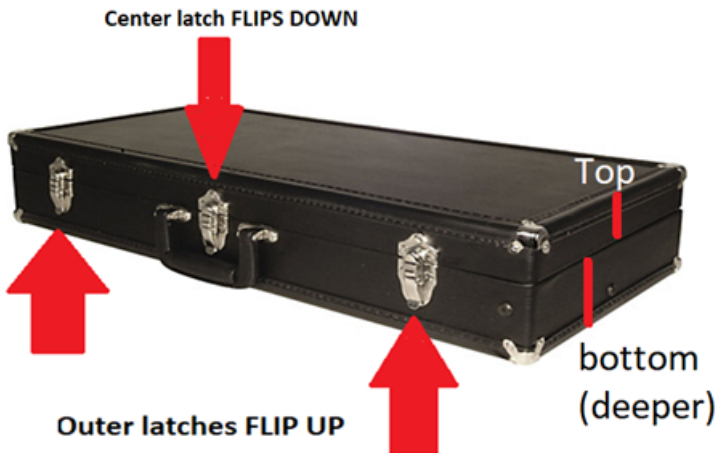


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## Written Instructions

1. Put the case on the floor in front of you and make sure the case is right side up.
2. The bottom section of the bassoon case is deeper or thicker than the top.
3. Make sure the two outer latches flip UP (if they flip down the case is upside down).



4. Take out the seat strap and place it diagonally across

the chair with the hook or cup near the right-side front edge.



5. With your left hand, pick up the boot joint. There are two holes on the top of the boot joint. Hold the boot so the larger hole is on the left and the smaller hole is on the right. Rest the bottom of the boot joint on the chair between your legs.



6. With your right hand, pick up the wing joint and hold it so the tenon is at the bottom and whisper pad is at the top. The tone holes will face

away from your body. The bridge key should be at bottom right of joint and the concave curve is at the lower left.

7. Insert the tenon of the wing joint into the smaller of the two holes at the top of the boot joint.

8. Align wing joint so that the concave edge forms a concentric circle with the hole for the long joint.



9. While supporting the boot with your left hand, lower the boot-wing assembly to the floor.

10. Hold the boot-wing assembly with your right hand and pick up the long joint with your left hand. Hold the long joint with the larger tenon at the top, the thumb keys facing you, and the pinky keys facing away from you on the left.

11. Place the right-side convex curve of the long joint against the concave curve of the wing joint and slide the long joint down into the hole in the boot joint.

12. Engage the body lock between the wing and

long joints. The body lock keeps the two joints in proper alignment with each other.



12. Hold the partially assembled bassoon with your right hand and pick up the bell with your left hand so that the bell ring is at the top.

13. Hold down the low Bb key cup down with

your left thumb and slide the bell onto the tenon at the top of the long joint.

14. Hold the long joint of the bassoon with your left hand and pick up the bocal with your right hand.

15. Be mindful of the small protrusion located just above the cork. Ensure that it does not catch on the whisper-key pad when inserting the bocal.

16. Hold the bocal as near the cork as possible and slide it into the receiving hole at the top of the wing joint.

17. Align the bocal so that the hole in the nub can be closed by the whisper-key pad.

18. While holding the boot joint in your right hand and the wing/long joints in your left hand lift the bassoon to rest on your right thigh.

19. Attach the seat strap to the bottom of the boot joint cap and lower the boot joint down until the strap supports the weight of the bassoon.

## **Things to know**

When the bassoon is assembled properly:

- The seat strap hook/cup/ring is on the player's right side.
- The bocal should point toward the face of the player.
- The tone holes on the wing and boot will face away from the player.
- The thumb keys on the long, wing, and

boot will face the player.

**16.**

## **Taking the Bassoon Apart**





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## Written instructions

The bassoon is disassembled in reverse of the order of assembly.



1. Remove the reed and place it in a safe location (reed case preferred).

2. Make sure the whisper-key pad is **not resting against** the nub on the bocal. Remove the bocal taking care to avoid contact between the nub and whisper-key pad. Shake out any water. Place in the bassoon case.
3. Holding the wing and long joints securely with your left hand, use your right hand to detach the seat strap. Use your right hand to hold the boot joint and carefully lower the bassoon to the floor.
4. Remove the bell joint from the long joint by using a small back and forth twisting motion while taking care to avoid contact between the two halves of the low Bb bridge key. Place the bell in the bassoon case.
5. Unlatch the body lock that holds the long and wing joints together.
6. Place your left hand around the top of the long joint and your right hand at the top of the boot joint. Use a small twisting motion by turning your hands in opposite directions (left clockwise, right counterclockwise) until the long joint tenon comes out of the boot joint. Place the long joint in the bassoon case.
7. Support the boot joint with your left hand and lift the boot/wing assembly so the bottom of the boot joint rests on the chair between your left.
8. Place your left hand on the left side of the boot joint and gently wrap your right hand around the wing joint. Use small twisting motions to pull the wing tenon out of the boot joint.

9. Place the wing joint temporarily in the case while you swab the boot joint.
10. **Swab the boot joint.** (See [Chapter 17: Swabbing](#) for instructions)
11. Once the boot joint has been swabbed, put it in the bassoon case.
12. **Swab the wing joint** and put it in the bassoon case.
13. Remove the seat strap from the chair and put it in the case.
14. Put the reed case in the proper location in the bassoon case.

### **TAKE CARE:**

Be sensitive to any resistance when closing the bassoon case. Resistance means something is not in the right place or is not sufficiently snugged into its spot. Forcing the lid to close will damage the instrument if something is sticking up out of place.

### **NOTE:**

**Make certain the lid of the case is secured (latched or zipped)** before picking up the case. If the case is accidentally lifted before the lid has been secured, parts of the bassoon will fall out of the case and become damaged.



**17.**

## **Swabbing the Boot and Wing Joints**



## The Purpose of Swabbing

The bassoon needs to be swabbed after every time it is played.

The purpose of swabbing is to dry out the inside of an instrument. The bassoon needs to be swabbed after every time it is played. In addition to drying out the bore (the hollow tube that runs down the center of the instrument), swabbing protects the pads from damage from staying wet. A fabric pull-through bassoon swab is the kind I recommend.

## Swabbing the Boot and Wing Joints

The boot joint and the wing joint are the only two joints that need to be swabbed. Water should never reach the long joint or the bell, so they don't need to be swabbed.

### Swabs

Use a cloth drop swab made especially for the bassoon.

**NEVER USE** those fuzzy stick swabs that look like saxophone swabs. They only add lint and crud to the bore. Throw them away!



\*Some older bassoons might have a stick swab that is covered with cloth. These will work for the boot joint but not the wing joint. The drop-type swabs do a more thorough job of drying the bore.

### Swab Sizes:

**One Size Fits All:** The Hodge Silk Bassoon Swab can be used in both the boot joint and the wing joint. It is made of just the right size piece of silk fabric that crushes easily so it can easily slide through the wing joint. You can also flatten this silk swab out a bit and it will be large enough to use in the boot joint. This swab has a string attached to a piece of chain (no weight or brass ball) so it can go through the wing and the boot.



Or you can use a set of two swabs, each specific to a particular joint.

**Wing joint swab** (cotton, microfiber, or silk) These usually have a 1-inch fabric-covered weight at the end of the string.



*Wing Joint Swab*

**Boot joint swab** (cotton, microfiber, or silk). The best ones have a length of chain attached to the end of the string for easy passage through the u-bend of the boot.





***Boot Joint Swab***

**I prefer option #1 (one size fits all) for students and schools** because you don't have to worry about getting the boot swab stuck in the wing. The silk compresses to allow easy passage through the wing and expands to adequately clean the boot. Silk swabs can easily be hand-washed with soap and warm water and will dry quickly.

### **How to Swab:**



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To Swab the Boot:

1. Check the full length of the swab for knots and remove any you find.
2. Hold the boot with the bore holes facing up and the open holes facing you.
3. Feed the string of the boot joint swab into the LARGE bore hole (the one for the long joint – it is unlined).
4. Feed in as much of the string and swab as possible.
5. Tilt the boot joint to the left and shake while turning the boot so that the cap faces up. Keep the open holes facing you as you turn the boot. (You are guiding the swab down the large hole and around the u-bend so that it will come out the other side of the boot.
6. The swab should come out the small hole at the top of the boot joint once the bore holes are facing down and the cap is facing up. If not – shake the bassoon gently until the end of the swab comes through. If shaking doesn't work, or if the swab falls out the large hole – start over and try again.
7. **Repeat 2 or 3 times.**

#### To Swab the Wing:

1. Check the full length of the swab to make sure there are **NO KNOTS** in the string or the fabric. Remove any knots that you find **BEFORE** putting the swab into the wing joint or it will get stuck.

2. Hold the wing joint upside down (with the tenon end up) and feed the weighted end of the string into the wing joint tenon until it comes out the other end (down by the whisper-key pad).
3. Catch the weighted string or chain at the whisper-key pad end of the wing and pull it through the wing joint until the complete swab has passed through the wing joint.
4. **Repeat** two or three times until the bore is dry. You can check the bore by holding it up to a light source and looking through the bore in the direction of the light.

**STOP immediately if you feel resistance!** Continuing to pull in the same direction will only make the problem worse.

**Instead,** grasp the tail of the fabric and pull in the opposite direction so the swab comes out the same end where it entered the wing joint.



**18.**

## **Getting Rid of Water in the Instrument During Rehearsal/Performance**



Water in the bassoon makes a popping sound, kind of like popcorn. Water in a tone hole can result in a gurgling sound and distorted pitch. There are a few ways to get rid of this water.

1. Suck water out through the reed just like a clarinet or saxophone player. Do this when you only have a few beats of rest.
2. Remove the reed and blow forcefully into the bocal while it is still in the instrument. Do this if you have at least a few bars of rests.
3. Remove the bocal and blow out the water in it. Be sure to point the other end of the bocal at the floor. Do this if you have several bars of rests.
4. Blow into the open tone hole where the gurgle is to force the water back into the bore. The location of the gurgle will determine how quickly you can do this.
5. Take the bassoon apart and swab the wing and boot joints.



## IV

# HOLDING THE BASSOON



**19.**

## **Bassoon Posture**





*One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here:*

<https://lowecc.pressbooks.sunycreate.cloud/?p=92#oembed-1>

Healthy posture and proper support of the instrument are crucial fundamental elements for any musician. The size and weight of the bassoon make posture and support especially important.

1. Healthy posture will allow the bassoonist to breath and play for several hours without fatigue.
2. Proper support of the bassoon will allow the player to hold the instrument with a balanced, efficient, and comfortable posture, and it will facilitate good hand position.
3. Good hand position will allow coordinated, flexible, and efficient finger motion.

**TIP:** Practicing in front of a full-length mirror will help you see your posture, how you are holding the bassoon, and your hand position.



---

## Bring the bassoon To You!

Find a comfortable, healthy sitting posture and then *bring the bassoon to you*. Avoid contorting your body to fit the bassoon. The seat strap and bocal should provide enough flexibility to help you maintain a comfortable and healthy posture when playing.

### Sitting Posture

- Start by sitting with your bottom as far back on the seat of the chair as is possible.
- Keep your head/chin level.
- Place the soles of your feet (or shoes) flat on the

floor with your weight distributed evenly between them. Your feet need to act as a point of balance. If your feet don't reach the floor when you sit at the back of the chair, place a board or your instrument case under your feet.

- Your torso should be upright and balanced over your hips as though you are getting ready to stand up quickly.
- Your shoulders should be relaxed (down and back), and your arms should hang loosely from your shoulders.
- Your hands should be relaxed with softly curved fingers.

### **Centered & Balanced**

- Weight centered over your sitting bones
- Balanced (no leaning left, right, forward, or backward)

### **Upright & Relaxed**

- Upright as though you were suspended by a string coming out of the crown of your head
- Relaxed; not stiff or rigid; let your spine support your arms, shoulders, head, and neck

### **Ready to stand**

- Both feet flat on the floor a little in front of your knees
- Weight balanced over your hips near the back of

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the chair

## Holding the bassoon: Position Relative to the Player's Body

- The lowest section of the bassoon rests on the right side of the body and the boot joint rests on the right thigh.
- The bassoon leans diagonally across the body so that the bell joint points to the left of the player. The diagonal tilt should be only enough to bring the whisper key to the center of the player's body. Increasing the tilt angle will increase the weight supported by the left hand and can cause cramping in the left hand and wrist.
- Adjust placement of the boot on the right thigh – between the knee and the hip – so the reed enters straight into the mouth when the player's chin is level.
- Position your music stand and music so you can read it looking to the right of the bassoon (over the bocal). You can limit the amount of body motion required to see a full page of music by sitting farther back from the music stand.

**NOTE:** Avoid contorting your body to reach the bassoon.  
**Bring the bassoon to you!**

## Reed/Bocal Position

- Once the bassoon is fully assembled – with the

bocal and reed inserted, the reed needs to come to the center of the lips.

- Bring the bassoon up to the level of your lips by pulling the seat strap to your left.
- Lower the bassoon down to the level of your lips by letting the seat strap slide to your right.
- Keep your chin level (no ducking or craning your neck to reach the reed).
- Keep your head centered over your spine (avoid tilting left or right, forward or backward).
- The position of the reed and the bocal can be changed.
  - The bocal can be moved left or right so that it comes to you. Hold the bocal just above the nub and twist gently. If the bocal doesn't want to move, use a small amount of cork grease to lubricate the cork.
  - Twist the reed on the bocal so the blades are level (left to right) entering your mouth.



*One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here:*

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[d-2](#)



**20.**

## **Supporting the Bassoon**





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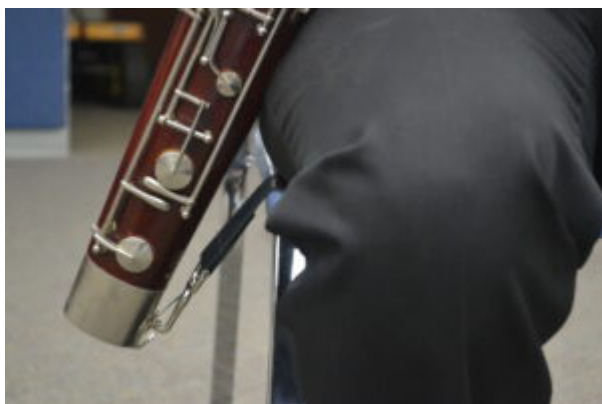
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## Three places of support

1. The seat strap
2. The right thigh
3. Base of the left index finger

## The Seat Strap

1. The seat strap holds most of the weight of the bassoon.
2. The strap rests directly on the chair with the plain end on the left and the hook, ring, or cup on the right. The seat strap is doing its job when there is no slack in the strap between the chair and the point of connection on the boot joint. Slack in the seat strap means the player is holding the bassoon up instead of letting the weight rest on the seat strap.



## The Right Thigh

- The right thigh supports the remaining weight of

the bassoon.

- The side of the boot joint without any keys should rest securely on/against the right thigh.
- Follow these steps to determine where the boot should contact your thigh:
  - Allow your right arm to hang down by your side.
  - Bend your elbow until your forearm is parallel to your thigh.
  - Ideally, the boot joint should fit in the palm of your right hand without having to reach forward or pull your arm back toward the back of the chair.
  - This position will allow the right shoulder, arm, hand, and fingers to remain relaxed.

**NOTE:** It is crucial for the boot to rest on the right thigh. Petite-sized players will need to sit more toward the right edge of the chair or angle the chair to create this point of contact.

If the boot joint rests again the edge of the chair instead of the player's right thigh, it will not be stable in the player's hands.

This ideal position for the boot on the thigh may need a little adapting due to:

- The angle of the bocal – the bocal needs to be in a level plane for good intonation. A downward angle will make the pitch flat; an upward slant will make the pitch sharp. The boot should rest

on the thigh where it allows the reed to enter straight into the mouth.

- The body proportions of the player – if the player has a very long torso, legs, and/or arms an adjustment may be needed.



Resting the boot close to my knee gives me the best posture. Notice the following:

- a) Chin is level and the reed enters straight into the mouth,
- b) Upper torso, arms, and hands are relaxed,
- c) The boot and bell are in the same diagonal plane (not leaning forward or backward) which limits weight in left hand.

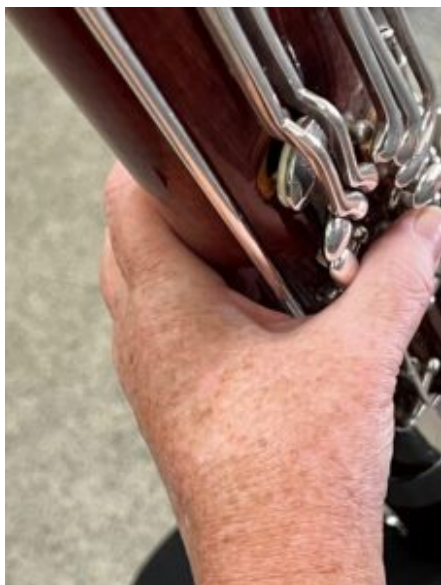


Resting the boot near my hip creates several issues for my posture:

- a) Bocal and reed have an upward angle which lowers the pitch,
- b) Tension in the upper torso and my left shoulder and arm,
- c) Forward lean of the bassoon increases the weight in my left hand.

## The Base of Left Index Finger

- The base of the left index finger provides the third point of contact to balance and support the bassoon.
- This point of contact between the long joint and the left index finger should anchor the left hand to facilitate finger technique.
- Fourth line F is a good note for checking this point of support because all four fingers of the left hand are up while the left thumb presses the whisper key.





The degree of the diagonal tilt across the body will either increase or decrease the weight supported by the base of the left index finger.

**Good:**

- Keeping the bassoon in a single vertical plane will minimize the weight on the left hand.
- Minimizing the diagonal tilt to the left will minimize the weight in the left hand.

**Not good:**

- Weight on the left hand will increase as the tilt to the left increases.
- Weight on the left hand will increase if the bassoon is allowed to tilt forward, away from the player.
- Holding the bassoon to the right side of the body

so that it is straight up and down (no diagonal tilt) will eliminate the second and third points of support and will force the player to twist the body and head to the right.

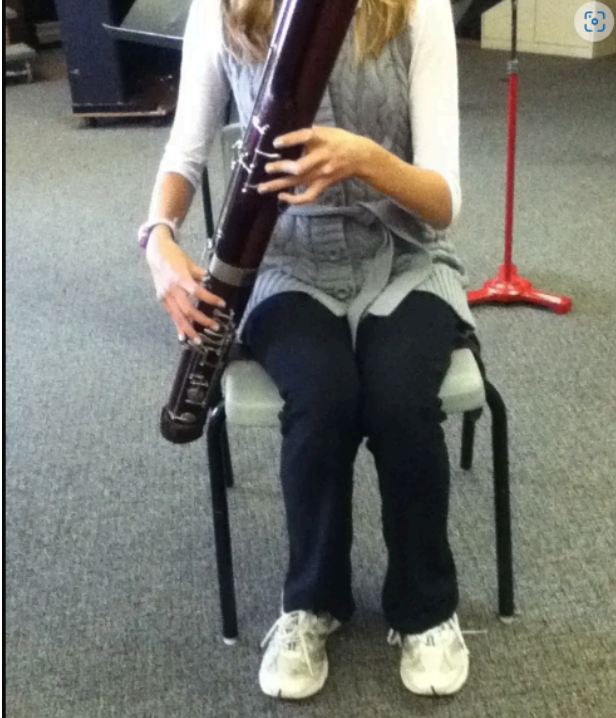
## Recognizing Bad Posture



**Problem:** Both bassoonists have the boot resting back by their hip which is making it lean forward, increasing the weight on the left hand. **Solution:** Move the seat strap closer to the front of the chair and rest the boot closer to their knee.

**Problem:** The bassoonist in the foreground is lowering his chin to reach the reed. **Solution:** Raise the bassoon by pulling the seat strap to the left.

**Problem:** The other bassoonist is tilting his head and body to the left. **Solution:** Adjust the angle of the reed on the bocal.



**Problem:** The bassoon is resting against the chair instead of on the right thigh. **Solution:** Sit along the right side of the chair.



## 21.

### Hand Position

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#### The Ideal Hand Position

- Relaxed fingers, softly curved over the keys and tone-holes
- Pads of fingers cover the holes
- Use pad near tip of left thumb (avoid hitchhiker's thumb)
- Pinkies and thumbs should be curved and have relaxed mobility

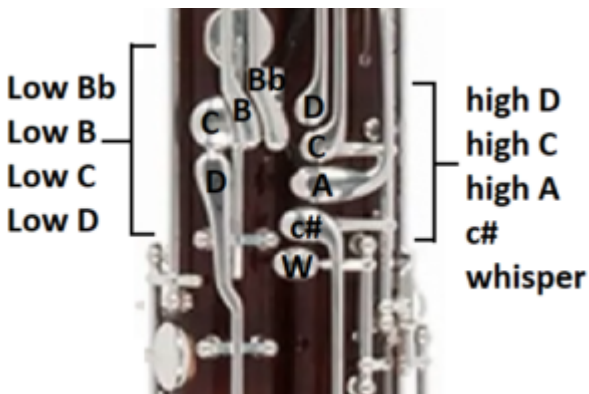
**Note:** If you have small hands, refer to chapter 4 for information about short reach model bassoons.





## Left-Hand Thumb Keys

There are four keys on the back (the side the player can see while playing) of the long joint and four or five keys on the back of the wing joint. All of these keys are operated by the left thumb, but thankfully not all at once.



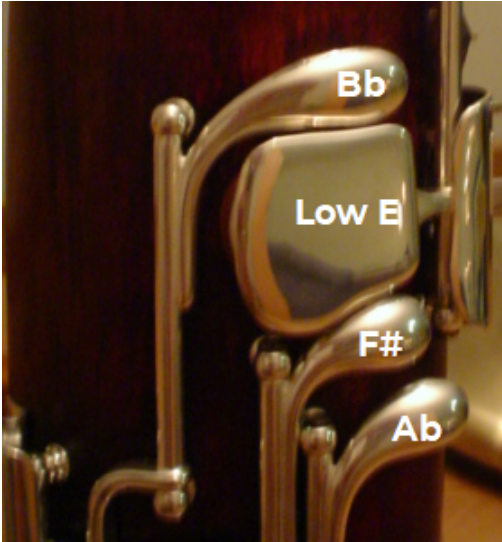


If your left thumb is relaxed and close to the keys needed, you will be able to move quickly and accurately. If your thumb is stiff or the joint is locked, you will not be able to move quickly or accurately. This will cause coordination problems between your fingers and your thumb.



## Right-Hand Thumb keys

There are four keys on the back of the boot joint (the side that faces you). These keys are operated by the right-hand thumb.





The resting position of the right thumb is important. Resting the thumb on the low E key guard (which is right beside the low E/pancake key) you will be able to move easily and accurately to the required thumb keys. If your thumb is out of position (above the Bb for example), you will have to lift your thumb and move it into position before pressing the required thumb key. This will lead to coordination problems between your fingers and your thumb.

Use your thumb like a pencil.

Think about how you hold a pencil to write. What part of the tip do you use? Not the very tip or point, and not the side of the pencil. You use the side of the tip.

Do the same with your thumb when pressing keys on the wing joint. Press the whisper key with the fleshy part of your thumb just below the tip instead of the harder flesh around the joint.

Using the end near the tip keeps the thumb joint softly curved and that allows the quickest motion and greatest accuracy.

**Avoid “Hitchhiker’s Thumb”**

The middle of your thumb is a larger surface so it can’t be as accurate as near the tip. Using the middle of your thumb can also cause the joint to collapse or lock and that greatly limits motion.

## Hover over the keys/holes

Let your thumbs and fingers hover over the holes or keys each is assigned to operate.

**Keys:** let your fingers rest lightly on the keys when not pressing them down. That will keep them in position and ready for use.

**Holes:** your fingers will need to rest just above the airstream coming out of the hole. This is only about a quarter of an inch. If your fingers rest too close to the holes, the pitch will not be accurate, and the tone will be muffled.

## Common Hand and Finger Problems

1. Tone-holes are not covered completely. Leaks will cause poor response and/or squeaking just like on clarinet and bass clarinet.
2. Collapsed finger joints due to squeezing. A collapsed joint makes lifting the finger a two-step process (relax & lift). This creates uneven finger technique.
3. Fingers out of position when not in use. This can cause leaking and squeaking and sloppy technique.



*Finger problems: index finger is leaking at the top hole, end joint is collapsed on middle finger, and ring finger is leaking on the bottom hole.*



*Finger issues: stiff fingers, collapsed joints on middle and ring fingers, too much pressure on the keys and holes.*



*Thumb issues: Right thumb is out of position when not in use and is pressing against the metal band at the top of the boot joint.*

**22.**

## **Accommodating Large Hands**



**A player with large hands will need to use a handrest (crutch) on the boot joint for the right hand, and probably a spacer on the long joint for the left hand. The right-hand crutch has been in use for many years and is considered a standard part of the bassoon. The left-hand spacer has seen more common use in the last decade.**



## **THE RIGHT-HAND CRUTCH**

A right-hand crutch controls the right hand's distance from the bassoon. The stem of the crutch is inserted into the crutch hardware located on the right side of the boot joint.



The hardware includes a tightening screw which allows the crutch to be locked into place at the ideal height depending on the player's hand size. A properly adjusted crutch will allow the right hand to relax with the pads of the index and middle fingers falling at the center of their respective tone holes while also allowing easy reach and operation of the pinky cluster keys.

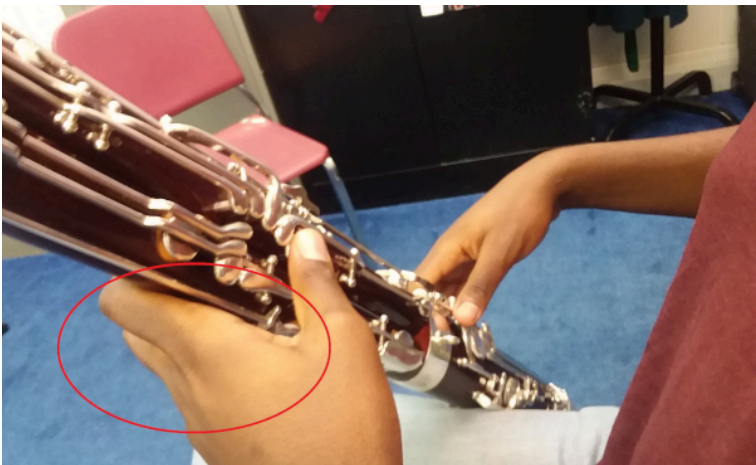


**Note:** Players with smaller hands may not be able to comfortably reach the keys/holes with the crutch in place. Players over 6 feet tall will want to consider buying a custom crutch with a longer stem because the standard

crutch will not provide enough support for extremely large hands.

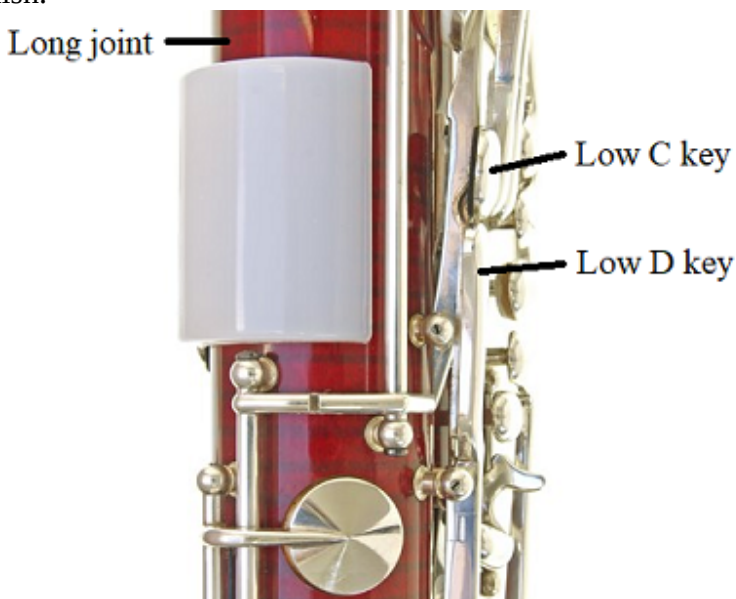
## THE LEFT-HAND CRUTCH

The left-hand handrest serves a similar function as the right-hand crutch but for the left hand. The base of the left index finger provides the third point of support and balance when holding the bassoon. The exact point of contact will vary from player to player due to hand size (width of palm and length of the fingers), but it should fall between the middle and lower knuckles of the left index finger. This point of support is crucial in developing good hand position and agile finger technique. It will allow the left hand to rest comfortably with the pads of the index, middle, and ring fingers contacting the center of the E, D, and C tone holes respectively. The left-hand handrest/spacer allows the player to maintain contact between the base of the index finger and the long joint without collapsing the base of the index finger. This is especially helpful for technique in the lowest octave.



The player in this photo has exceptionally large hands and is having to collapse the base joint of his index finger to rest against the long joint. Collapsing the hand in this way restricts the mobility of the left thumb. The other problem is that when the player needs to press the low C, B, or Bb key the base of the left index finger automatically loses contact with the long joint, removing a crucial point of support and balance for the instrument.

**TIP:** *My Grip* is a silicone spacer/handrest for the left hand made to address this issue. There are five thicknesses ranging from 2mm to 15mm. Choose the one that provides support while allowing trouble-free operation of the left-hand pinky keys and high C and D keys. If you find one size too small but the next size up is too big, you can layer the smaller sizes. The *My Grip* will adhere to the bassoon without any need for adhesive and will not damage the finish.





[forrestsmusic.com](http://forrestsmusic.com)

[Crutches for Bassoon – Charles Double Reed Company  
charlesmusic.com](http://charlesmusic.com)

[My Grip – Silicone  
Hand Support – Midwest  
Musical Imports  
mmimports.com](http://mmimports.com)

[MyGrip | Miller  
Marketing  
millermarketingco.com](http://millermarketingco.com)

[Bassoon Hand Rests](#)



V

# FINGERING CHART

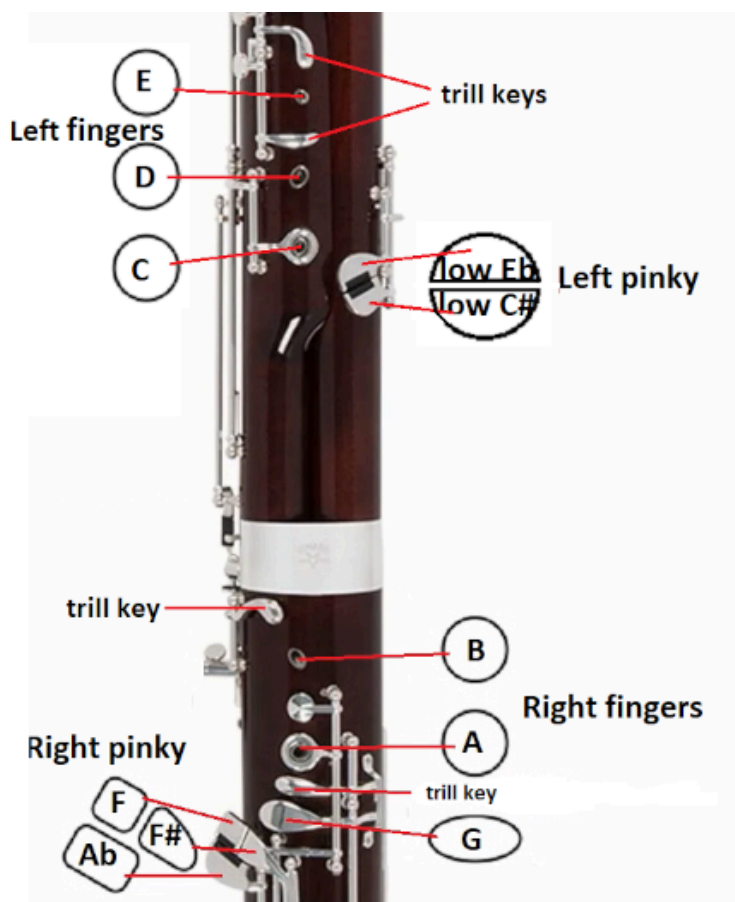


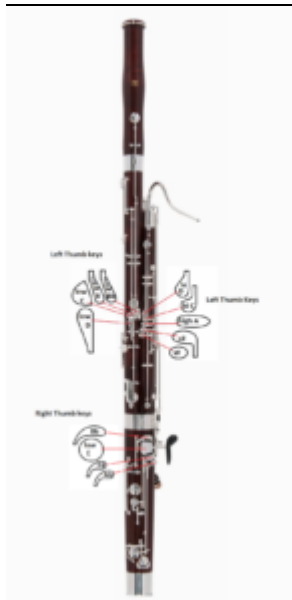
**23.**

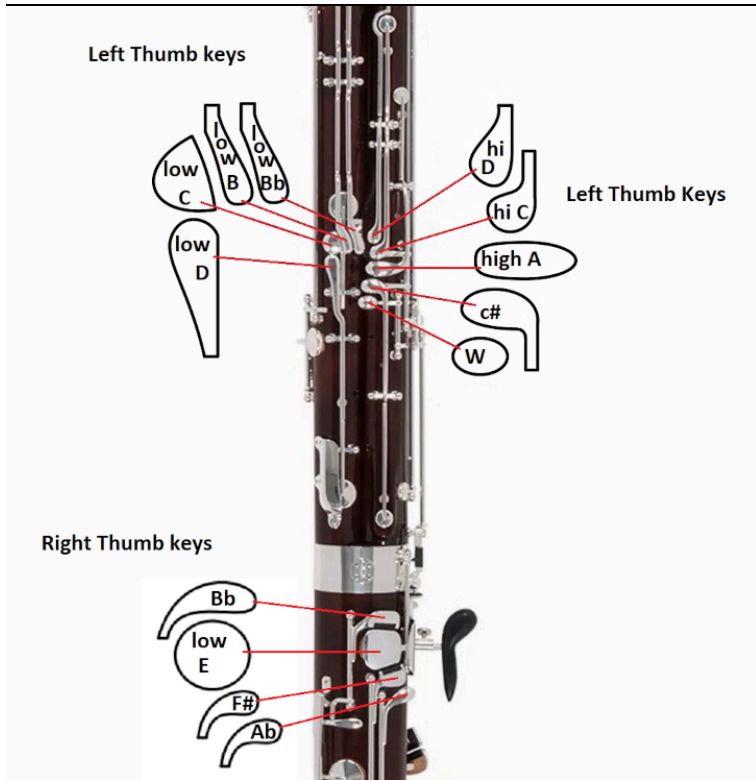
## **Diagram of the Bassoon Keys**



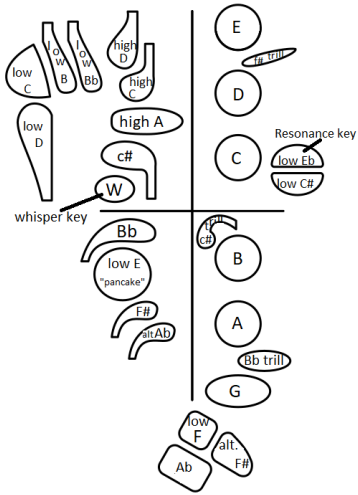








This is the diagram of keys used for the fingering chart in the next chapter.





This diagram was created using the bassoon template at [Fingering Diagram Builder | Bret Pimentel, woodwinds](#) (accessed March 8, 2024).



# 24.

## Fingering Chart

[printable bassoon fingering chart](#)

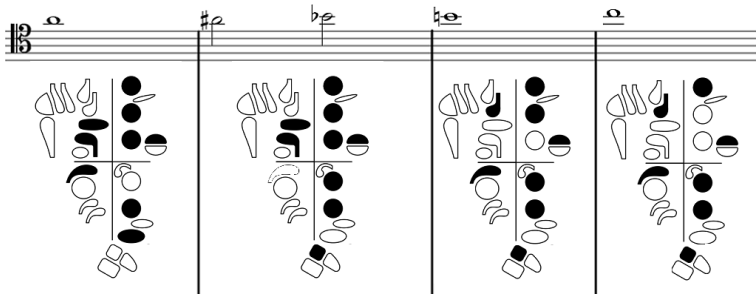
This section shows the fingering for the notes G<sub>2</sub>, F<sub>2</sub>, E<sub>2</sub>, and D<sub>2</sub> in bass clef. Each note is represented by a musical staff with a single note and a corresponding fingering diagram below it. The diagrams show the placement of fingers (1-4) on the keys and the position of the thumb and index finger on the keys.

This section shows the fingering for the notes C<sub>2</sub>, B<sub>1</sub>, and A<sub>1</sub> in bass clef. Each note is represented by a musical staff with a single note and a corresponding fingering diagram below it. A purple dot in the diagrams indicates an optional fingering.

This section shows the fingering for the notes G<sub>1</sub>, F<sub>1</sub>, E<sub>1</sub>, and D<sub>1</sub> in bass clef. Each note is represented by a musical staff with a single note and a corresponding fingering diagram below it. A note below the diagrams states: "Low F key goes down when back F# key is pressed".

This section shows the fingering for the notes C<sub>1</sub>, B<sub>0</sub>, and A<sub>0</sub> in bass clef. Each note is represented by a musical staff with a single note and a corresponding fingering diagram below it.

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All fingering images were created using the bassoon template at [Fingering Diagram Builder | Bret Pimentel, woodwinds](#) (accessed March 8, 2024).



VI

# THE WHISPER KEY NOTES



**25.**

## **About the Whisper Key**



**The whisper key** is located on the side of the wing joint that faces the player.



**The whisper key** moves the whisper-key pad at the top of the wing joint.



The bocal has a small nub on the side near the corked end.







**The whisper key** is operated by the left thumb. When pressed, it covers the vent (small hole) in the bocal nub. Closing this hole helps the notes on and below the bass staff speak in the proper (lower) octave.

**Note:** The other woodwind instruments have an octave or register key that, when pressed, opens a hole near the top of the instrument so the higher notes can speak. The whisper key on the bassoon closes the highest hole so the lower notes can speak. It is basically a “reverse octave key.”



## Whisper Key not engaged (up)



## Whisper Key Engaged (pressed)



Covering the hole in the nub on the bocal allows the notes in and below the bass staff to speak in their proper octave.

The whisper key is pressed by the left thumb for the following notes:



## Locating the Whisper Key on Different Models of Bassoons

The whisper key is the lowest button on the wing joint,

regardless of the model of bassoon. On a basic student model bassoon, the whisper key will be the fourth thumb key down on the wing joint.

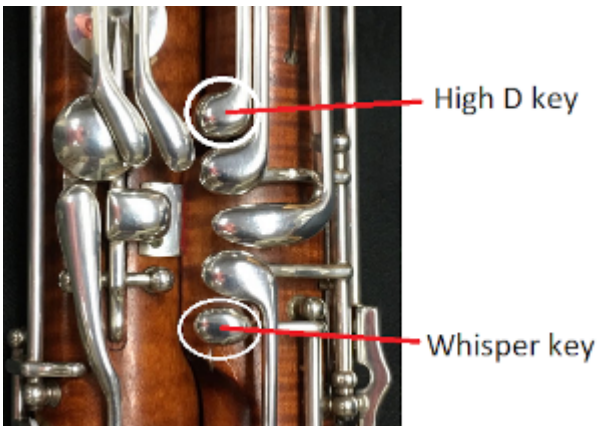
### Basic Student Model





**More advanced models will have a high D key which is placed above the four thumb keys on the wing joint found on the basic model. On models with a high D key the whisper key will be the fifth thumb key down on the wing joint.**

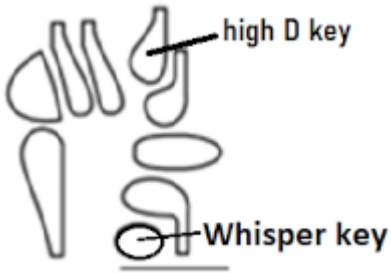
**Intermediate Student or Artist Model**



**Note:** The high D key makes it easier to play certain notes, but it is possible to play all but the highest notes on a bassoon without one so don't worry if your bassoon does not have a high D key. Fingering diagrams in this volume will include the high D key.



The diagram below shows how the left thumb keys look on the fingering chart.





**26.**

**Lesson 1: C-D-E-F**



### Hand Position Reminder:

The left hand goes on top, and the fingers wrap around the long and wing joints. The base of the left index finger supports the bassoon as it rests against the long joint.





Keep fingers and thumb relaxed with a natural curve.

Use pads of fingers to cover all holes completely.

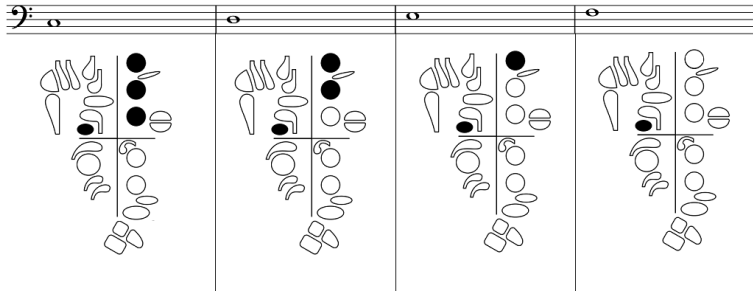
Use the end of your thumb to press the whisper key down.

**Note:** Avoid squeezing with your fingers. If the end joint on your index and/or middle finger is collapsing, you are pressing too hard. Collapsed end joints will slow your technique and make your hands tired.

## Fingerings:

These first four notes use only the fingers and thumb of

the left hand.



**Tips for the first notes:**



- Notes are part of a C major scale segment.
- Only one finger changes between each of these notes.
- Keep your hands and fingers soft with a light touch on the tone-holes.

### Air & Ear Reminders:

- Use your **AIR!** Blow a constant and strong stream of air into the bassoon.
- Use your **EAR!** Give yourself an aural target by playing a drone to match. One of my favorite online sites is [www.tuningdrones.com](http://www.tuningdrones.com). Having an aural target is the best way to develop accurate intonation and boost your tuning confidence!
- Articulate each note by lightly tapping the front of your tongue against the reed at the start of each note.

The first exercise (*Matching Pitch*) will help you work on intonation. You should play this exercise on each new note you learn. It will help you address response and intonation. Your **AIR** and your **EAR** are your most powerful musical tools. Pay attention to both and you will make excellent progress.

### Matching Pitch

Repeat *Matching Pitch* but play the third line D instead

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of C. Listen to the reference tone and support your sound with your air.

### Matching Pitch on D

Once you are comfortable with the notes C and D, continue on to *Playing C & D*.

**Counting:** The numbers above each bar represent the quarter note beats and are a reminder to count the beats while you are playing. The meter is 4/4 which means there are four beats in each measure and the quarter note gets the beat. Count at a steady pace (tempo) and be sure to count the beats in your head while you are playing so you always know where you are in the bar.

### Playing C & D

Play *Matching Pitch* on third space E; your next new note.

### Matching Pitch on E

**Note:** The third-space E can be tricky to play in tune. It can tend to sag flat by as much as a half step. Here are some suggestions to fix a flat third-space E natural:

- Hear the pitch accurately before you play the E.
- Take a full breath and blow a steady air stream.

- Try increasing your hug on the reed just a little. Squeezing too hard will make the problem worse.
- If these suggestions do not work, the reed might be the problem. See [chapter 89“Simple Reed Adjustments”](#) for tips to adjust your reed.

Once you feel comfortable with the E, move on to *Playing D & E*. Be sure to count in your head as you play the notes.

Playing D & E

Now you are ready to play some tunes using these three notes.

Remember to:

1. Use your AIR (blow steady air)
2. Use your EARS to aim the pitch of each note (hear the tune in your head as you play).
3. Articulate each note.
4. Count four beats per bar.

Mary Had a Little Lamb

Hot Cross Buns

# Improvise

How many tunes can you come up with that use only the notes you've learned so far?

Create your own tunes by improvising around these three notes and any rhythms and articulations you feel like playing.

## Balancing the bassoon on “open” middle F

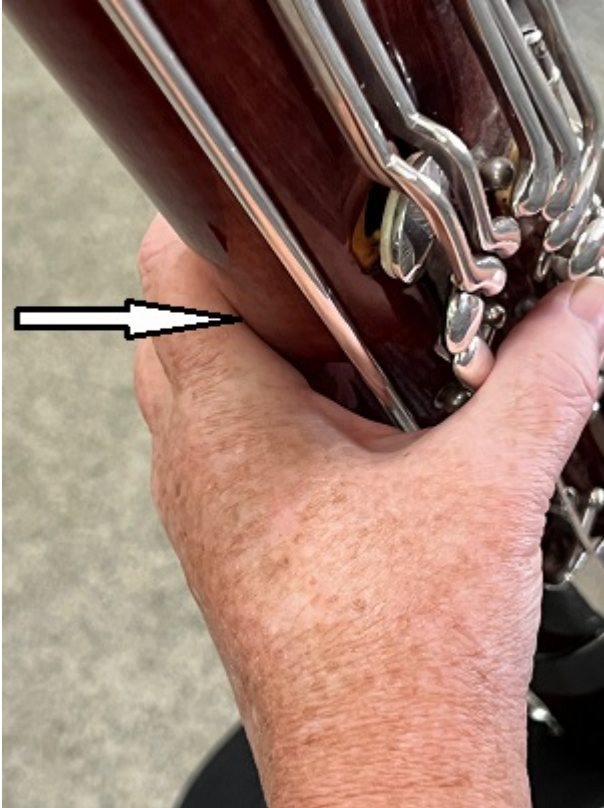


*One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here:*

<https://lowecc.pressbooks.sunycreate.cloud/?p=758#oemb-ed-1>

The whisper key, pressed by the left thumb, is the only key needed to play middle (open) F. None of the holes on the front of the bassoon should be covered for middle F.

**Note:** This makes the third point of support and balance especially important. Having a solid point of contact at the base of your left index finger will allow you to support and balance the wing and long joints when you lift your fingers away from the holes and not feel like you're going to drop the bassoon.



Focus on this balance point as you play through the tuning exercise on middle F.

**Matching Pitch**

Bassoon

Reference Tone

## Playing D-E-F

The first staff contains seven measures of music: D4 quarter, E4 quarter, F4 quarter, D4 quarter, E4 quarter, F4 quarter, and a whole rest. The second staff contains seven measures: D4 quarter, E4 quarter, F4 quarter, a whole rest, D4 quarter, E4 quarter, and F4 quarter. The third staff contains seven measures: D4 quarter, E4 quarter, F4 quarter, a whole rest, D4 quarter, E4 quarter, and F4 quarter.

### Simple Song

The **meter** for *Simple Song* is 6/8. Start by counting in 6 with one number/beat on each eighth note. Once you get comfortable with the notes and fingerings, try putting a heavy accent on beats 1 and 4 and play beats 2, 3, 5, and 6 without accent. This will create the feel of having 2 big beats in each bar, with each big beat having 3 small beats. Feeling the 2 big beats per bar will help create the special lilting (dancing) feel for which 6/8 meter is known.

**Tie:** The curved line used in bars 2, 4, and 8 is a **tie**. A tie is used to connect two notes that are the same pitch. Hold the C for the full time notated (5 eighth notes) but do not articulate the second C in the bar.

**Tip:** Keeping your fingers close to the bassoon when you pick them up to move to the next note will make putting them back down with precision much easier and will help you sound even better.

### Simple Song

The notation shows two staves of music in 6/8 time. The first staff has four measures: 1 2 3 4 5 6 | 1 2 3 4 5 6 | 1 2 3 4 5 6 | 1 2 3 4 5 6. The notes are D4, E4, F4, D4, E4, F4. The second measure has a tie between the first and second notes. The second staff has four measures: 5 1 2 3 4 5 6 | 1 2 3 4 5 6 | 1 2 3 4 5 6 | 1 2 3 4 5 6. The notes are D4, E4, F4, D4, E4, F4. The second measure has a tie between the first and second notes.

## Improvise

Take a few minutes to improvise using the left-hand notes you've learned in this lesson. If another bassoonist is available, partner up and play your tunes for each other. See if you can copy what your partner plays and vice versa.

## 27.

### Lesson 2: B-A-G and low F

#### Right Hand Fingers & Thumb on the Boot Joint



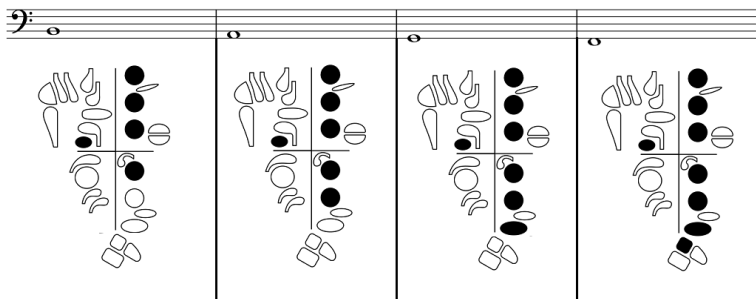
*Fingers are relaxed and joints are softly curved. Pads of fingers cover the tone holes and keys. Tips of fingers are pink = not squeezing or pressing hard. Ring finger and pinky are resting on (but not pressing) the G and F keys when not in use.*

## B A G and low F

These notes are played by both hands. The left-hand fingers and thumb will stay in the “C” position while the right-hand fingers move.



*Right thumb is relaxed, and the joint is softly curved. Right thumb is resting lightly on the low E key guard. This position allows the thumb to move easily and quickly to any of the thumb keys.*



The B and A tone holes on the front of the boot joint are covered by the index (B) and middle (A) fingers of the right hand. The G key is operated by the ring finger on the right hand, and the low F key is operated by the right-hand pinky.

**Tip:** These notes require moving only one finger between each note. Keep your fingers soft and light. The harder you squeeze or press with your fingers, the harder

it will be to move them. Make sure you are not trying to hold the bassoon up with your fingers. Let the weight of the bassoon be supported by the seat strap and your right thigh.

### Air & Ear Reminders:

- Use your **AIR**.
- Use your **EAR**. Give yourself an aural target by playing with a reference tone (ex. [www.tuningdrones.com](http://www.tuningdrones.com)). Choose an octave B drone to start and then work with a perfect fifth of B and F-sharp.
- Articulate each note by lightly tapping the front of your tongue against the reed at the start of each note.

### Matching Pitch

Once you feel comfortable playing B with the reference tone, play the exercise below. Work on keeping your right-hand index finger close to the hole when you lift it to move back to C after playing B. Keep counting as you play.

### Playing C to B

**Play Matching Pitch on A.** Focus on response and tuning.

### Matching Pitch on low A

Once you feel comfortable playing A with the reference tone, continue to the next exercise below. Keep your fingers close to the tone holes when they are not in use and be sure to count each beat in your head as you play.

### Playing B & A

**Play Matching Pitch on G and on F.** Continue to focus on response and tuning.

Once you feel comfortable playing G and F with the reference tone, continue to the next exercise. Don't forget to keep counting!

## Playing Low G &amp; Low F

1-2-3-4- 1-2-3-4- 1-2 3-4- 1-2-3-4- 1-2-3-4- 1-2 3-4- 1-2-3-4-

*f*

8 1-2-3-4- 1-2 3-4- 1-2-3-4- 1- 2-3-4- 1-2-3-4- 1- 2-3-4- 1-2 3-4-

**TROUBLESHOOTING:**

If you have trouble with these notes sounding too high (not in the proper octave), here are some suggestions to help:

- Hear the pitch accurately (in the proper octave).
- Make sure your left thumb is on the whisper key and press it all the way down.
- Make sure the whisper-key pad is fully covering the pinhole on the bocal nub.
- Soften the hug with your lips around the reed.
- Add space between your teeth and open your oral cavity (“Hot Pizza Mouth”)
- Make sure you are not pushing up on the reed with your bottom lip.
- Blow warmer air.
- If these suggestions don’t work, the problem is probably with the reed. [Watch the video on “Adjusting the Tip Opening”](#) in [chapter 89 Simple Reed Adjustments](#).

Now you are ready to play some tunes using these four notes.

**REMINDER:**

- Use your **AIR** (blow steady air)
- Use your **EARS** to aim the pitch of each note (hear the tune in your head as you play).
- Articulate each note.
- Count four beats per bar during *Right Hand Tune*, and two beats per bar during *Lightly Row*.

**Right Hand Tune****Lightly Row in G**

Count the eighth notes for this tune to keep the tempo nice and steady. Each quarter note is subdivided (broken down) into 2 equal length eighth notes. There are two ways to count the eighth notes. You can either give each eighth note a number and count to four in every bar, or you can use numbers for the eighth notes that fall on the beat and the word “and” (shown with a plus sign) for the second eighth note on every beat. Feeling and counting the smaller note values is called **subdividing** and it helps keep the tempo steady.

**Lightly Row in G**

Musical notation for Lightly Row in G, consisting of two staves of music. The first staff contains eight measures of music, and the second staff contains eight measures of music. The notation is in bass clef and 2/4 time. Above the first staff, counting numbers are provided: 1 + 2+ 1 + 2+ 1 + 2+ 1 + 2+ 1 + 2+ 1 + 2+ 1 + 2+. A measure rest is indicated by a '9' below the first measure of the second staff.

## Are You Sleeping?

Are You Sleeping?

## Folk Song

This tune does not start on the downbeat. Notice that the first bar only has one beat worth of notes. When a piece begins on the beat BEFORE the downbeat, we say it starts on the **upbeat**.

When you are ready to begin, count the first three beats silently to yourself to set the tempo. Inhale as you count the first two silent beats and set your embouchure and fingers on beat 3.

Folk Song

## Morning Mood from Peer Gynt Suite

There are 3 beats per bar and the quarter note gets the beat. Subdivide the quarters into eighth notes in bars 10 and 12. Keep counting during the longer notes.

This tune has a lot of **slurs**. A **slur** is similar to a tie. It is a way of connecting notes into a group. The tie is used to connect notes on the same pitch; and the slur is

used to connect notes on different pitches. Articulate only the first note of each slurred group of notes. In *Morning Mood* articulate the first C and blow a steady stream of air as you play the next five notes. Articulate the C on the downbeat of bar 3, the first C in bar 5, the first D in bar 6, and the C in bar 7. Changing notes without articulating requires coordination of the fingers in order to avoid “blips” between the printed pitches.

### Practice Tip:

Practice slurred passages by adding articulation to check coordination of your fingers. Practice articulated passages slurred to make sure you are blowing a steady airstream.

### Morning Mood from *Peer Gynt Suite*

Edvard Grieg  
arr. C. Lowe

1 2 3 1 2 3

9 1 2 3 1 2 + 3 +

15 1 2 3 1 2 3 1 2 3 1 2 3 1

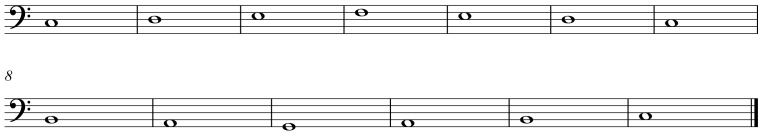
**TIP:** Practicing scales with a drone is a terrific way to develop your active listening skills for good intonation.

**Play the C scale with a C-G drone.**



[tuningdrones.com](http://tuningdrones.com)

split octave  
C major scale



There is one more note to learn before playing *Menuet du Tambourin* by Jacques Hotteterre. That note, low f-sharp (f#) is covered in the next lesson. But, there are sections you can play through now because the notes are from the C major scale you just learned.

### Excerpts from *Menuet du Tambourin* by Jacques Hotteterre

(NYSSMA Level One solo with piano)

First phrase:



Second phrase:



Third phrase:





28.

## Lesson 3: Middle B-flat (Bb)

### The B-flat Key

The Bb key is the top thumb key on the back of the boot joint (the side you can see when you play).

Bb key on Boot Joint

Thumb keys diagram

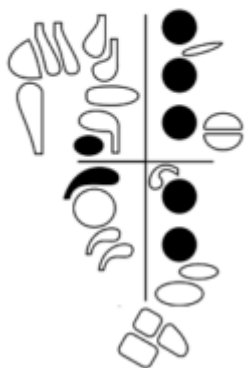
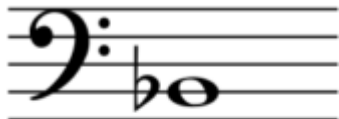


Right thumb presses  
Bb key

**Tip:** Use the pad of your thumb closer to the tip than the knuckle. This will help keep a soft curve in your

thumb which will help it move to another key with speed and accuracy.

### Middle Bb Fingering



Use your right thumb to press the B-flat (Bb) key on the back of the boot joint and cover **both** open tone holes (B and A) on the front of the boot joint.

**Tip:** Thinking of Bb as A# can help you remember to “finger A and raise the note a half step by adding the A# key.” If you finger B-natural and add the Bb key, you’ll get a sound, but it will not be a Bb.

### *Matching Pitch*

Play Matching Pitch with a perfect fifth drone on Bb-F.



[tuningdrones.com](http://tuningdrones.com)

### Matching Pitch

Bassoon

Reference Tone

### Playing Bb to C

Moving between Bb and C requires moving three fingers so you will need to work on coordinating all three fingers so that they lift and press as a unit. Keep your fingers soft and light.

#### Playing Bb & C

1-2-3-4- 1-2-3-4- 1-2-3-4- 1-2-3-4- 1-2-3-4 1-2 3-4- 1-2-3-4-

*f*

1-2-3-4- 1- 2 + 3-4 + 1 + 2 + 3-4- 1- 2 + 3-4 + 1 + 2 + 3-4-

### *F major - One Octave*

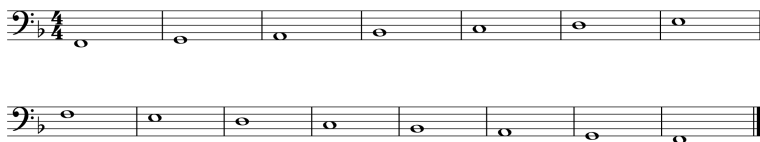
Practice the scale slowly with an F-C drone.



[tuningdrones.com](http://tuningdrones.com)

F major - One Octave  
(play slowly with drone)

♩ = 52



Now practice the scale in shorter note lengths to work on your finger coordination but keep listening for intonation.

F major - One Octave



*Long, Long Ago*

This tune includes breath marks for phrasing (the checkmark every four bars) and introduces four new signs/instructions.

Play the ties in bars 8 and 12 by articulating the low F on beat one and holding it until beat 4.

The three other signs tell you about the form of the piece. Start at the beginning and play through to the last bar. Notice there is no final bar line at the end. The instruction “***D. S. to Fine***” means to go back to the bar with the



sign and play to the ***Fine***. Notice the final bar line at the ***Fine***. Stop there.

## Long, Long Ago

Musical score for "Long, Long Ago" in bass clef, 4/4 time. The score consists of four staves. The first staff ends with a repeat sign. The second staff has a "Fine" marking under a slur. The third staff has a "D. S. to Fine" marking at the end. There are various articulation marks like accents and slurs throughout.

## Lightly Row

Listen to the quality of your articulation when playing *Lightly Row*. Are you getting the sound and clarity you want? Notice the force of your tongue against the reed. A **marcato** articulation requires more force with the tongue, and **leggiero** needs only a light flick of the tongue against the reed. Experiment with playing this in *marcato* style and *leggiero* style.

**Tip:** Keep your air support steady and make sure your tongue touches the reed at the beginning of every note.

### Lightly Row

Musical score for "Lightly Row" in bass clef, 2/4 time. The score consists of two staves. The first staff starts with a measure number "9" above it. The music is a simple rhythmic exercise.

## Gavotte by Jacques Aubert (Faber Music, arr. L. Hilling and W. Bermann)

- Level 1 NYSSMA Solo for bassoon and piano
- Gavotte is a dance from the 1700s
- C stands for Common Time and is another way to write 4/4 meter
- 4 beats per bar, quarter note gets the beat
- One octave range



“Gavotte,” illustration by Randolph Caldecott from *Bretonfolk*

*Courtesy of the Victoria and Albert Museum, London*

Britannica, T. Editors of Encyclopaedia (2019, January 22). gavotte. Encyclopedia Britannica. <https://www.britannica.com/art/gavotte>

This piece includes a slur marking in almost every bar. To play these slurs you will articulate the first note of the slurred group and then first note after the slur ends. In the first half bar you should articulate the first A and again on the second A. Do not articulate the low G. In the second full bar 3 you will articulate the two quarter notes and the first C eighth note and the last two eighth notes of the bar. Do not articulate the D eighth note.

Jacques Aubert  
(1689-1753)

**Gavotte**

*Grazioso*

The musical score for the bassoon part of 'Gavotte' is written in bass clef with a key signature of one flat (B-flat) and a 3/4 time signature. It consists of three staves of music. The first staff begins with a forte (*f*) dynamic and concludes with a piano (*p*) dynamic. The second staff starts with a piano (*p*) dynamic and ends with a forte (*f*) dynamic, featuring an accent over the first note of the final measure. The third staff begins with a piano (*p*) dynamic and ends with a forte (*f*) dynamic, including a *rit.* (ritardando) marking over the final measure. The tempo/style marking *Grazioso* is placed above the first staff.

This Gavotte is a sprightly dance and should be played with a lilt - but not too fast.

The meter and rhythms are simple. However, there are some tricky finger combinations.

### Practice Tip: Isolate & Repeat

If you struggle with a passage from this piece, play it through slowly and find out which two or three notes are creating the problem (probably the notes where the most fingers are moving). Isolate those two or three notes and repeat them slowly while focusing on finger coordination. Let your fingers soften and relax as they get used to the motion. Once the pattern can be played cleanly with minimal effort you can gradually increase the speed of the repetitions.

The exercises below are practice suggestions for Aubert's *Gavotte*. Start slowly and repeat each pattern until your fingers move easily between the notes. The notes in each bar are all under a slur so only articulate the first note in each bar.

### Gavotte practice



6



11



## 29.

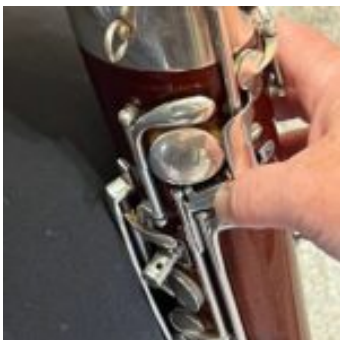
### **Lesson 4: Low F-sharp (F#)**

The bassoon has two F-sharp keys. The standard F-sharp key (used most often) is operated by the right-hand thumb and is located on the back of the boot joint. The alternate f-sharp key is operated by the right-hand pinky. We will learn the standard F# key first.

## Back (thumb) F#

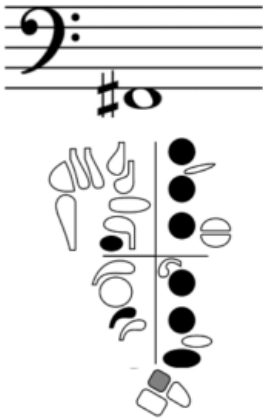
Thumb F# key on Boot Joint

Key Diagram



**Tip:** Use the pad of your thumb closer to the tip than the knuckle. This will help keep a soft curve in your thumb which will help it move to another key with speed and accuracy.

Low F# fingering



**Note:** The low F key in the fingering diagram is colored gray instead of black. That is because it goes down automatically with the f-sharp key. You do not have to press the F key down when playing F#.

Start by playing some low F#s. Notice how the note feels compared to the other notes you have learned. It is probably harder to get to speak because F-sharp has more resistance.

### **Troubleshooting:**

- Make sure completely cover all of the open holes.
- Make sure the whisper key is down.
- Space your teeth
- Blow warm air.
- Articulate firmly.

Play *MatchingPitch* on low F#



[tuningdrones.com](http://tuningdrones.com)

### Matching Pitch on low F#

Bassoon

Reference Tone

### Low F# neighbor tones

This exercise gives you a chance to work on your right thumb technique. It will help to rest your right thumb lightly on the thumb F# key when you're not pressing the key. That will keep your thumb in position.

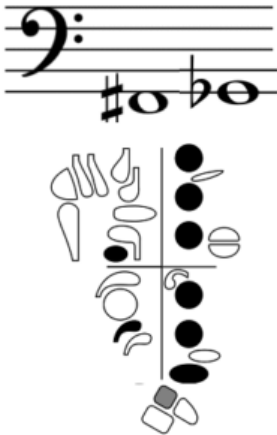
**Tip for Bars 1-8:** You only need to move your right thumb.

**Tip for Bars 9-16:** You only need to move your right pinky until the final G. You need to lift both your right pinky and right thumb for the final G.

### Low F# neighbor tones

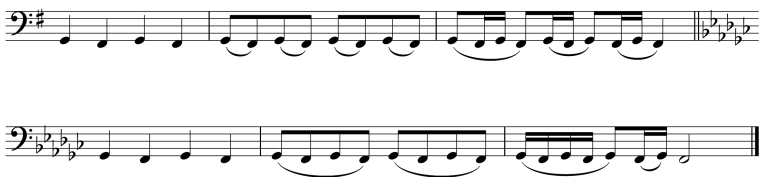
### Practicing Low G-F# and Gb-F

Gb and F# are *enharmonic* spellings of the same pitch and both notes have the same fingering.



**Tip:** Your right thumb is the only finger that needs to move for the next exercise. Finger low G and then add the F# key in bars 1-3. Finger low F and then add the F#(Gb) key in bars 4-6.

### Practicing Low G-F# and Gb-F



[tuningdrones.com](http://tuningdrones.com)

Practice this scale slowly with a perfect fifth drone on G-D.

split octave  
G major scale



G major Etude



*Menuet du Tambourin* by Jacques  
Hotteterre (Faber Music, arr. L. Hilling  
and W. Bermann)

- Level 1 NYSSMA solo for bassoon and piano
- Menuet is a dance from the 1700s
- 3 beats per bar, quarter notes get the beat



*The Minuet by Francois Brunery.* Art Renewal Center. (n.d.).

<https://www.artrenewal.org/artworks/the-minuet/francois-brunery/68907>

François Brunery (1849-1906)

**Phrases** in music are like sentences in speaking. When you come to the end of a sentence you usually take a breath before continuing. The first phrase in this piece ends in bar 8, and the second phrase ends in bar 16. The small checkmarks show that you should breathe at the end of bars 8 and 16 to make the phrasing clear to the listener.

Bassoon

## Menuet du Tambourin

Jacques Hotteterre (Le Romain)  
(c. 1680-1761)

The musical score is written in bass clef with a 3/4 time signature. It consists of four staves of music. The first staff starts with a forte (f) dynamic. The second staff features a repeat sign and a fermata. The third and fourth staves continue the melody with various slurs and a second fermata.

**Note:** Information in the next section is useful for intermediate to advanced students. If you are a beginner, you may want to come back to this information at a later point in your studies.

## Front (pinky) F-sharp

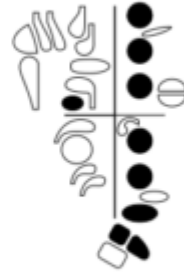
The pinky f-sharp key is part of the right-hand pinky cluster. This f-sharp can make certain note patterns easier to play cleanly and quickly. For example, using the pinky f-sharp when slurring between a-sharp and f-sharp allows you to alternate between the thumb and pinky instead of having the right thumb leap between the two thumb keys.

The pinky f-sharp is also usually a bit lower in pitch than the thumb f-sharp.

The angle of the keys in the basic diagram doesn't quite map onto the actual instrument. Here's how it looks on the instrument and in the fingering diagram:

Front F# key on Boot Joint

Fingering for Front F#



Right pinky presses front F# key

The front f-sharp might feel a little difficult until you get used to using it, which won't be that often. However, it is worth practicing because it is quite useful in certain passages.

**Tip:** If you feel like your pinky isn't long enough to reach the front F# key, bend your right wrist toward the

boot cap. You don't need to cover the entire F# key, only the front edge.



One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here:

<https://lowecc.pressbooks.sunycreate.cloud/?p=792#oemb-ed-1>

*Harkstow Grange* from Percy Grainger's *Lincolnshire Posy* is almost impossible to play cleanly without using the pinky f-sharp key due to the slur from b-flat to g-flat.

### Harkstow Grange

Percy Grainger

Slowly flowing

Because the right thumb is in use on the B-flat in bars 1, 3, and 7, it is best to use the pinky F#/Gb to make a clean slur. However, in bars 2, 4, and the last note of bar 7 it is best to use the back F#/Gb followed by the front A-flat key.

If you are lucky enough to play this piece you will need to practice these slurs.



**Note:** To slur from low G-flat to low F when using the pinky F-sharp key for G-flat, your thumb will need to slide from the F-sharp key to the F key. This is manageable but will require practice.

## Enharmonic Noodle

The first line of *Enharmonic Noodle* is in the key of B major which has 5 sharps (F#, C#, G#, D#, A#). A# is fingered like Bb. The second line of *Enharmonic Noodle* is in Gb major and has 6 flats (Bb, Eb, Ab, Db, Gb, Cb). Cb is fingered the same as B natural and Gb is fingered the same as F#. The fingerings and sounds for both lines are the same but the notes you see are written differently when in the key of B Major and Gb Major.

## Enharmonic Noodle





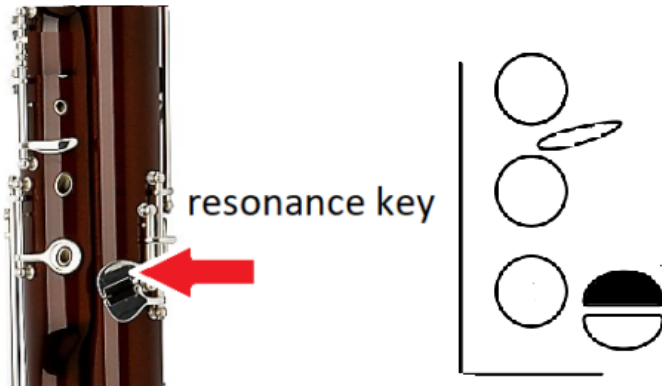
## 30.

**Lesson 5: Middle E-flat (Eb)****The Resonance Key (Left-Hand Pinky)**

The resonance key is the upper key on the long joint and is pressed with the left-hand pinky. When pressed, this key opens a large tone-hole on the long joint and is used to adjust the timbre and tuning of certain notes.

Resonance Key on Long Joint

Key Diagram



## Middle Eb

Middle E-flat (Eb) has a fun fingering. It's called a "forked" fingering because the left middle finger is up, but the left ring finger is down. This can be tricky to coordinate, and you'll need to work on getting your fingers to move independently from each other.

This Eb has several possible fingerings but only two of them sound good and have stable intonation. You can avoid a lot of trouble with middle Eb if you use one of the two reliable fingerings shown below. The only difference between the two fingerings is in the right hand. The fingering on the left uses the middle finger and is a little higher in pitch; the second uses the index finger and is a little lower in pitch.

The image shows a musical staff in bass clef with a 4/4 time signature and a flat key signature. The note is a middle Eb. Below the staff are two fingering diagrams for the left and right hands, separated by a vertical line and the word "OR".

The first diagram is labeled "higher in pitch". It shows the left hand with the middle finger up and the ring finger down. The right hand has the index finger up and the middle finger down.

The second diagram is labeled "lower in pitch". It shows the left hand with the middle finger up and the ring finger down. The right hand has the middle finger up and the index finger down.

## Matching Pitch on Eb

Play this trying both fingerings to see which one makes it easiest to play the Eb in tune with the reference tone.



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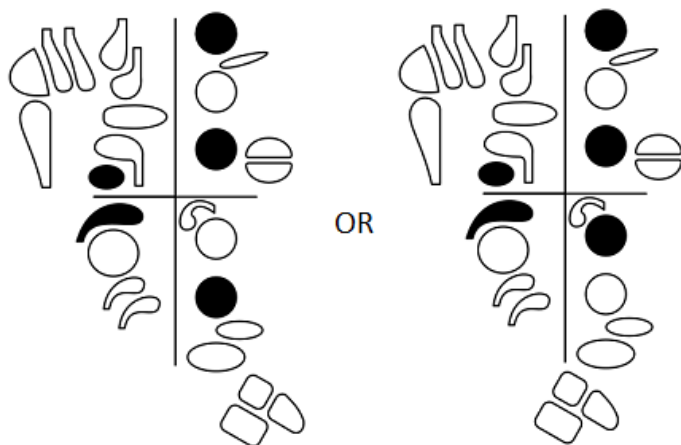
### Matching Pitch on Eb

Bassoon

Reference Tone

## Troubleshooting Intonation:

If you are using your AIR & EAR but aren't completely in tune with either of the suggested fingerings, try playing middle Eb without the resonance key (left pinky). Most instruments need the resonance key down to be in tune on middle Eb, but not all.



**Note:** Middle Eb will need a good amount of practice before it feels easy. The finger coordination is a challenge because some fingers will be lifting while others are going down. The next exercise, *Practice Patterns*, provides options for practicing various note combinations that include middle Eb. These patterns can be transposed to address any tricky combination of notes. You can make them more challenging by adding articulations and dotted rhythms.

## Practice Patterns

Practice E-flat to E-natural

E-flat to F

Two staves of music in bass clef, 4/4 time, key of B-flat. The first staff contains four measures: a whole note B-flat, a whole note F, a half note B-flat followed by a half note F, and a quarter note B-flat followed by a quarter note F. The second staff contains four measures: a quarter note B-flat followed by a quarter note F, a quarter note B-flat followed by a quarter note F, a quarter note B-flat followed by a quarter note F, and a quarter note B-flat followed by a quarter note F.

E-flat to D

Two staves of music in bass clef, 4/4 time, key of B-flat. The first staff contains four measures: a whole note B-flat, a whole note D, a half note B-flat followed by a half note D, and a quarter note B-flat followed by a quarter note D. The second staff contains four measures: a quarter note B-flat followed by a quarter note D, a quarter note B-flat followed by a quarter note D, a quarter note B-flat followed by a quarter note D, and a quarter note B-flat followed by a quarter note D.

E-flat to C

Two staves of music in bass clef, 4/4 time, key of B-flat. The first staff contains four measures: a whole note B-flat, a whole note C, a half note B-flat followed by a half note C, and a quarter note B-flat followed by a quarter note C. The second staff contains four measures: a quarter note B-flat followed by a quarter note C, a quarter note B-flat followed by a quarter note C, a quarter note B-flat followed by a quarter note C, and a quarter note B-flat followed by a quarter note C.

E-flat to B-flat

Two staves of music in bass clef, 4/4 time, key of B-flat. The first staff contains four measures: a whole note B-flat, a whole note B-flat, a half note B-flat followed by a half note B-flat, and a quarter note B-flat followed by a quarter note B-flat. The second staff contains four measures: a quarter note B-flat followed by a quarter note B-flat, a quarter note B-flat followed by a quarter note B-flat, a quarter note B-flat followed by a quarter note B-flat, and a quarter note B-flat followed by a quarter note B-flat.

### *Eb Neighbors*

This exercise uses the finger combinations you've just practiced.

### Eb Neighbors

Two staves of music in bass clef, 4/4 time, key of B-flat. The first staff contains seven measures: a whole note B-flat, a whole note B-flat, a half note B-flat followed by a half note B-flat, a quarter note B-flat followed by a quarter note B-flat, a quarter note B-flat followed by a quarter note B-flat, a quarter note B-flat followed by a quarter note B-flat, and a quarter note B-flat followed by a quarter note B-flat. The second staff contains seven measures: a quarter note B-flat followed by a quarter note B-flat, a quarter note B-flat followed by a quarter note B-flat, a quarter note B-flat followed by a quarter note B-flat, a quarter note B-flat followed by a quarter note B-flat, a quarter note B-flat followed by a quarter note B-flat, a quarter note B-flat followed by a quarter note B-flat, and a quarter note B-flat followed by a quarter note B-flat.

7

## Eb is the Key

- A lot of fingers have to move when playing from middle Eb to middle F. You need to lift everything except the whisper key.
- Play through the exercise slowly to identify the tricky note combinations (probably Eb to F, Eb to D, and C to Eb).
- Use the isolate and repeat practice technique on each pair of notes before playing through the exercise again.
- Observe the slurs in bars 7, 8, and 13.

In bar 7 you will articulate all but the last two pitches (the F eighth and E quarter).

In bar 8 you will articulate all notes except for the D eighth notes on the “and” of beats 1 and 3.

In bar 13 you will articulate all notes except for the D eighth notes on the “and” of beats 1 and 3.

Eb is the Key

The musical notation is in bass clef with a key signature of two flats (Bb, Eb) and a 2/4 time signature. It consists of three systems of staves. The first system contains six measures. The second system, marked with a '7' above the first measure, contains five measures. The third system, marked with a '12' above the first measure, contains three measures. Slurs are placed over the notes in measures 7, 8, and 13.

## *The Water is Wide*

This piece is presented as a duet. The top part is the melody, and the bottom part is the accompaniment. Play

this with your teacher or with another student bassoonist. You can even play a duet with yourself by recording one of the parts and playing the other part along with your recording.

Be sure to count and keep a steady tempo. The suggested tempo is quarter note = 96 but practice at a slower tempo until your fingers are comfortable with the notes and you can sing your part easily and accurately in your head while you play.

### The Water is Wide

Elizabethan Folk Song  
arr. Jensen/Koch/Lowe

$\text{♩} = 96$

The musical score is written in bass clef with a key signature of two flats (B-flat and E-flat) and a 3/4 time signature. It consists of four systems of two staves each, representing the left and right hands of a piano accompaniment. The first system starts with a tempo marking of quarter note = 96 and a piano (*p*) dynamic. The second system begins with a measure rest for the first measure, indicated by the number 5. The third system starts with a forte (*f*) dynamic and a measure rest for the first measure, indicated by the number 10. The fourth system begins with a piano (*p*) dynamic and a measure rest for the first measure, indicated by the number 13. The piece concludes with a double bar line and repeat dots.



## 31.

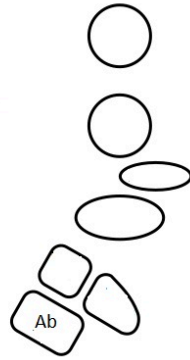
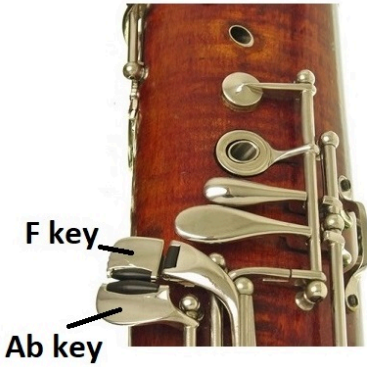
### Lesson 6: Low A-flat/G-sharp (Ab/G#)

#### The Front (Pinky) A-flat Key

The boot joint has a cluster of three keys that are operated by the right-hand pinky. The low F key you learned in lesson 2 is part of this cluster. The A-flat key is another key in this cluster. All bassoons have a front A-flat key; advanced model bassoons will also have a back (thumb) Ab. The thumb Ab is covered at the end of this chapter.

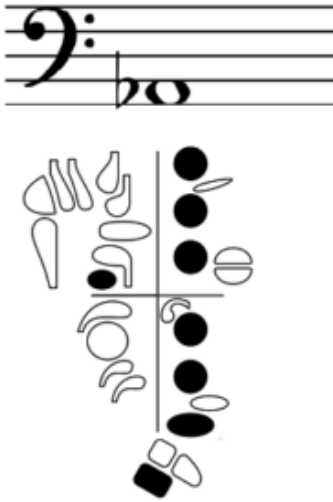
Front Ab key on Boot

Key diagram



Right pinky presses the front Ab key

Low A-flat fingering



### Matching Pitch on Low Ab

Play this exercise with a drone (a sustained reference tone) to check your intonation.



[tuningdrones.com](http://tuningdrones.com)

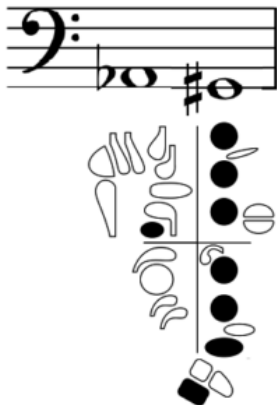
### Matching Pitch on low Ab



### Think G#

A-flat (Ab) requires **all three fingers on the right hand** as well as the right-hand pinky. Thinking of Ab as G# will help you remember to “finger G and raise the note ½ step

by adding the G# key.” If you finger A-natural and add the Ab key, you will get a sound, but it will not be an Ab.



**Tip:**

The more chromatic a passage is, the more fingers you need to move. You will need to work on coordinating your fingers, pinkies, and thumbs so that they lift and press as a unit. The next exercise will help you practice that technique. Keep your fingers soft and light.

***Practicing Ab to G and A to G#***

Changing the key signature can make a big difference for fingerings.

- Only the right-hand pinky needs to move in the first eight bars.
- At the key change, move the right-hand ring finger AND pinky at the same time.
- Keep a steady pulse and focus on coordination of your fingers.

Practicing Ab to G  
and A to G#

6

11

18

23

The musical notation consists of five staves in bass clef. The first staff is in Ab major (two flats) and contains five measures of music. The second staff starts at measure 6, also in Ab major, and contains seven measures, ending with a double bar line and a key signature change to A major (no sharps or flats). The third staff starts at measure 11, in A major, and contains seven measures. The fourth staff starts at measure 18, in A major, and contains seven measures. The fifth staff starts at measure 23, in A major, and contains seven measures, ending with a double bar line.

*Mary Had a Little Lamb*

This is normally a simple piece, but the key makes this version a little tricky.

**Note:** Be sure you are using your right thumb to press the Bb key on the back of the boot joint whenever you play Bb in this octave. Using the alternate Bb key would make it very hard to move cleanly between Bb and Ab.

Mary's Lamb in Ab

The musical notation consists of two staves in bass clef, both in Ab major (two flats). The first staff contains four measures of music. The second staff contains four measures of music, ending with a double bar line.

*Starting the Eb Scale*

Now that you know Ab you can play in the key of Eb major.

## Starting the Eb Scale

The musical score consists of six staves of music in bass clef, 4/4 time, and Eb major key. The notes are as follows:

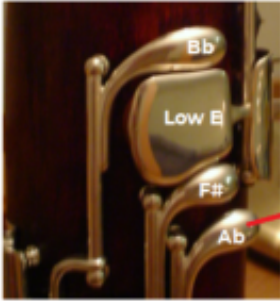
- Staff 1: C4 (half), D4 (quarter), E4 (quarter), F4 (quarter), G4 (quarter), A4 (quarter), B4 (quarter), C5 (quarter).
- Staff 2: D4 (quarter), E4 (quarter), F4 (quarter), G4 (quarter), A4 (quarter), B4 (quarter), C5 (quarter), D5 (quarter).
- Staff 3: E4 (quarter), F4 (quarter), G4 (quarter), A4 (quarter), B4 (quarter), C5 (quarter), D5 (quarter), E5 (quarter).
- Staff 4: F4 (quarter), G4 (quarter), A4 (quarter), B4 (quarter), C5 (quarter), D5 (quarter), E5 (quarter), F5 (quarter).
- Staff 5: G4 (quarter), A4 (quarter), B4 (quarter), C5 (quarter), D5 (quarter), E5 (quarter), F5 (quarter), G5 (quarter).
- Staff 6: A4 (quarter), B4 (quarter), C5 (quarter), D5 (quarter), E5 (quarter), F5 (quarter), G5 (quarter), A5 (quarter).

## The Back (Thumb) A-flat Key

This key is not included on all bassoons. However, it can be useful in certain passages and situations. The back (thumb) A-flat can be a little lower in pitch than the front A-flat. The thumb A-flat can also be helpful in some passages with tricky fingerings.

Back Ab key on Boot      Key Diagram

---



Right thumb presses  
the back Ab key

The thumb Ab key can feel harder for your thumb to find because it is rarely used. It might also feel harder to reach than the pinky Ab. Keep your hand and thumb relaxed to increase your reach. As you learn more about the bassoon and play more repertoire you will discover places to use the back A-flat key.



## 32.

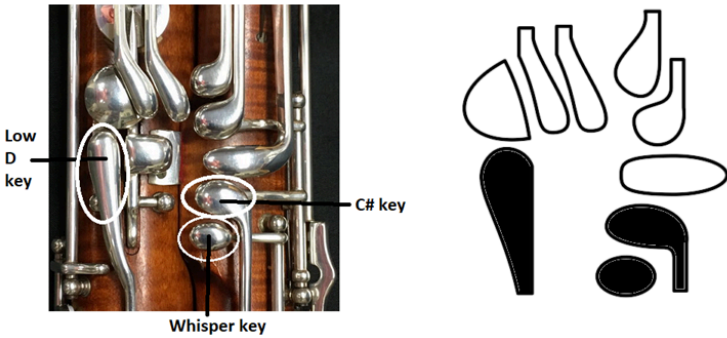
## Lesson 7: Middle C-sharp/D-flat (C#/Db)

### C-sharp and Low D keys

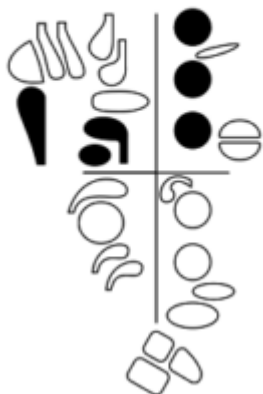
This note requires coordination in your left thumb. You must press the low D key, whisper key, and C# keys at the same time. These thumb keys are located on the wing and long joints. The three tone-holes on the front of the wing are also covered for middle C-sharp.

Wing and Long Joint Thumb Keys

Thumb Keys Diagram



## Middle C# Fingering



*One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here:*

<https://lowecc.pressbooks.sunycreate.cloud/?p=823#oemb-ed-1>

### **Tip:**

This fingering is a handful and can create tension in your hand as you practice playing C-sharp. Pay attention to your body and take short breaks to relax your back, shoulder,

arm, hand, and fingers as you add this note to your technique.

- Keep the tip end of your left thumb on the whisper key.
- Roll your thumb up to add the C# key by rotating your left wrist a little. Use the upper edge or side of your thumb to press the C# key.
- At the same time, allow your thumb's knuckle to relax and flatten to press the low D key. \*Make sure it goes all the way down.
- There is no need to squeeze when pressing these keys so keep your left hand as relaxed as possible as you work on this exercise.



If your hand gets a cramp, hold the bassoon with your right hand and lower your left arm down by your side. Shake your hand and fingers gently until they feel more relaxed. Practice this combination for only a few minutes at a time to avoid stressing your left thumb and hand.

### *Matching Pitch on C#*

Play this with an octave drone on C#. Once that feels comfortable, try it with a perfect fifth drone on C#-G#.



[tuningdrones.com](http://tuningdrones.com)

### Matching Pitch on C#

### Making Friends with C#

This exercise goes back and forth between C-sharp and its closest neighbors on the staff. Play this slowly and focus on keeping your hands and fingers relaxed and coordinated.

#### Making Friends with C#

### Mary Had a Little Lamb

This is a simple and familiar tune. Concentrate on:

- keeping your thumb and hand soft and relaxed,
- holding the whisper key down for the entire tune (avoid lifting it when rolling up to c# key),
- rolling/pivoting your thumb upward so the top edge presses the C# key,
- allow the knuckle in the middle of your thumb to flatten (collapse) to press the low D key as

you roll up to also press the C# key.

### Mary Had a Little Lamb



### Tune in D minor

*Tune in D minor* might seem confusing because it has both a Bb and a C#. The Bb is in the key signature and the C# creates a half-step below D to make D sound like home. It's called a **leading tone**. Notice how the D sounds like you've come back home at the end of the tune.

### Tune in d minor

## 33.

## Lesson 8: Chromatic Segments

## Chromatic Segments

Playing chromatic segments requires moving many different fingers. You must memorize the fingerings AND practice them to train your fingers to move smoothly and in coordination with each other. This next exercise is just one suggestion for practice. You can change the rhythms, articulations, and pitch groupings. Work to gradually increase speed while maintaining ease and accuracy of motion.

The fingerings are provided for each note in the first example below.

## Right-Hand notes:

The left hand stays the same for all notes in the first four lines so focus on the changes in the right hand.

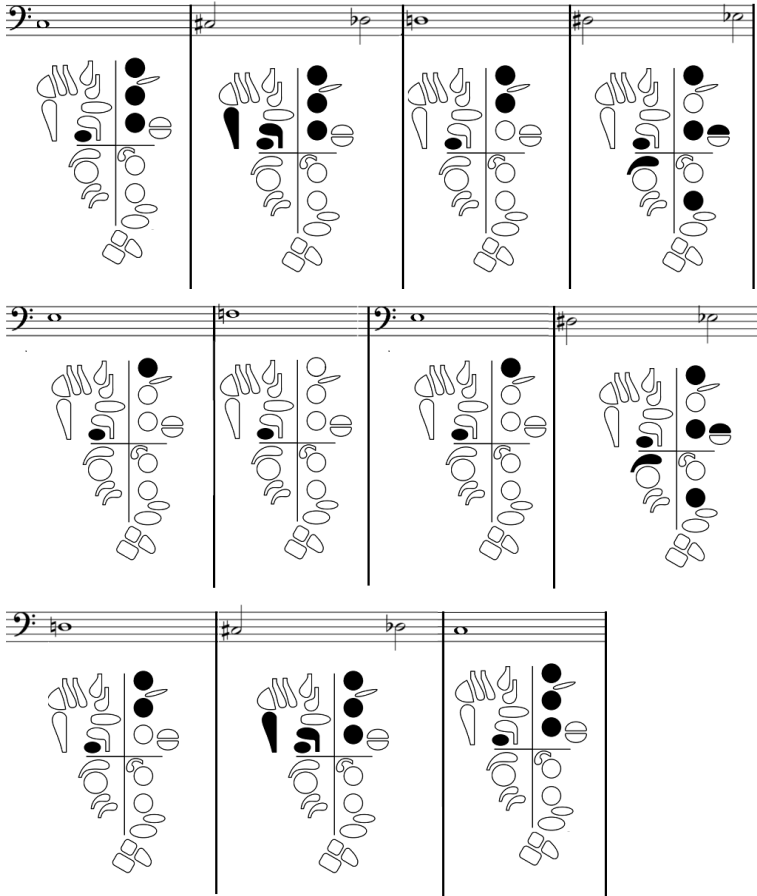
The image displays a musical exercise for the bassoon. It consists of a staff with a bass clef and four measures of music. The notes are G<sub>2</sub>, F<sup>#</sup><sub>2</sub>, F<sub>2</sub>, and E<sub>2</sub>. Below the staff are four diagrams showing the right-hand fingering for each note. A legend indicates that the low F key goes down when the back F<sup>#</sup> key is pressed.

Low F key goes down when back F<sup>#</sup> key is pressed

The image displays three rows of piano keyboard diagrams, each with four measures. The diagrams illustrate the left-hand notes and fingering for the piece. The notes are indicated by black dots on the keyboard, and the fingering is shown by numbers 1-5. The diagrams are arranged in three rows, with the first two rows having a treble clef and the third row having a bass clef. The notes in the first row are G2, F2, E2, D2. The notes in the second row are G2, F2, E2, D2. The notes in the third row are G2, F2, E2, D2. A note in the third measure of the third row is shaded grey, and a text box below it reads: "Low F key goes down when back F# key is pressed".

### Left-Hand notes

Now the notes in the left-hand change and two fingerings in the right hand are added for D#/Eb.



**Tip:**

Spend time practicing the chromatic scale every day to get the fingerings memorized and feeling familiar in your fingers. Start slowly and keep your hands as relaxed as possible. As the scale gets more familiar you can increase the speed.

Here is the one octave chromatic scale without the fingerings.

312 Carol Cope Lowe

The image shows two staves of musical notation. The first staff begins with a bass clef and contains eight measures of music. The notes are: G2, A2, B2, C3, D3, E3, F3, G3. The second staff begins with a bass clef and contains six measures of music. The notes are: G2, A2, B2, C3, D3, E3. The piece concludes with a double bar line.

## 34.

# Etudes and Solos with Range between Low F and Middle F

## Methods

*The First Complete **Weissenborn** Bassoon Method and Studies, Op. 8 Vols. 1 and 2*, edited by Frank Morelli (Carl Fischer)

Lessons I – X (pages 31-60) fit within the range of low F to middle F. The lessons include exercises in a variety of meters and rhythms, and several short duets with the top line intended for the student. The bottom part is intended for an advanced student or teacher and extends beyond the one-octave range from lower F to middle F.

## Etudes

*\*Bassoon Student* Student Instrumental Course – Level One (Elementary) by Henry T. Paine and Fred Weber (Belwin-Mills Publishing Corp.)

This is a method for individual instruction. Lessons 1-9 fit

within the range of low F to middle F and provide useful supplemental material.

**\*Caution: I include this method only for the musical examples it contains.** The outdated written instructions are contrary to the modern approach to bassoon playing. The method's author encourages forcing the embouchure into an exaggerated overbite and instructs the student to "Bite reed tighter" rather than increasing air speed when playing at the top of the bass staff.

## Solos (unaccompanied tunes)

Blue Moon Bassoon by Amanda J. Turley

This is a "comprehensive songbook for beginner and intermediate bassoonists."

Chapter 1: Around the World tunes 1-8

Chapter 2: The Emerald Isles tunes 10, 14

Chapter 3: Winter Wonderland tune 20

## Solos with piano accompaniment (Collections)

The Really Easy Bassoon Book - Very first solos for bassoon with piano accompaniment Composed or Arranged by Graham Sheen (Faber Music)

1. *March Introduction* Range: middle C to middle E
2. *Duet* Range: middle C to middle F

3. *Rondo* Range: middle C to middle F
4. *The Dancing Lesson* Range: low G to middle F
5. *Dulcian* Range: low G to middle F
6. *Russian Folksong* Range: low A to middle F

First Book of Bassoon Solos – Bassoon and Piano,  
edited & arranged by Lyndon Hilling & Walter  
Bergmann (Faber Music)

1. *Ostinato* by William Bergmann Range: middle C to middle F
4. *Czech Dance* Range: low G to middle E
5. *Barcarolle* by Lyndon Hilling Range: low F to middle F
6. *Variations on a German Christmas Song* by Walter Bergmann Range: low F to middle F
9. *Menuet du Tambourin* by Jacques Hotteterre (*Le Romain*) Range: low F# to middle F
10. *Minka* Range: low G# to middle E



## VII

# HALF-HOLE NOTES ON THE BASS STAFF



## 35.

### About Half-hole Technique

---

What is Half-hole?

Half-hole is basically leaking on purpose. A few notes have the same fingering for the low octave and the middle octave.

Half-hole allows the higher of these two octaves (middle octave) to speak clearly.



Which notes need half-hole?



How do you half-hole?

- Left index finger (top tone-hole on the front of the wing joint)
- Pivot or rock your finger downward.
- Avoid sliding or lifting your finger.
- Uncover top portion of the 'e' tone hole.
- Keep the whisper key engaged with your left thumb





**Troubleshooting:**

- If the note “growls” or is producing the lower octave, OPEN more of the hole.
- If the note “squeaks” or produces a partial that is too high, CLOSE more of the hole.
- Half-hole is not an exact specification of the amount of hole to be uncovered. The amount of exposed hole may be very slightly different for each of these pitches. For instance, the f-sharp may require slightly more of the hole to be open to speak clearly in the proper octave.



*One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here:*

<https://lowecc.pressbooks.sunycreate.cloud/?p=868#oemb-ed-1>



## 36.

### Lesson 9: Half-hole "pinky G"

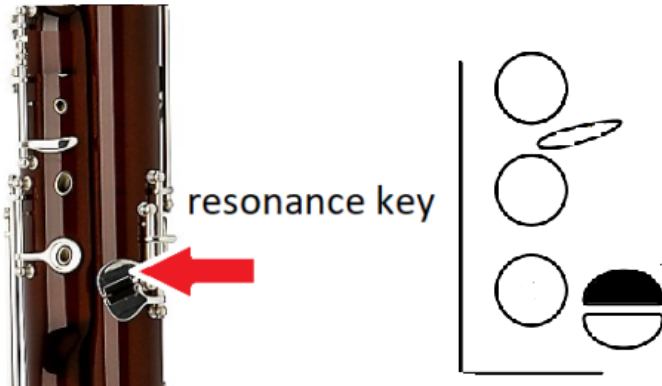
#### Reminder: Resonance Key

The **resonance key** is added to improve the intonation and tone quality of the top-space G. I call it the "pinky G" so I remember to include my left pinky on the resonance key.

Resonance Key on Long Joint

Key Diagram

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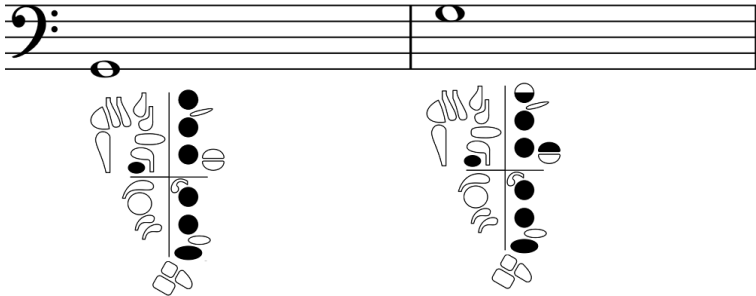
## Half-hole “pinky” G

The fingering for top space G is very close to the fingering for low G but top space G requires half-hole and the resonance key.

**Note:** You might need to open a little more or a little less of the E tone-hole to get each half-hole note to speak clearly.

- If the G **growls** (too much lower octave), OPEN MORE of the E tone hole.
- If the G **squeaks** or sounds airy, OPEN LESS of

the E tone hole.



### Matching Pitch

Half-hole pinky G can be tricky to tune. Play this exercise with an octave drone on G.

*If you are flat to the drone:*

- Make sure you listen carefully to the drone before playing.
- Blow a full, faster stream of air.

*If you are sharp to the drone:*

- Use the resonance key (top key for left pinky).
- Lower the back of your tongue by voicing an “ahh” vowel (like the word “hot”).
- Keep space between your teeth and in your oral cavity (hot pizza mouth).
- Keep the whisper key engaged with your left thumb.



### Matching Pitch

Bassoon

Reference Tone

### G Octaves

The next two exercises include visual reminders:



half-hole

**+RES** add resonance key

### G Octaves

### C major - One Octave

This exercise extends the range of the C major split octave scale by adding half-hole G at the top.

## C major - One Octave

## F to Half-hole “pinky” G

The next exercise focuses on playing open F to half-hole pinky G. The left thumb stays on the whisper key for the entire exercise, but all other fingers move.

**Reminders:**

- Keep your fingers close to the instrument when playing F so you can quickly find the holes to cover for G.
- Keep your fingers relaxed and use a light touch. You don't need to squeeze to cover the holes if you use the pads of your fingers.
- Add the resonance key (left pinky) on half-hole G so it will have good intonation and sound good.

## F to Half-hole "pinky" G

Four staves of musical notation in bass clef, 4/4 time. The first staff contains four measures: a quarter note G, quarter note F, quarter note G, quarter note G; a quarter rest, quarter note G, quarter rest; a quarter note G, quarter note G, quarter note G, quarter note G; and a half note G. The second staff contains four measures: quarter note G, quarter note G, quarter note G, quarter rest; quarter note G, quarter note G, quarter note G, quarter rest; quarter note G, quarter note G, quarter note G, quarter note G; and a quarter rest, half note G. The third staff contains four measures: quarter note G, quarter note G, quarter note G, quarter note G; a quarter rest, quarter note G, quarter rest; quarter note G, quarter note G, quarter note G, quarter note G; and a half note G. The fourth staff contains four measures: quarter note G, quarter note G, quarter note G, quarter rest; quarter note G, quarter note G, quarter note G, quarter rest; quarter note G, quarter note G, quarter note G, quarter note G; and a quarter rest, half note G.

## Lightly Row

This tune includes slurs and ties as well as breath marks for phrasing. The breath marks separate the tune into four 4-bar phrases. Slurs indicate a connection between musically grouped notes on different pitches, and ties connect notes of the same pitch.

## Lightly Row

Three staves of musical notation in bass clef, 4/4 time. The first staff contains six measures: quarter note G, quarter note G, half note G; quarter note G, quarter note G, half note G; quarter note G, quarter note G, quarter note G, quarter note G; quarter note G, quarter note G, quarter note G, quarter note G; quarter note G, quarter note G, quarter note G, quarter note G; and quarter note G, quarter note G, quarter note G, quarter note G. The second staff contains six measures: quarter note G, quarter note G, quarter note G, quarter note G; quarter note G, quarter note G, quarter note G, quarter rest; quarter note G, quarter note G, quarter note G, quarter note G; quarter note G, quarter note G, quarter note G, quarter note G; quarter note G, quarter note G, quarter note G, quarter note G; and quarter note G, quarter note G, quarter note G, quarter note G. The third staff contains six measures: quarter note G, quarter note G, quarter note G, quarter note G; quarter note G, quarter note G, quarter note G, quarter note G; quarter note G, quarter note G, quarter note G, quarter note G; quarter note G, quarter note G, quarter note G, quarter note G; quarter note G, quarter note G, quarter note G, quarter note G; and quarter note G, quarter note G, quarter note G, quarter note G.

## Intervals for Practice #1 - Half-hole G

Below is one more exercise working on half-hole pinky G and its neighboring notes.

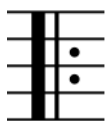
Intervals for Practice #1  
Half-hole G



## Grandfather's Clock

This tune introduces the use of **repeat signs**, and **1st and 2nd endings**.

**Repeat signs** tell the performer to play the music between the signs two times. Start at the beginning and play the first 8 bars, then play the music marked as the 1st ending and go back to the “start repeat” sign. Play through bars 2-8 again and then skip over the 1st ending and play the 2nd ending and continue playing to the end of the piece.



START repeat

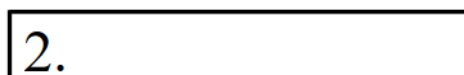


Repeat signs

END repeat



1st ending (play the first time through)



2nd ending (play the second time through)

### Grandfather's Clock

7

13

19

23

## Bicycle Built for Two

Be sure to observe the ties in bars 7-8, 15-16, 19-20, 23-24, and 31-32. Keep counting during the tied notes but do not articulate the second note in the tied pair.

### Bicycle Built For Two

Harry Dacre

## 3-note Practice D-Eb-F

The next exercise is a good review of middle Eb and will help you prepare to play the next tune, *Panis Angelicus*.

### 3-note Practice D-Eb-F

## Panis Angelicus

French composer Cesar Franck wrote a beautiful song

titled *Panis Angelicus* (Medici Music Press, arr. Ronald Dishinger)

- NYSSMA Level 2 solo
- Includes middle Eb and half-hole pinky G
- This is a song that has been arranged for bassoon so connect the notes with your air and use a gentle articulation.
- The wide black bar at the beginning is called a **multi-rest**, and it indicates a rest that lasts for several bars. The number above the bar tells you exactly how many bars to rest. Be sure to count the beats and measures as they happen so you don't miss your entrance. You need to count to 4 twelve times when you play with the accompaniment.

Panis Angelicus

Cesar Franck

Poco Lento  $\text{♩} = 72$   
12

18

25

31

40

46

52

55



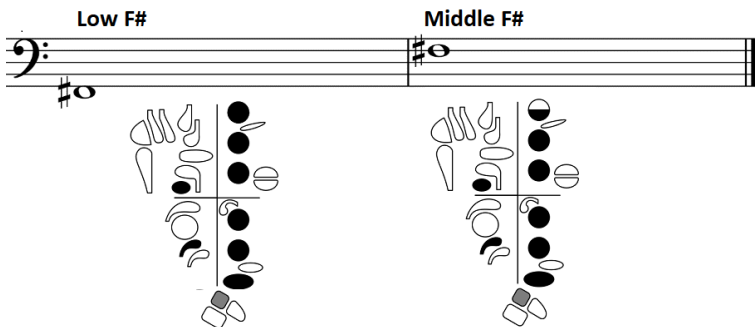
## 37.

## Lesson 10: Half-hole F-sharp/G-flat (F#/Gb)

Middle F-sharp (fourth line of the bass staff) uses the same F-sharp key as the low F-sharp covered in lesson 3. The only fingering difference between low F# and middle F# is the half-hole needed for the upper octave. Be sure to keep the whisper key engaged with your left thumb.

“Half-hole” is not a completely accurate term. You might need to open a little more or a little less of the hole to get the middle Ab to speak clearly in the upper octave.

- If the F# **growls** (too much low octave), OPEN MORE of the top hole.
- If the F# **squeaks** or sounds really airy, OPEN LESS of the top hole.





## Matching Pitch on F#

This note tends to be very sharp. Play this exercise with a drone on F#.

- Voice a low tongue vowel (hot or putt).
- Create space between your teeth and in your oral cavity (“hot pizza”)
- Cover less of the hole.



[tuningdrones.com](http://tuningdrones.com)

### Matching Pitch on F#

Bassoon

Reference Tone

### F# Octaves



- F-sharp requires a more open half-hole than G for a clear tone.
- You don't need to press the low F key when playing F-sharp because it goes down automatically when the f-sharp key is pressed.
- Pivot or roll your finger downward for the half-hole instead of sliding. The roll/pivot motion is much more accurate and efficient than the slide.

### F# Octaves



Now you know the notes for this one-octave G major scale. The half-covered circle above middle F# and G is a reminder to half-hole these notes. The resonance key is not used on half-hole F#, only for the half-hole G.



### Middle E to F#



Playing from E to F# is tricky because a lot of fingers have to move, and the top finger has to shift from full coverage to half-hole on the F#. Isolate these two notes and repeat them using as many rhythm and articulation patterns as you can create. Here are just a few suggestions:

**Middle E to Half-hole F#**

7

**Clouds and Sunshine**

This exercise includes two short melodic ideas, each in minor and then major. Which version sounds like “clouds”, and which one sounds like “sunshine”?

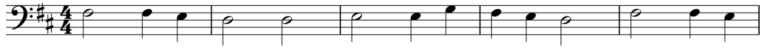
**Clouds and Sunshine**

8

14



## Go Tell Aunt Rhody



6



## Saints Go Marchin' In

The tune is written in the key of B major which has 5 sharps – F#, C#, G#, D#, and A#. These last three sharps (G#, D#, A#) might look unfamiliar but you already know them as Ab (G#), Eb (D#), and Bb (A#). Focus on the D# (fingered like Eb) for this tune.

### Saints Go Marchin' In



6



12



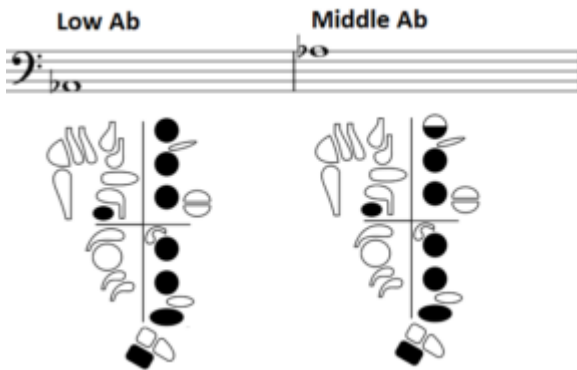


## 38.

## Lesson 11: Half-hole A-flat//G-sharp (Ab/G#)

The fingering for middle A-flat (top line bass staff) is almost the same as the low A-flat from lesson 6. The only difference between low A-flat and middle A-flat is the half-hole needed for middle A-flat.

- If the A-flat grows, open more of the E tone hole.
- If the A-flat squeaks or sounds really airy, open less of the E tone hole.



## Matching Pitch on Ab

Half-hole Ab should be a pretty good note with intonation. Playing with a drone will show if your breath support, embouchure, and voicing are good.

If your A-flat tends to be sharp:

- Voice a low tongue vowel (hot or putt).
- Create space between your teeth and in your oral cavity (“hot pizza”)
- Cover less of the hole.

If your A-flat tends to be flat:

- Increase your breath support
- Blow more air into the bassoon
- Voice a higher vowel [‘o’ like blow, or ‘i’ like sit]
- Hug the reed just a little stronger with your lips while keeping a little space between your teeth.



[tuningdrones.com](http://tuningdrones.com)

### Matching Pitch on Half-hole Ab

Bassoon

Reference Tone



## Eb melody



8



16



24



## Half-hole the Upper Octave

This exercise includes the three half-hole pitches on the bass staff. Speed up your air and adjust the amount of half-hole open as needed so the upper octaves speak with a clear and full tone. Avoid working harder with your embouchure for the upper notes.

## Half-hole the Upper Octave



5



9



13



## Practice Patterns (E-F#-G#)

This exercise, in the key of E, uses two of the same notes/

fingerings as the previous exercise but the A-flat is now spelled G-sharp.

Practice Patterns (E-F#-G#)

Au Claire de la lune

Traditional



**39.**

## **Exercises for Half-hole Practice**







## 40.

# Etudes and Solos with Range from low F to top line A flat

## Etudes & Methods

*The First Complete Weissenborn Bassoon Method and Studies, Op. 8 Vols. 1 and 2*, edited by Frank Morelli (Carl Fischer)

Lesson XI (pages 61-64) fit within the range of low F to middle A-flat.

*\*Bassoon Student* Student Instrumental Course – Level One (Elementary) by Henry T. Paine and Fred Weber (Belwin-Mills Publishing Corp.)

This is a method for individual instruction. Lessons 10-17 fit within the current range (low F to middle G) and provide useful supplemental material.

**\*Caution:** I include this method only for the musical examples it contains. The written instructions are outdated and contrary to the modern approach to bassoon playing. The author encourages forcing the embouchure into an exaggerated overbite and instructs the student to “Bite reed

tighter”. There is no mention of the speaker keys or change in air speed for upper notes.

## **Solos (unaccompanied tunes)**

Blue Moon Bassoon by Amanda J. Turley

Chapter 1: Around the World tune #9

Chapter 2: The Emerald Isles tunes 10-17

Chapter 3: Winter Wonderland tunes 19, 20, 22

Chapter 4: American Spirit tunes 23, 25, 29

Chapter 5: Night and Day tunes 36, 37, 39

## **Solos with piano accompaniment (Collections)**

Classic Festival Solos (Alfred Publishing Co.)

*Panis Angelicus* by Cesar Franck (ed. Henry T. Paine) Range: middle Bb to middle G

Master Solos Intermediate Level – Bassoon (Hal Leonard Publishing Corp.)

*Peasant Dance* from *Two Sketches* by Edmund J. Siennicki Range: low F to middle G

The Really Easy Bassoon Book – Very first solos for  
bassoon with piano accompaniment, Composed or  
Arranged by Graham Sheen (Faber Music)

7. *La Mere Gigogne et les Polichinelles* Range:  
low F to middle G

8. *Hungarian Folksong* Range: low F to middle  
G

9. *Two German Dances* from Schubert D. 783  
Range: low F to middle G

First Book of Bassoon Solos – Bassoon and Piano,  
edited & arranged by Lyndon Hilling & Walter  
Bergmann (Faber Music)

2. *Yugoslav Dance* Range: middle C to middle G

3. *Polka* Range: low G to middle G

7. *Gavotte* by Jacques Aubert Range: low F to  
middle G

13. *Hymn* by J. S. Bach Range: low A to middle  
G

14. *Waltz* by Franz Schubert Range: low G to  
middle G

15. *Minuet* by Henry Purcell Range: low G to  
middle G

16. *Andante* by Franz Schubert Range: low G#  
to middle G



## VIII

# THE SPEAKER KEY NOTES



# 41.

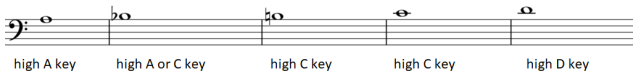
## About the Speaker Keys



*One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here:*

<https://lowecc.pressbooks.sunycreate.cloud/?p=871#oembed-1>

### Which notes use the Speaker Keys?



### Why do we use the Speaker Keys?

- Improve clarity of response/articulation (eliminates “bark” or hesitation)
- Facilitates slurring to speaker key notes from above and below.

The notes at the top of the bass staff share

fingerings with the notes at the bottom of the bass staff except that the whisper key is not pressed. While it is possible to get the notes to respond without the speaker keys by using fast air speed and optimal breath support, most beginning students tend to tighten the lips to get the upper notes. This creates inconsistent response, poor tone quality, sharp intonation, fatigue, a very small dynamic range, and leads to using the lips too much and not using enough air.

The “Speaker Keys” are so named because they allow notes to speak/respond easily, without additional lip pressure. The speaker keys allow the player to:

1. Maintain a full tone in the middle and upper octaves,
2. Improve intonation and flexibility,
3. Center the tone in upper octave,
4. Reduce muscle fatigue.

## **Where are the Speaker Keys?**

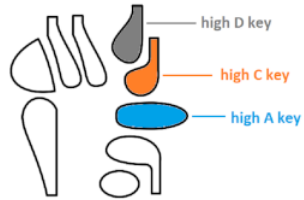
The speaker keys are located on the wing joint.

### Speaker Keys on the Wing



high D  
high C  
high A

### Thumb Keys Diagram



## Which finger operates the Speaker Keys?

The left thumb operates the speaker keys. This means your left thumb must release the whisper key and move up to the speaker keys.

## How do I decide which speaker key to use?

- Pressing one of the speaker keys may alter the pitch/timbre of the note slightly so choose the speaker key that creates the least pitch/timbre disruption.
- Some basic models of bassoons will not include a high D key. If there is no high D key the player must rely on a very fast air stream, raised back of the tongue, and slight increase in lip pressure to produce this note in the proper octave.

## When do we use the speaker keys?

Bassoonists' Commandment No. 1 is "Thou Shall Not Crack."

This means:

- Use the appropriate speaker key when you want to guarantee a clear entrance on middle A, upper Bb, B, C, and D.
- Use the appropriate speaker key when you have a slur to middle A, upper Bb, B, C, and D.

There are two scenarios where you *might* be able to get away with not using the speaker keys:

1. If you have an absolutely perfect reed that will let you play the speaker-key notes clearly and easily with no additional lip pressure, or
2. If the notes are moving in stepwise motion between speaker-key notes.

Learning to use the speaker keys takes practice but it is an excellent habit to develop because it will make the response of the speaker key notes extremely reliable.

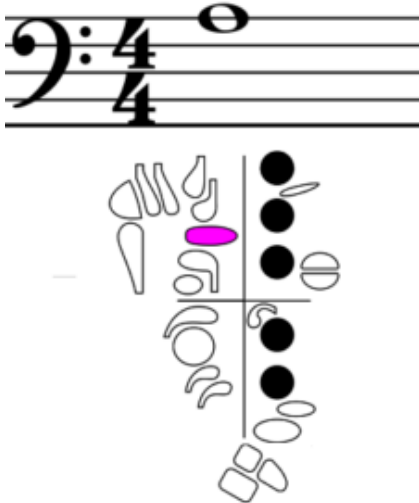
### Tip:

For the best intonation and tone, maintain fast air speed and optimal breath support even when using the speaker keys.

42.

## Lesson 12: Upper A

### Speaker Key A



The left thumb is the only digit that moves between low A and upper A. It will need to move between the whisper key and the high A key. As you learn to move your thumb between the various keys, you might need to watch your thumb to make sure you land on the correct key.

Low A Middle A

The image shows two musical staves. The left staff, labeled 'Low A', contains a single bass note (A1) on the first line. The right staff, labeled 'Middle A', contains a single bass note (A2) on the second line. Below each staff is a corresponding fingering diagram for the bassoon. The 'Low A' diagram shows the left hand with fingers 1-4 on keys 1-4 and the right hand with fingers 1-4 on keys 1-4, with the thumb on the low A key. The 'Middle A' diagram shows the left hand with fingers 1-4 on keys 1-4 and the right hand with fingers 1-4 on keys 1-4, with the thumb on the middle A key. A pink highlight is visible on the right-hand key diagram for Middle A.

### Matching Pitch

Play through *Matching Pitch on Upper A* to check your intonation on this new note. Use faster air for good response and tone.



[tuningdrones.com](http://tuningdrones.com)

### Matching Pitch on Upper A

The image shows two musical staves. The top staff is labeled 'Bassoon' and contains a single bass note (A2) on the second line. The bottom staff is labeled 'Reference Tone' and contains a series of notes (A1, A2, A3, A4, A5) on the first line, with a wavy line above them indicating a pitch contour.

If you are *flat* on the upper A:

- Make sure the E tone hole is completely covered (no half-hole).
- Raise the back of your tongue into more of an “ee” (see) position.
- Decrease space between your teeth and in the

oral cavity.

If you are *sharp* on the upper A

- Listen carefully to the drone to internalize accurate aural target, AND
- Use your best breath support and fast air, AND
- Increase space between your teeth.

### Balance Point

Finding a good balance point in your left hand is the key to fluid motion between the many thumb keys. Using minimal pressure on the keys and holes is also important. If you squeeze with your hands, it will take a lot of effort to lift your thumb off the whisper key.

To play these octave As, your left thumb will move between the whisper key and the high A speaker key. Each line in the following exercise will sound the same but your thumb will move more slowly and deliberately in the first line, a little quicker for the second line, and quickly for the third line. With a good bit of practice, your thumb will actually “memorize” the feel of this motion and the distance between these two thumb keys (like a pianist’s hands & fingers memorizing the feel of the various intervals).

Blow fast, cold air for the upper A and slow, warm air for the low A. The upper A tends flat so you will also need to change the vowel in your mouth by raising the back of your tongue.

## Speaker Key Exercise on A

Whisper (move) Speaker (move) Wk (move) Sk (move) Wk (move) Sk (move)

Wk (move) Sk (move) Wk (move) Sk (move) Wk (move) Sk (move) Wk (move) Sk (move) Wk (move) Sk (move)

Move thumb as close to change of octave as possible but keep thumb relaxed and controlled.

Wk Sk Wk Sk Wk Sk Wk Sk

Wk Sk Wk Sk Wk Sk Wk Sk

## Alma Mater in F

*Alma Mater in F* is an Old American song. The score below is marked with symbols to remind you of the following:

- **Green circle** means use half-hole
- **+res** means add the resonance key
- **Red line** means hold down the whisper key until the line stops or changes color
- Blue **Sp** and line means use the appropriate speaker key, which in this case is the High A key

## Alma Mater in F

Old American

Upper G to upper A is a challenging combination for the fingers.

**Practice Tip:** Using the Isolate and Repeat technique.

- Focus on your LEFT THUMB (whisper – A speaker – whisper)
- Focus on the LEFT INDEX (half – full -half)
- Focus on LEFT PINKY (resonance On-Off-On)

Now go back and play through *Alma Mater in F*. It should be much easier.

## Alma Mater in F

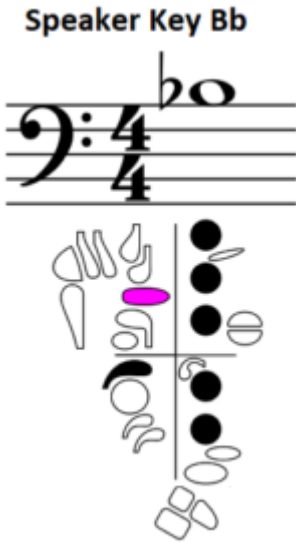
Old American

## Reminders

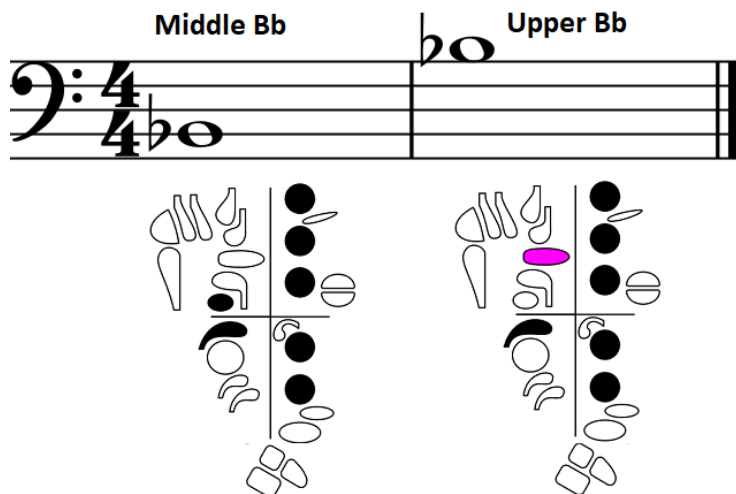
Speaker key exercises give the left thumb a workout. Keep your hands relaxed and allow the long/bass joint to balance near the base of the left index finger. This will allow the front of

the hand (and left fingers) to remain in position while the motion between whisper and speaker keys is isolated in your thumb.

43.

**Lesson 13: Upper Bb (Bb3)**

The fingering for upper Bb is almost the same as for the middle Bb you've already learned. The only finger that changes is the left thumb which moves from the whisper key to the high A or high C speaker key,



The only difference between playing octave As and octave B-flats is that your right thumb will press the Bb key for the B-flats. You should still be able to use the A speaker key on the upper Bb. If you get too much sound/pitch disruption with the A speaker key, try pressing the C speaker key instead.

## Matching Pitch

Play through *Matching Pitch on Bb* to determine which of the speaker keys works best for Bb on your bassoon. Use faster air for the upper Bb to get good response and tone.



[tuningdrones.com](http://tuningdrones.com)

### Matching Pitch on Upper Bb

Bassoon

Reference Tone

The image shows two musical staves. The top staff is labeled 'Bassoon' and contains four measures of music, each starting with a whole note Bb on the second line of the staff. The bottom staff is labeled 'Reference Tone' and contains a continuous series of whole notes, starting with a Bb on the second line and moving up stepwise to a Bb on the fourth line.

If you are *flat* on the upper Bb:

- Listen carefully to the drone to internalize an accurate aural target, AND
- Use your best breath support, AND
- Make sure the E tone hole is completely covered (no half-hole).
- Raise the back of your tongue into more of an “ee” (see) position.
- Decrease space between your teeth and in the oral cavity.

If you are *sharp* on the upper Bb:

- Listen carefully to the drone to internalize an accurate aural target, AND
- Use your best breath support and fast air, AND
- Increase space between your teeth.

### *Speaker Key Exercise on Bb*

This exercise will help train your thumb to move between the whisper key and the A or C speaker key.

- Your thumb must be on the correct key at the start of the note (whisper for lower Bb, speaker for upper Bb). This means your thumb will have to leave the current key early (before the start of the next note).
- Keep your embouchure and air speed the same until just before the beginning of the octave

change.

Whisper OR Speaker simile

Whisper (move) Speaker (move) Wk (move) Sk (move) Wk (move) Sk (move)

WK (move) SK (move) WK (move) SK (move) WK (move) SK (move) WK (move) SK (move)

Move thumb as close to change of octave as possible but keep thumb relaxed and controlled.

Wk Sk Wk Sk Wk Sk Wk Sk

Wk Sk Wk Sk Wk Sk Wk Sk

## Troubleshooting:

If your lower note jumps up as soon as you take your thumb off of the whisper key, your embouchure is too tight. Add space between your teeth and in your oral cavity by thinking “hot pizza mouth.”

## Bb major scale

Now you know the notes to play a one-octave Bb scale that goes between middle and upper Bb.

## Remember:

- Forked Eb can make this scale tricky so find

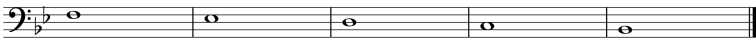
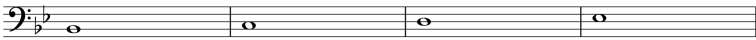
creative ways to isolate and repeat D-Eb-F until it is fluid.

- Half-hole and resonance key on G
- Pivot back to full hole for the A and Bb.
- Use the high A *or* high C speaker key on the top A and Bb.



[tuningdrones.com](http://tuningdrones.com)

Bb major scale  
(with tuning drone)



### Bb Scale Pattern Practice

This exercise is a good way to work through the finger combinations in the Bb scale.



## Bb Scale Pattern Practice

The image shows five staves of musical notation for the Bb scale in 4/4 time, bass clef. The scale is written in quarter notes. The notes are: Bb, C, D, Eb, F, G, Ab, Bb, C, D, Eb, F, G, Ab, Bb. The notation includes various annotations: red horizontal lines above the staff, green circles around specific notes, and green text '+res' (rest) below the staff. The staves are numbered 7, 13, 19, and 23. The first staff starts at measure 7 and ends at measure 12. The second staff starts at measure 13 and ends at measure 18. The third staff starts at measure 19 and ends at measure 24. The fourth staff starts at measure 23 and ends at measure 28. The fifth staff starts at measure 23 and ends at measure 28.

Now try playing the Bb scale in quarter notes straight up and down.

### Bb major scale

The image shows a single staff of musical notation for the Bb major scale in 4/4 time, bass clef. The scale is written in quarter notes. The notes are: Bb, C, D, Eb, F, G, Ab, Bb, C, D, Eb, F, G, Ab, Bb. The notation includes a red horizontal line above the staff and a double bar line at the end of the scale.

### College Song

This counting shown for this tune puts the “inactive counts” in parenthesis. Inactive counts are beats or subdivisions where nothing changes but you still need to count to keep the pulse and hold the note(s) for the correct duration. It is especially important to count these inactive beats to avoid getting lost or losing the beat.

## College Song

1(+2)+ 1(+2)+ 1+ 2+ 1+ 2+ 1(+2)+ 1+ 2+ 1(+2+ 1+)2+

## Over the River and Through the Woods

This tune includes half-hole notes and speaker key notes. Look through the music and identify the notes that require either half-hole or a speaker key and practice those intervals before playing the entire tune.

## Over the River and Through the Woods

**Allegro** American Folk Song

# Over the River and Through the Woods with finger reminders.

## Over the River and Through the Woods

**Allegro** *w* *Sp* American Folk Song

The musical score is written in bass clef with a key signature of one flat (B-flat) and a 3/4 time signature. It consists of four staves of music. Above the first staff, the tempo is marked 'Allegro' and there is a red line with a blue line above it labeled 'Sp'. Above the second staff, there is a red line. Above the third staff, there is a red line with a blue line above it labeled 'Sp'. Above the fourth staff, there is a blue line labeled 'Sp'. Green circles highlight specific notes on the first and third staves, with '+RES' written below them. Slurs and breath marks are present throughout the piece.

## Blue Bells of Scotland

Observe the phrasing (breath marks) and slurs. The left thumb will move between the whisper key and high A speaker key a lot, and don't forget the half-hole on top space G.

## Blue Bells of Scotland

The musical score is written in bass clef with a key signature of one flat (B-flat) and a common time signature. It consists of three staves of music. Each staff has a red line above it. Slurs and breath marks are present throughout the piece.

## Blue Bells of Scotland with reminders for

## your fingers.

### Blue Bells of Scotland

Blue Bells of Scotland

### March of the Leprechauns

Excerpt from *March of the Leprechauns* by Frank Erickson  
(Alfred Publishing, edited Arthur Best)

- NYSSMA Level 1 solo for bassoon and piano
- First 20 bars
- Two beats per bar, quarter note gets the beat.
- Observe the articulations:
  - Tenuto – a pressed accent
  - Staccato – spaced (create silence on both sides of the note)
  - Slur – only the note at the beginning of the slur gets tongued.

# March of the Leprechauns

Bassoon Solo

FRANK ERICKSON  
Ed. by Arthur Best

Moderately

4

1

*p*

2

This piece is only available as part of the collection *Classic Festival Solos, Volume 2* published by Alfred Publishing, Co.



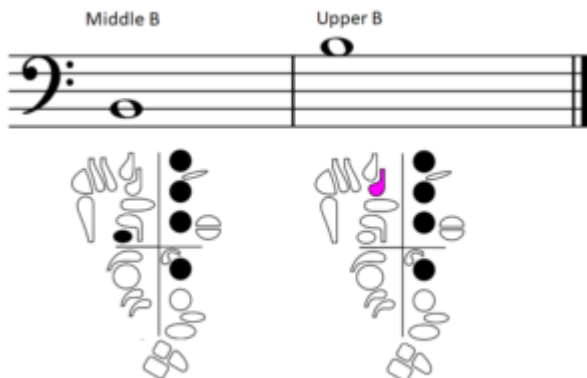
44.

## Lesson 14: Upper B (B3)

Speaker Key B

The upper B on most bassoons works best with the high C speaker key.

As with the other speaker key notes, the fingering is almost the same as the octave below. The left thumb is the only finger that changes between octaves, it is on the whisper key for middle B and the high C speaker key for upper B.



## Matching Pitch

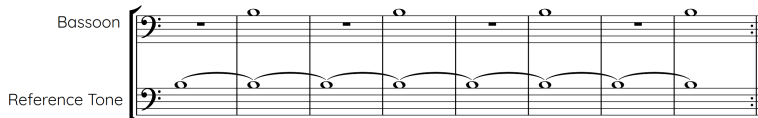
Play through *Matching Pitch on B* to determine which speaker key sounds best on your instrument.

- Use fast air in the upper octaves for good response and tone.
- Experiment with voicing to see where your tongue needs to be for good intonation.



[tuningdrones.com](http://tuningdrones.com)

### Matching Pitch on Upper B



## Speaker Key Exercise on B

This exercise will give you practice playing octave Bs.

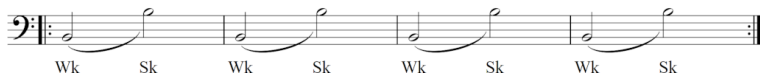
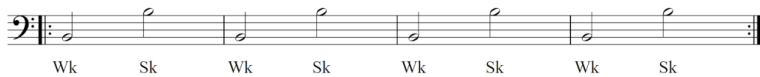
### Remember:

- Time your thumb motion to be in position to press the appropriate key for the next note **before** it starts.
- Use faster air for the speaker key notes for good intonation and tone.
- Use slower air for the lower B to keep it in the lower octave.
- Change voicing between octaves as needed (“ee” if upper octave is flat and back to “ah” for lower octave.)

## Speaker Key Exercise on B



Move thumb as close to change of octave as possible but keep thumb relaxed and controlled.



## Hot Cross Buns

Remember to use fast, cold air and your best breath support.

Half-hole G needs the resonance key (left pinky) to have good intonation and sound good.

### Hot Cross Buns



## B major Scale in half notes

B major might look scary with all of the sharps BUT you already know all of the fingerings. A-sharp feels like B-flat, G-sharp feels like A-flat, D-sharp feels like E-flat.

Play the scale through at a slow, safe tempo to sort out the finger patterns.

B major scale



B major scale

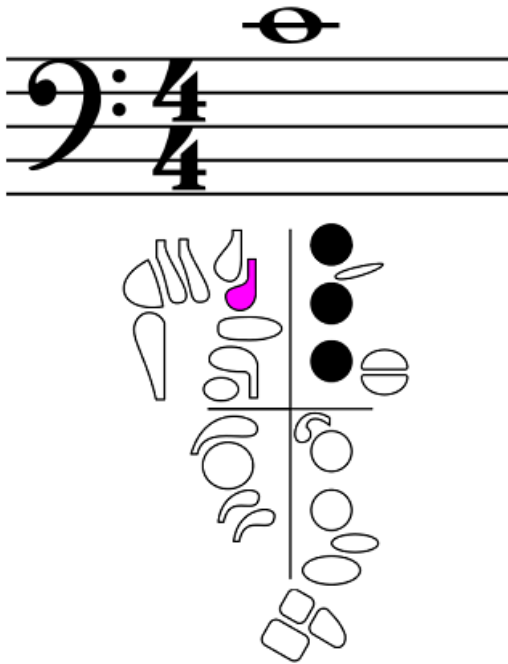




45.

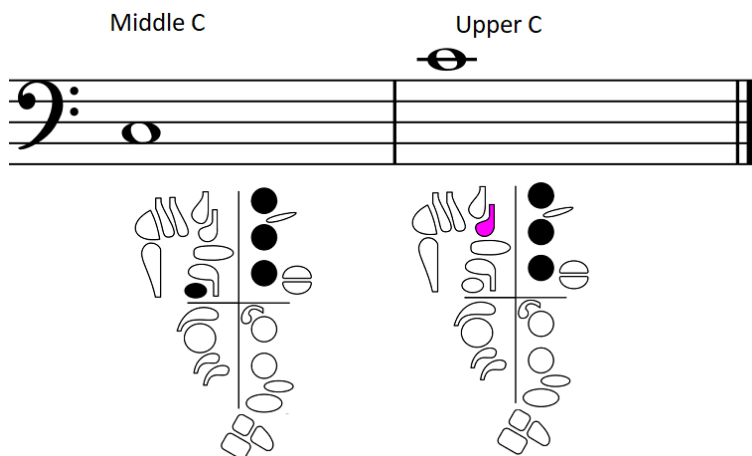
## Lesson 15: Upper C (C3)

Speaker Key C



The upper C on most bassoons works best with the high C speaker key. As with the other speaker key notes, the fingering is almost the same as C the octave below. The left thumb is the only finger that changes between octaves, it is

on the whisper key in the staff and on the high C speaker key above the staff.



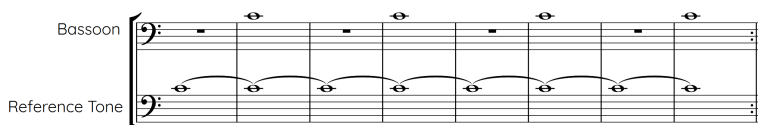
## Matching Pitch

Play through *Matching Pitch on C* to determine which speaker key sounds best on your instrument. Play with fast air and your best breath support for the best intonation and tone.



[tuningdrones.com](http://tuningdrones.com)

### Matching Pitch on Upper C



This upper octave C tends to be a *flat* note on the bassoon, so you'll need to:

- Listen carefully to the drone to create an accurate aural target, AND
- Use optimum breath support, AND
- Blow fast, cold air, AND
- Raise the back of your tongue to form an “ee” vowel.
- Press the high C speaker key.
- Increase support at the center of your bottom lip.

If you are *sharp*, rely more on your breath support and air speed to create the note AND

- Open your oral cavity and lower the back of your tongue
- Increase the space between your teeth and decrease pressure on the reed.

### Speaker Key Exercise on C

Practice timing the thumb motion between the whisper key and high C speaker key with the next exercise.

## 394 Carol Cope Lowe

simile

Whisper (move) Speaker (move) Wk (move) Sk (move) Wk (move) Sk (move)

WK (move)SK (move) WK (move)SK (move) WK (move)SK (move) WK (move)SK (move)

Move thumb as close to change of octave as possible but keep thumb relaxed and controlled.

Wk Sk Wk Sk Wk Sk Wk Sk

Wk Sk Wk Sk Wk Sk Wk Sk

## C major scale in half notes

The fingerings for this scale are pretty easy so focus on the following areas:

- Accuracy and ease of your left thumb,
- Air speed increases as you go up and decreases as you come back down,
- Keeping the tone full and the articulation clear.

C major scale

C major scale

## French Folk Song

*French Folk Song* needs to have a singing quality so use a light articulation in addition

to your usual best breath support. Singing the tune in your head as you play will help intonation and tone.

French Folk Song

9

15

Melody in the Second Octave

*Melody in the Second Octave* includes leaps from half-hole notes to speaker key notes. Remember that the E hole needs to be covered completely for the speaker key notes. The only half-hole note in the tune is the top-space G. Look through the music and find the half-hole Gs and identify the speaker key notes and practice those intervals before playing the entire tune.

Melody in the Second Octave

8

13

## Melody in the Second Octave with reminders

\_\_\_\_\_ = use the whisper key and slower air  
 \_\_\_\_\_ = use faster air and speaker key (high A or C)

**+RES** = add the resonance key (left pinky top key)

**note circled in green** = half-hole

**note in a purple box and 'EE'** = raise back of tongue to 'EE' vowel

### Melody in the Second Octave

### Ode to Joy

Here's another tune for half-hole and speaker key practice.

Remember:

- Use the whisper key on half-hole notes.
- Cover the top hole completely on speaker key notes.
- Use fast air at the top of the staff.
- Use “ee” vowel at top of staff.

- Isolate and repeat the difficult intervals. Use a variety of rhythms and articulations.
- Playing in this register can be tiring so plan regular practice instead of trying to learn all of this in one day.

### Ode to Joy

Beethoven

simile

The image shows three staves of musical notation in bass clef. The first staff begins with a 'simile' instruction. The music consists of eighth and quarter notes, with some rests. The key signature has one flat (B-flat).

### Ode to Joy with reminders

#### Ode to Joy

Beethoven

This image shows the same three staves of 'Ode to Joy' as above, but with various technical annotations. Above the notes, there are labels: 'Speaker keys' (blue), 'Whisper key' (red), 'Sp' (blue), and 'W' (red). Some notes are circled in green, and below them is the label '+RES'. There are also some 'EE' labels in purple above certain notes. The annotations are spread across all three staves.

### The Merry Peasant and Song

*The Merry Peasant* by Robert Schumann and *Song* by Philip Rosseter (Faber Music, *First Book of Bassoon Solos*, arr. L. Hilling & W. Bermann)

NYSSMA Level 2 (must play both movements)

# The Merry Peasant

Robert Schumann  
(1810-1856)

Measures 1-9 of 'The Merry Peasant' in bass clef, common time. Measure 1 starts with a forte (*f*) dynamic. Measure 9 ends with a mezzo-forte (*mf*) dynamic and a repeat sign. Accents are present above notes in measures 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, and 9.

# Song

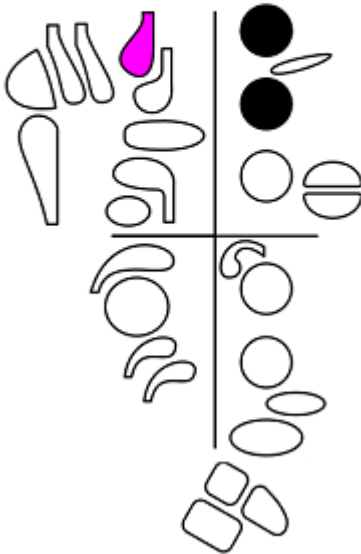
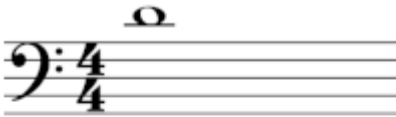
Philip Rosseter  
(1568-1623)

Measures 1-10 of 'Song' in bass clef, common time. Measure 1 starts with a piano (*p*) dynamic and a *legato* marking. Measure 10 ends with a pianissimo (*pp*) dynamic. Accents are present above notes in measures 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, and 10.

46.

## Lesson 16: Upper D (D3)

### Speaker Key D



The fingering for upper D is almost the same as the middle D you already know. The difference is that the left thumb moves from the whisper key up to the high D key.

Middle D                      Upper D

The image shows two musical staves. The left staff is in bass clef and contains a single note, Middle D, with a fingering diagram below it. The right staff is in bass clef and contains a single note, Upper D, with a fingering diagram below it. The fingering diagrams show the placement of fingers and the use of keys on the bassoon. The Upper D fingering diagram has a pink highlight on the key for the second finger.

### Matching Pitch

Upper D is a **very flat** note. Play through *Matching Pitch on Upper D* to figure out what you need to do to play upper D in tune. Use very fast air and your best breath support.



[tuningdrones.com](http://tuningdrones.com)

### Matching Pitch on Upper D

The image shows two musical staves. The top staff is labeled 'Bassoon' and contains a series of rests, indicating where the student should play. The bottom staff is labeled 'Reference Tone' and contains a series of notes, indicating the target pitch for the student to match.

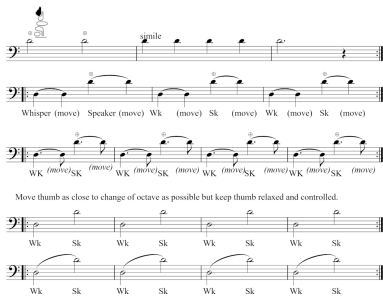
To raise the pitch of this typically *very flat* note:

1. Hear the D reference tone and sing it in your head.
2. Use a cold and very fast air stream.

3. Press the high D speaker key.
4. Raise the back of your tongue to voice an “ee” vowel.
5. If you are still flat, add just a little upward push from the center of your bottom lip.

**Note:** The least expensive student-model bassoons do not come standard with a high D speaker key. This key is worth the price if you can afford the upgrade. If you do not have a high D key, use very fast air along with a slight increase in support from the embouchure (especially from center of lower lip) on this note.

### Speaker Key Exercise on D



Whisper (move) Speaker (move) Wk (move) Sk (move) Wk (move) Sk (move)

Wk (move) Sk (move) Wk (move) Sk (move) Wk (move) Sk (move) Wk (move) Sk (move)

Move thumb as close to change of octave as possible but keep thumb relaxed and controlled.

Wk Sk Wk Sk Wk Sk Wk Sk

Wk Sk Wk Sk Wk Sk Wk Sk

### G minor scale segment

Etude #14 is in the key of G minor which has the same key signature as Bb major BUT there is an F-sharp to make G sound like the most important note (tonic).

Practice this scale segment before playing the etude to get used to the sound of the minor scale. If you play an F-natural instead of f-sharp in bar 5, the G after the F will sound less like an arrival. The F-sharp makes the G sound like the “home note” of the key.

G minor scale segment



## Belwin Mills Intermediate Etude #14

I started with this method book, and #14 was one of my favorite tunes.

**Note:** The original upper Eb in bar 11 has been changed to a C in this version to keep the tune within the player's current range.

**Etude #14**  
from Belwin Mills Intermediate Method

Andante

12

The image shows the first 12 measures of Etude #14 in bass clef, 3/4 time, with a key signature of one flat (Bb). The tempo is marked 'Andante'. The notation consists of three staves. The first staff contains measures 1-6, the second staff contains measures 7-10, and the third staff contains measures 11-12. The piece ends with a double bar line.

## Belwin Mills Intermediate Etude #15

### 3/4 Etude #15

from Belwin Mills Intermediate Method

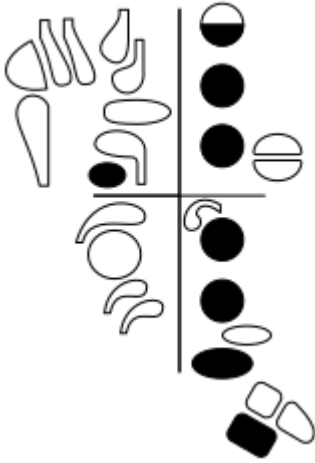
9

The image shows the first 9 measures of Etude #15 in bass clef, 3/4 time, with a key signature of one flat (Bb). The notation consists of two staves. The first staff contains measures 1-6, and the second staff contains measures 7-9. The piece ends with a double bar line.

## Sonata No. 1 in A minor

*Sonata No. 1 in A minor* by Johann Ernst Galliard is a wonderful work in five short movements. It was first published in 1733. Below is the first phrase of the fourth movement. The rest of the movement includes notes not yet covered. The last note of the first phrase has been raised an octave to fit the current range.

**Reminder:** Half-hole G# is fingered the same as half-hole Ab from Lesson 11.



IV.  
from Sonata No. 1

Johann Ernst Galliard

Allegro e staccato  
*Hornpipe l'Inglese*

*mf*

5

Musical notation for the bassoon part of the piece. The first staff is in bass clef, 3/4 time, and begins with a mezzo-forte (*mf*) dynamic. The second staff starts at measure 5 and ends with a repeat sign. The notation consists of eighth and sixteenth notes, with some rests and accidentals.



## 47.

### Lesson 17: Flicking



*One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here:*

<https://lowecc.pressbooks.sunycreate.cloud/?p=955#oembed-1>

#### Flicking

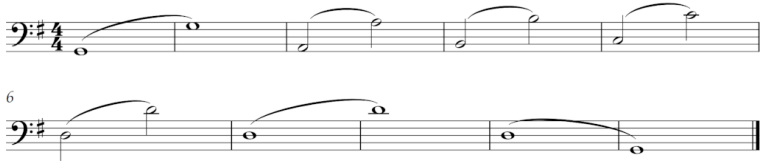
Flicking is a special technique for using the speaker keys (same notes/same keys). Instead of holding the appropriate speaker key down for the duration of the note, you start the note with the speaker key down but then release it once the note has begun. This creates a clear response for the note without a timbre or pitch disruption as the note is held.

#### Remember:

- Increase your air speed as the melody goes up and slow it back down as the melody descends.
- Raise the back of your tongue for the flat notes (esp. C and D above the staff) and drop it back

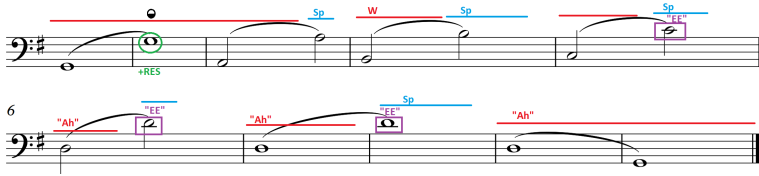


## Octave Slurs G to D



Here is the marked score for Octave Slurs G to D

## Octave Slurs G to D





**48.**

## **Building Embouchure Strength in the Speaker Key Register**

410 Carol Cope Lowe

Building Strength in the Speaker Key Register



## 49.

# Etudes and Solos with range of Low F to Upper D

## Methods

Rubank *Intermediate Method for Bassoon*

Most of the examples on pages 1-15 fit this range. However, a couple of them end on low C, a couple include upper C#, and a few extend to upper F.

*Bassoon Primer Method* by Ryszard Paciorkiewicz

Etudes 1-10 and #12 fit this range and provide challenging rhythms and meters for an engaged student.

*\*Bassoon Student* Student Instrumental Course – Level One (Elementary) by Henry T. Paine and Fred Weber (Belwin-Mills Publishing Corp.)

This is a method for individual instruction. Lessons 18-29 fit within the current range (low F to upper D) and provide useful supplemental material.

**\*Caution:** I include this method only for the musical examples. The written instructions are outdated and

contrary to the modern approach to bassoon playing. The author encourages forcing the embouchure into an exaggerated overbite and instructs the student to “Bite reed tighter”. There is no mention of the speaker keys or change in air speed for upper notes.

## **Etudes**

*26 Melodic Studies* by Graham Sheen (Emerson Edition Ltd.)

Etudes 1-6 fit this range.

## **Solos (short unaccompanied tunes)**

Blue Moon Bassoon by Amanda J. Turley

- Chapter 2: The Emerald Isles tune 18
- Chapter 3: Winter Wonderland tune 21
- Chapter 4: American Spirit tunes 24, 26-27, 30
- Chapter 5: Night and Day tunes 30, 32-34, 36, 40
- Chapter 6: Enchanted Forest tunes 41, 43, 45, 47-48
- Chapter 7: Dance Party tunes 52-54, 57
- Chapter 8: Festive Season tune 60
- Chapter 9: On the High Seas tunes 69-70
- Chapter 12: Yuletide Celebration tune 93
- Chapter 14: Wolfie and the Gang tune 104

## Solos (Collections)

*A Miscellany for Bassoon, Book I* by Michael Rose  
(ABRSM – C.F. Peters Corp.)

*Gavotte* Range: low F to upper C  
*Cantilena* Range: low G to upper C  
*Serenade* Range: low F to upper C (unaccompanied)  
*Menuet Antique* Range: low F to upper D  
*Sea Shanty* Range: low G to upper C

The Really Easy Bassoon Book – Very first solos for  
bassoon with piano accompaniment, Composed or  
Arranged by Graham Sheen (Faber Music)

11. *The Elephant* from Saint-Saens *Carnival of the  
Animals* Range: low G to upper C  
12. *Fine Knacks for Ladies* by John Dowland Range:  
middle C to upper C  
13. Two Norwegian Melodies by Edvard Grieg  
*Kuhreigen* Range: middle C# to upper Bb  
*Bauernlied* Range: middle C to upper D

### **Classic Festival Solos (Alfred Publishing Co.)**

*A Little March* by Roy D. Johnson Range: middle Bb to  
upper A  
*Valse* by Henry T. Paine Range: middle Bb to upper C  
*Preludio* by John Cacavas Range: low G to upper C  
*Funiculi Funicula* by Luigi Denza (ed. Henry T. Paine)  
Range: middle Bb to upper C

*A Song of Sadness* by P. Tchaikovsky, Op. 40, No. 2 (arr. John Cacavas) Range: low G to upper D

*Prayer of Adoration* by Giovanni Bonacini (arr. John Cacavas) Range: middle C to upper C

*Menuet of the Oxen* by Franz Joseph Haydn (transcribed by Alan Hawkins) Range: low F to upper D

First Book of Bassoon Solos – Bassoon and Piano,  
edited and arranged by Lyndon Hilling and Walter  
Bergmann (Faber Music)

17. *Nobody's Jigg* Range: low F to middle A

19. *Cockle Shells* Range: low G to middle A

20. *Merry Peasant* by Robert Schumann Range: low  
G to upper C

21. *Song* by Philip Rosseter Range: middle D to upper  
C

22. *Welsh Folk Song I* Range: low A to upper A

23. *Gavotte* by Francesco Barsanti Range: middle C  
to upper C

24. *Welsh Song II* Range: low G to upper C

25. *Prelude* by J. S. Bach Range: low G to upper Bb

Standard of Excellence Festival Solos, Book 2, 15 Easy  
Solos for Young Musicians (Neil A. Kjos Music Co.)

*Ancient Ayre* by John Barrett Range: middle Bb to upper  
C

*March from the Overture to "The Occasional  
Oratorio"* by George Frideric Handel Range: middle Bb  
to upper C

*Little March* by Leopold Mozart Range: middle Bb to  
upper C

*March, Op. 85* by Robert Schumann Range: low A to upper D

*Renaissance Festival* by Tylman Susato Range: middle C to upper C

*Sailor's Song* by Edvard Grieg Range: middle Bb to upper C

*A Day in Venice, Op. 131, No. 7* by Ludvig Schytte  
Range: middle Bb to upper D

*La Bouffonne* by Francois Couperin Range: middle C to upper D

*Time Pieces for Bassoon, Volume 2* arranged by Ian Denley (The Associated Board of the Royal Schools of Music)

*Menuetto e Trio* from *Serenade in Bb, K. 361* by W. A. Mozart Range: low F to upper D

## Solos (Individual Pieces)

*A Russian Folk Song* by P. I. Tchaikovsky (transcribed by Alan Hawkins), Publisher: Belwin-Mills Publishing Corp.

Range: middle Bb to upper Bb

*Andante in E-Flat Major, K.3* by Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (transcribed by Alan Hawkins) Publisher: Belwin-Mills Publishing Corp. Range: low A to upper Bb

*Aria* from *Cantata No. 88, BWV 88 "Call Ye on God, so Gain His Blessings"* (arr. Ronald Dishingier) Publisher: Medici Music Press Range: middle Bb to upper D

*Funeral March of a Marionette* by Charles Gounod (arr. Harold L. Walters) Publisher: Rubank, Inc. Range: low G to upper A

*Gigue* by Roy D. Johnson, Publisher: Belwin-Mills Publishing Corp. Range: low G to upper D

*March from Suite No. 5* by Henry Purcell (trans./arr. by Ronald C. Dishinger) Publisher: Medici Music Press, Inc. Range: middle C to upper D

*March of the Leprechauns* by Frank Erickson (ed. Arthur Best) Publisher: Belwin-Mills Publishing Corp. Range: middle C to upper Bb

*Minuet* by Franz Joseph Haydn (adapted by Henry T. Paine) Publisher: Belwin-Mills Publishing Corp. Range: low G to upper D

*Rondeau* by F. W. Marpurg (arr. Hugo D. Marple) Publisher: Southern Music Co. Range: low A to upper D

*Scherzo* by Henry T. Paine Publisher: Belwin-Mills Publishing Corp. Range: low F to upper D

*The Merry-Go-Round* by William Spencer, Publisher: Hal Leonard Music Inc. Range: middle Bb to upper Bb

*Waltz for Bassoon* by Roy D. Johnson, Publisher: Belwin-Mills Publishing Corp. Range: middle Bb to upper C

IX

# **ABOVE THE SPEAKER KEY NOTES**



**50.**

## **Playing Above the Speaker Key Register**



## Upper Notes and the Need for Speed!

- Higher notes need cold, fast air. The higher the note, the colder and faster the air needs to be.
  - Imagine you are going to shoot a spit wad, or a watermelon seed all the way across the room. Use the muscles of your core to supercharge your air speed.
- Keep your shoulders, chest, neck, arms, hands, and fingers relaxed because effort from any of these areas will not be helpful.
- Place your lips at least halfway up on the reed. As you move higher in the range, move your lips closer to the first wire.
- Upper D and upper F are the flattest notes on the bassoon. Be sure to:
  - Use your very best breath support.
  - Blow very fast, cold air.
  - Voice a high vowel shape (“ee”) by raising the back of your tongue.
  - Use the natural speaking space in your oral cavity (AVOID “hot pizza mouth”).
  - Firm lips support the reed, but the

jaws remain soft and relaxed (AVOID clamping down on the reed.)

Use the *Matching Pitch* exercise regularly to check the intonation of these notes.

## 51.

### Lesson 18: Upper C-sharp/D-flat (C#/Db3)

#### The Thumb C# Key

The thumb c-sharp key is located on the wing joint, immediately above the whisper key.

Thumb C# key on Wing Joint

Left Thumb keys



#### Thumb C# is Not a Speaker Key

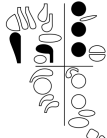
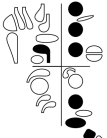
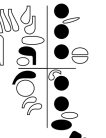
The speaker keys only address the response of notes, not the actual pitch of the notes. With upper C# you have to

press the thumb C# key for the duration of the note. If you don't press the thumb C# key or if you only flick it at the beginning of the note, the pitch will change to something other than upper C#.

## Fingerings for Upper C#

There are three standard fingerings for the third octave C#/Db; each has a different sound, feel, and intonation. Try all three fingerings and see which works best on your instrument. Be sure to consider response and intonation first, followed by tone quality and blend with the surrounding pitches. Fluency with all three options will allow you to choose the best one for each musical situation.

### Three Upper C-sharp fingerings

		
<p>"short c#" flat with muted tone hard to center pitch fewest fingers needed</p>	<p>"long c#" sharp with bright tone easy response more fingers</p>	<p>"full C#" best intonation &amp; tone good response most fingers needed</p>

## Matching Pitch

Play the Matching Pitch exercise using each of the three fingerings to see which is the most accurate for you.



### Matching Pitch on Upper C#

Bassoon

Reference Tone

Detailed description: This block contains two staves of music. The top staff is labeled 'Bassoon' and shows a series of seven notes on a five-line staff, each marked with a sharp sign (#) above it, indicating the pitch of the notes. The bottom staff is labeled 'Reference Tone' and shows a series of seven notes on a five-line staff, each marked with a sharp sign (#) above it, indicating the pitch of the notes. The notes are connected by a series of curved lines, suggesting a continuous melodic line.

### D major Segment

Detailed description: A single staff of music in bass clef with a key signature of one sharp (F#) and a 4/4 time signature. It contains seven notes: D2, E2, F#2, G2, A2, B2, and C#3, all marked with a sharp sign (#) above them. The notes are connected by a series of curved lines, suggesting a continuous melodic line.

### D major scale

Detailed description: A single staff of music in bass clef with a key signature of one sharp (F#) and a 4/4 time signature. It contains a sequence of notes: D2, E2, F#2, G2, A2, B2, C#3, D3, E3, F#3, G3, A3, B3, and C#4. The notes are connected by a series of curved lines, suggesting a continuous melodic line.

Detailed description: A single staff of music in bass clef with a key signature of one sharp (F#) and a 4/4 time signature. It contains a sequence of notes: D3, E3, F#3, G3, A3, B3, C#4, D4, E4, F#4, G4, A4, B4, and C#5. The notes are connected by a series of curved lines, suggesting a continuous melodic line.

### Chester

William Billings  
arr. W. Schuman

Detailed description: A single staff of music in bass clef with a key signature of one sharp (F#) and a 4/4 time signature. It contains a sequence of notes: D3, E3, F#3, G3, A3, B3, C#4, D4, E4, F#4, G4, A4, B4, and C#5. The notes are connected by a series of curved lines, suggesting a continuous melodic line.

Detailed description: A single staff of music in bass clef with a key signature of one sharp (F#) and a 4/4 time signature. It contains a sequence of notes: D3, E3, F#3, G3, A3, B3, C#4, D4, E4, F#4, G4, A4, B4, and C#5. The notes are connected by a series of curved lines, suggesting a continuous melodic line.

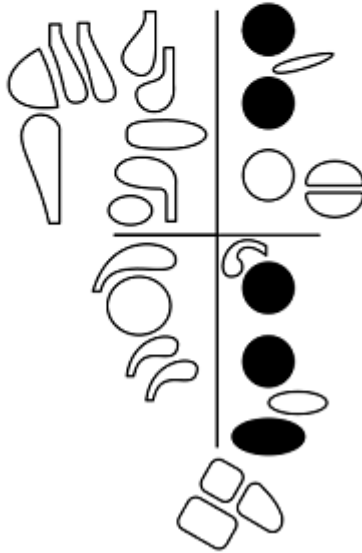
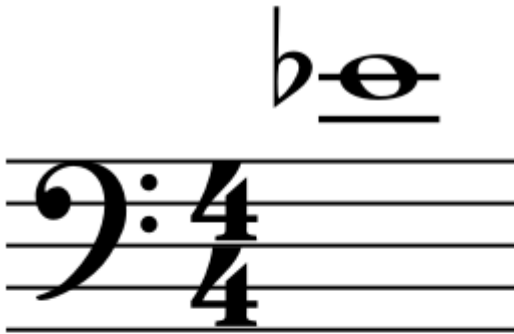
Detailed description: A single staff of music in bass clef with a key signature of one sharp (F#) and a 4/4 time signature. It contains a sequence of notes: D3, E3, F#3, G3, A3, B3, C#4, D4, E4, F#4, G4, A4, B4, and C#5. The notes are connected by a series of curved lines, suggesting a continuous melodic line.



**52.**

**Lesson 19: Upper E-flat/D-sharp (Eb/  
D#)**

## Fingering



## Intonation

This note tends to be flat so be sure to:

- Use your very best breath support

- Blow very fast, cold air
- Voice a high vowel shape
- Use the natural space in your oral cavity (do NOT exaggerate the space between your teeth for this note)
- Firm lips but relaxed, soft jaws

### *Matching Pitch*

Maintain your breath support and experiment with voicing higher and lower to explore the intonation of this note on your instrument and reed.

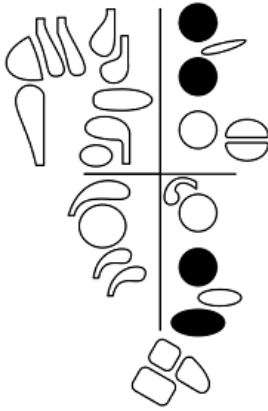
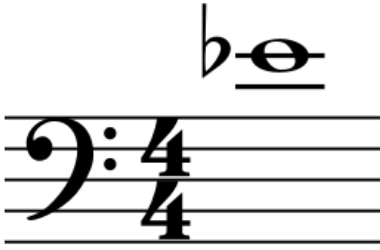


[tuningdrones.com](http://tuningdrones.com)

#### Matching Pitch on Upper Eb

### Slur fingering for upper Eb

Increasing your air speed helps a lot with upward slurs. However, with upper Eb changing the air speed isn't usually enough. There is a special fingering that makes slurring to upper Eb much easier than with the standard Eb fingering. It is close to the regular fingering for upper Eb, but you don't use the right index finger.



### Etude for upper Eb

Use the slur fingering for upper Eb in bars 7 and 12.

### Etude for upper Eb



## Eb major scale



## Alma Mater

Old American

Rubank *Andante* #2

The composer of this etude included detailed information about the articulation. As the performer, it is our responsibility to honor the composer's wishes by observing all markings.

**Staccato** appears as a dot over a note.

1. It means to put separation or space on both sides of the note with the dot.
2. It can also mean "play half the value of the note." A quarter note with a staccato dot can be played the same length as a regular eighth note.

**Tenuto** appears as a line above a note.

1. It is a type of pressed or weighted accent.
2. Tenuto can also mean to make the note a little

longer than normal.

There are also slurs of varying lengths, some only two or three notes, others for 6 or more notes.

### Andante

#### #2

from Rubank Elementary Method

9

17

25

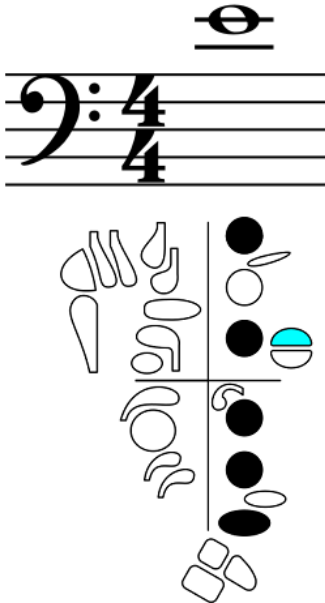
33

37

53.

## Lesson 20: Upper E

Fingering



**NOTE:** Adding the resonance key can improve the intonation and tone quality of the upper E. However, on some bassoons, adding the resonance key makes the note too flat.

## Intonation & Tone Quality

This note tends to have a thin tone quality compared to the neighboring pitches. Be sure to:

- Use your very best breath support.
- Blow very fast, cold air
- Voice a middle to high vowel shape depending on your intonation on this note.
- Experiment with the space in your oral cavity and between your teeth to find the most in-tune and resonant position for this note.
- Firm lips but soft jaws
- Most bassoonists add the resonance key on this note to help the intonation and tone quality. Play the note with and without the resonance key to see which is best in tune and which has the best tone quality.

### *Matching Pitch*

Maintain your breath support and experiment with adding the resonance key and with voicing to develop consistently accurate intonation.



[tuningdrones.com](http://tuningdrones.com)

## Matching Pitch on Upper E

## E major Segment

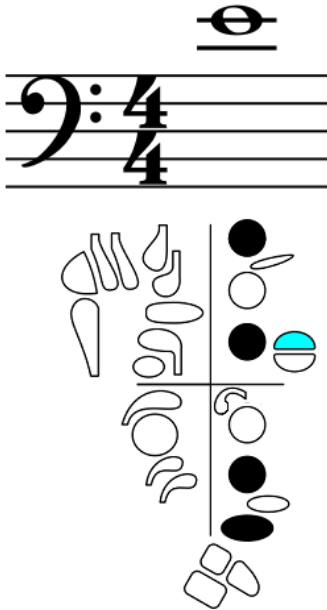
E major is a tricky key for the fingers and for intonation.

1. Play this scale segment slowly to work on coordination and ease of finger motion.
2. Experiment with each of the 3 fingering options for C# to see which works best for you in this key.

## E major Segment

## Slur Fingering for upper E

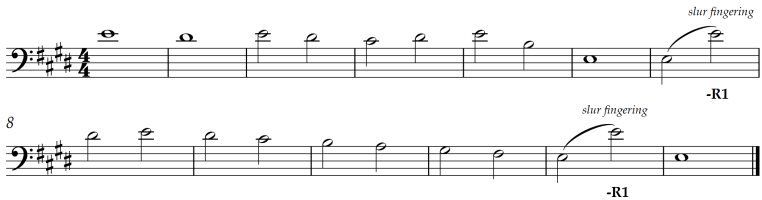
Upper E is another note that needs some extra help when slurring to it. Use the same trick for E3 that you used for Eb in the previous lesson. Leave off the right-hand index finger when you need to slur to upper E.



### Etude for upper E

This etude is a transposed version of *Etude for upper Eb*. It is a half-step higher and like the version in Eb, has two bars that require slurring from middle E to the upper E.

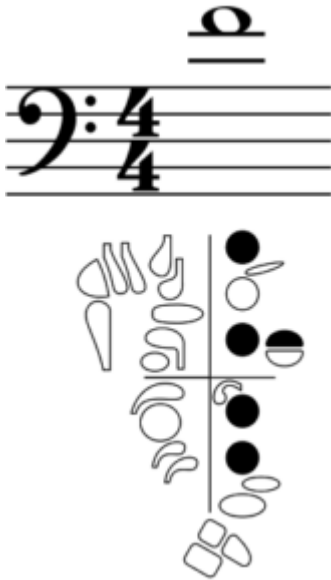
#### Etude for upper E



54.

## Lesson 21: Upper F

Fingering



Intonation and Tone Quality

It is important to use the Resonance Key on all notes F and above. The resonance key will improve intonation and will add fullness to the tone quality.

This note tends to be flat so be sure to:

- Use your very best breath support
- Blow very fast, cold air
- Voice a high vowel shape
- Use the natural space in your oral cavity (do NOT exaggerate the space between your teeth for this note)
- Firm lips but relaxed, soft jaws
- Add a **small** amount of upward support from the center of your bottom lip/jaw



[tuningdrones.com](http://tuningdrones.com)

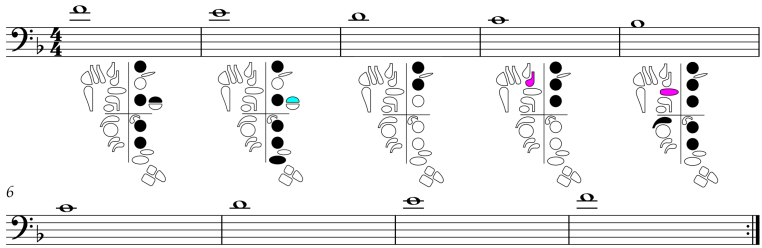
### Matching Pitch on Upper F

Musical notation for matching pitch on upper F. It consists of two staves. The top staff is labeled 'Bassoon' and the bottom staff is labeled 'Reference Tone'. Both staves are in bass clef. The top staff shows a sequence of notes: a whole note on F4, a half note on F4, a quarter note on F4, a quarter note on F4, a half note on F4, a quarter note on F4, a quarter note on F4, and a quarter note on F4. The bottom staff shows a sequence of notes: a whole note on F4, a half note on F4, a quarter note on F4, a quarter note on F4, a half note on F4, a quarter note on F4, a quarter note on F4, and a quarter note on F4. The notes in the top staff are marked with a small 'u' above them, indicating they are upper notes.

### F major Segment

In the key of F major, the tricky fingering happens between upper E and upper D with the change in the left-hand middle and ring fingers and lifting the pinky resonance key. Moving from upper F to upper E only requires adding the right-hand ring finger.

## F major Segment



## C major extended scale

This exercise extends the C major scale beyond one octave to give you practice playing upper D, E, and F. Just like in F major, the tricky fingering happens between upper D and E with the change in the left-hand middle and ring fingers and the addition of the pinky resonance key. Moving from upper E to F only requires lifting the right-hand ring finger.

C major extended scale



## Bb major Segment

In the key of Bb major, the tricky fingering is between upper F and E-flat because you have to swap the left-hand middle and ring fingers and lift the pinky resonance key while also adding the right-hand ring finger. E-flat to D requires changing three fingers but all are lifted so it isn't as tricky.

## Bb major Segment

The image shows two staves of music in bass clef with a key signature of two flats (Bb major). The first staff contains ten measures, each with a single note on the staff. The notes are Bb, Bb, Bb, Bb, Bb, Bb, Bb, Bb, Bb, and Bb. Fingerings are indicated by numbers 1-5 and slurs. The second staff contains four measures, each with a single note on the staff. The notes are Bb, Bb, Bb, and Bb. Fingerings are indicated by numbers 1-5 and slurs.

## Etude for upper F

Unlike with upper E-flat and E, there is no slur fingering for F3. As you make the slur you need to:

- Audiate the octave to create an accurate aural target (hear where you are aiming).
- Maintain your best breath support.
- Double your air speed as you move to the upper F.
- Add a small amount of upward pressure from the center of your bottom lip.
- Add the resonance key for the upper F.

## Etude for upper F

The image shows two staves of music in bass clef with a key signature of two flats (Bb major). The first staff contains ten measures, each with a single note on the staff. The notes are F, F, F, F, F, F, F, F, F, and F. Fingerings are indicated by numbers 1-5 and slurs. The second staff contains ten measures, each with a single note on the staff. The notes are F, F, F, F, F, F, F, F, F, and F. Fingerings are indicated by numbers 1-5 and slurs.

## Extended Bb Major Scale

♩ = 66

Musical notation for the Extended Bb Major Scale in bass clef, 4/4 time. The scale starts on G2 and ends on G3. The first line contains measures 1-6, and the second line contains measures 7-12. The notes are: G2, A2, Bb2, C3, D3, E3, F3, G3, F3, E3, D3, C3, Bb2, A2, G2.

## Using the upper F

Musical notation for 'Using the upper F' in bass clef, 4/4 time. The piece consists of four staves of music. The first staff starts at measure 1 and ends at measure 8. The second staff starts at measure 9 and ends at measure 15. The third staff starts at measure 16 and ends at measure 22. The fourth staff starts at measure 25 and ends at measure 31. The music features various articulations and slurs, including a prominent use of the upper F (F3) in the later measures.



## 55.

### **Embouchure Building Exercises for Upper Notes**

These exercises are for building embouchure strength.

- They are not about playing “fast notes.”
- Play them slowly.
- Focus your attention on your breath support, air speed, and intonation.
- Use only the muscles that you need (core and embouchure).
- Keep shoulders, neck, chest, arms, hands, and fingers relaxed.
- Squeezing or pinching anything will not have a good result.
- Repeat each pattern at least once.

### Exercises for Upper Notes

1

1

7

7

11

11

17

17

21

21

27

27

31

31

37

37

## 56.

### Etudes and Solos with 2 octave range (low F to Upper F)

#### Methods

*\*Bassoon Student* Student Instrumental Course – Level One (Elementary) by Henry T. Paine and Fred Weber (Belwin-Mills Publishing Corp.)

This is a method for individual instruction. Lessons 30-32 fit within the current range (low F to upper F) and provide useful supplemental material.

**\*Caution:** I include this method only for the musical examples it contains. The written instructions are outdated and contrary to the modern approach to bassoon playing. The author encourages forcing the embouchure into an exaggerated overbite and instructs the student to “Bite reed tighter”. There is no mention of the speaker keys or change in air speed for upper notes.

## **Etudes**

*The Singing Bassoon – Forty legato studies, Op. 17* by  
Giuseppe Concone Edited by June Emerson

Legato studies ideal for developing full and consistent breath support, centered tone, phrasing, and smooth slurs. Range of the etudes is generally on the bass staff rising frequently to D above the staff and occasionally to E and F above the staff.

## **Solos (short tunes without accompaniment)**

Blue Moon Bassoon by Amanda J. Turley

Chapter 4: American Spirit tune 31

Chapter 5: Night and Day tune 38

Chapter 6: Enchanted Forest tunes 42, 46

Chapter 7: Dance Party tunes 51-52, 56, 58

Chapter 8: Festive Season tunes 61-62

Chapter 9: On the High Seas tunes 67, 72

Chapter 10: At the Symphony tunes 75-76, 78

Chapter 11: Haunted Grove tunes 82, 84-86, 89-90

Chapter 12: Yuletide Celebration tunes 91, 94

Chapter 13: Out West tunes 96-97, 99-100

Chapter 14: Wolfie and the Gang tune 107

## **Solos (Collections)**

A Miscellany for Bassoon, Book I by Michael Rose (The

Associated Board of the Royal Schools of Music)

- Hornpipe* Range: middle B to upper E (unaccompanied)  
*Folksong* Range: low A to upper E  
*Ballad* Range: low A to upper F  
*Intrada* Range: low G to upper F  
*March* Range: low G to upper E

A Miscellany for Bassoon, Book II by Michael Rose  
(The Associated Board of the Royal Schools of Music)

- Habanera* Range: low F to upper F  
*Polka* Range: low F to upper E (unaccompanied)  
*Tango* Range: low G to upper F  
*Dance* Range: low A to upper E  
*Waltz* Range: low A to upper E

Classic Experience Collection (Cramer Music, London)  
Favorite Classical Themes Arranged for Bassoon and  
Piano by Jerry Lanning

- Moonlight Sonata* First Movement by Ludwig van  
Beethoven Range: low G to upper F  
*Overture from Carmen* by Georges Bizet Range:  
middle B to upper E  
*Two Themes from Peter and the Wolf* by Serge  
Prokofiev Range: low A to upper F  
*Sheep May Safely Graze* by Johann Sebastian Bach  
Range: middle D to upper F  
*Vesti La Giubba* from *Pagliacci* by Ruggero  
Leoncavallo Range: middle D to upper F  
*Waltz* from *Coppelia* by Leo Delibes Range: low G to  
upper F

Classic Festival Solos for Bassoon (Alfred Publishing Co.)

*The Happy Farmer* by Robert Schumann (arr. Roy D. Johnson) Range: middle Bb to upper Eb

*Waves of the Danube* by Ivanovici (ed. Henry T. Paine)  
Range: low G to upper Db

*Saraband and Minuet* from Sonata No. 6 by Johann Galliard (transcribed and edited by Harry R. Gee)  
Range: low C to upper Eb

*Elegy* by Jules Massenet (arr. Roy D. Johnson) Range:  
low A to upper Eb

*In the Hall of the Mountain King* by Edvard Grieg (arr. Roy D. Johnson) Range: low A to upper C#

*Allegro Appassionata, Op. 43* by Camille Saint-Saens (arr. Henry T. Paine) Range: low E to upper F

First Book of Bassoon Solos – Bassoon and Piano,  
edited and arranged by Lyndon Hilling and Walter Bergmann (Faber Music)

26. *Landler* by Franz Schubert Range: middle D to upper Eb

27. *Rustic March* by Carl Maria von Weber Range:  
middle Bb to upper D (w/ upper C# grace note)

First 50 Songs You Should Play on the Bassoon (Hal Leonard)

Songs from this book fit within this 2 octave range

Collection includes movie and TV themes, rock and pop tunes, anthems, ballads, etc.

Master Solos Intermediate Level – Bassoon (Hal Leonard Publishing Corp.)

*Romanze* by Edmund Siennicki Range: low F to upper F

## **NYSSMA Folio for Bassoonists (Jack Spratt Music Co.)**

*Aria* from the opera *Tigraine*” by Alessandro Scarlatti (arr. Clifford P. Barnes)

Second Book of Bassoon Solos – Bassoon and Piano, edited and arranged by Lyndon Hilling and Walter Bergmann (Faber Music)

4. Gavotte from *Trio Sonata for Two Violins, Op. 5* by G.F. Handel Range: middle D to upper E

5. L’Hiver (Winter) by G.P. Telemann Range: middle D to upper F (all tenor clef)

16. Andaluza from *Spanish Dances* by Enrique Granados Range: middle D to upper E

Standard of Excellence Festival Solos, Book 2, 15 Easy Solos for Young Musicians (Neil A. Kjos Music Co.)

*Minuet and Trio* by Ludwig van Beethoven Range: middle C to upper Db

*Rondeau* by Friedrich Wilhelm Marpurg Range: middle Bb to upper Eb

*To a Wild Rose* by Edward MacDowell Range: middle Bb to upper Eb

*Polonaise* from the *Notebook for Anna Magdalena*  
Bach by Johann Sebastian Bach Range: middle B to  
upper Eb

Time Pieces, Volume II arr. by Ian Denley (The  
Associated Board of the Royal Schools of Music)

*Song to the Moon* from *Rusalka* by Antonin Dvorak  
Range: middle D to upper F

*Montagues and the Capulets* from *Romeo and Juliet* by  
Sergey Prokofiev Range: low F (E#) to upper F

*Fughetta* from *Ten Easy Pieces* by Alexandre Tansman  
Range: low G# to upper E

*Vocalise* from *Portraits* by John McCabe Range: low  
A to upper Eb

## Solos (Individual Pieces)

“*Arm, Arm Ye Brave*” from *Judas Maccabeus* by G.F.  
Handel (arr. Ronald Dishinger) Publisher: Medici Music  
Press Range: middle Bb to upper F

*Ave Maria* (arr. for bassoon and piano by Neil Ramsay)  
Publisher: Medici Music Press Range: low A to upper F

*Caprice No. 13* from *24 Caprices for solo violin, Op.  
1* (arr. David R. Werden) Publisher: Cimarron Music Press  
Range: low F to upper F

*Concerto in C minor* (trans. from *Oboe Concerto in G  
minor HWV 287*) by G.F. Handel Publisher: Editio Musica  
Budapest Range: middle C to upper F

*Concerto in C minor* (trans. from *Oboe Concerto in  
G minor HWV 287* by Vincent Pezzi) by G.F. Handel

Publisher: Southern Music Company Range: middle C to upper F

*Fugue from Fantasy and Fugue No. 7 in C minor BWV 537* by J.S. Bach (arr. Ronald Dishinger) Publisher: Medici Music Press Range: middle Bb to upper F

*“Happy, Happy, Happy Pair”* from *Alexander’s Feast* by G.F. Handel (arr. Ronald Dishinger) Publisher: Medici Music Press Range: middle C to upper F

*“Happy, Happy Shall We Be”* from *Semele* by G.F. Handel (arr. Ronald Dishinger) Publisher: Medici Music Press Range: middle Eb to upper F

*Jabberwocky* by Harold L. Walters Publisher: Rubank, Inc. Range: middle Bb to upper F

*Let Thy Hand Be Strengthened* from *Coronation Anthem No. 4* by G.F. Handel (arr. Ronald Dishinger) Publisher: Medici Music Press Range: middle G to upper Eb

*Minuetto* from *Don Giovanni* by W. A. Mozart (arr. Frank Erickson, ed. Arthur Best) Publisher: Belwin-Mills Publishing Corp. Range: middle Bb to upper Eb

*“Pour forth no more Unheeded Prayers”* from *Jephtha* by G.F. Handel ((arr. Ronald Dishinger) Publisher: Medici Music Press Range: middle C to upper Eb

*Prelude No. 17 in A-flat Major, BWV 862* from *Well-Tempered Clavier* by J.S. Bach (arr. Ronald Dishinger) Publisher: Medici Music Press Range: low G to upper F

*Saraband* by Roy D. Johnson, Publisher: Belwin-Mills Publishing Corp. Range: low F# to upper Eb

*Sonata in Bb Major for bassoon and keyboard* by Jerome Besozzi Publisher: Oxford University Press (third movement has some tenor clef) Range: low A to upper F

*Spanish Dance No. 2* by Moritz Moszkowski, Publisher: Belwin-Mills Publishing Corp. Range: low G to upper E

*“Swell the Full Chorus”* from *Solomon* by G.F. Handel

((arr. Ronald Dishinger) Publisher: Medici Music Press  
Range: middle Bb to upper F

*The King of Kings* from *Deborah* by G.F. Handel (arr.  
Ronald Dishinger) Publisher: Medici Music Press  
Range: low G to upper F

*Two Alleluias* from *Coronation Anthems No. 2 and No.  
4* by G.F. Handel ((arr. Ronald Dishinger) Publisher:  
Medici Music Press Range: middle C to upper Eb

X

# NOTES BELOW THE BASS STAFF



**57.**

## **About the Low E key and Playing Low Notes**





*One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here:*

<https://lowecc.pressbooks.sunycreate.cloud/?p=371#oembed-1>

## The Low E key

The low E key is located on the back of the boot joint and is nicknamed the “pancake key” because it is usually round and flat like a tiny pancake.

Low E key on Boot

Right Thumb keys



The low E key is operated by the right thumb, and it has two functions.

1. It closes the low E tone hole on the boot joint.
2. It operates the whisper key for the lowest notes when the left thumb is not available to press the whisper key.

The E tone hole has to be covered for low E and all of the notes below E.



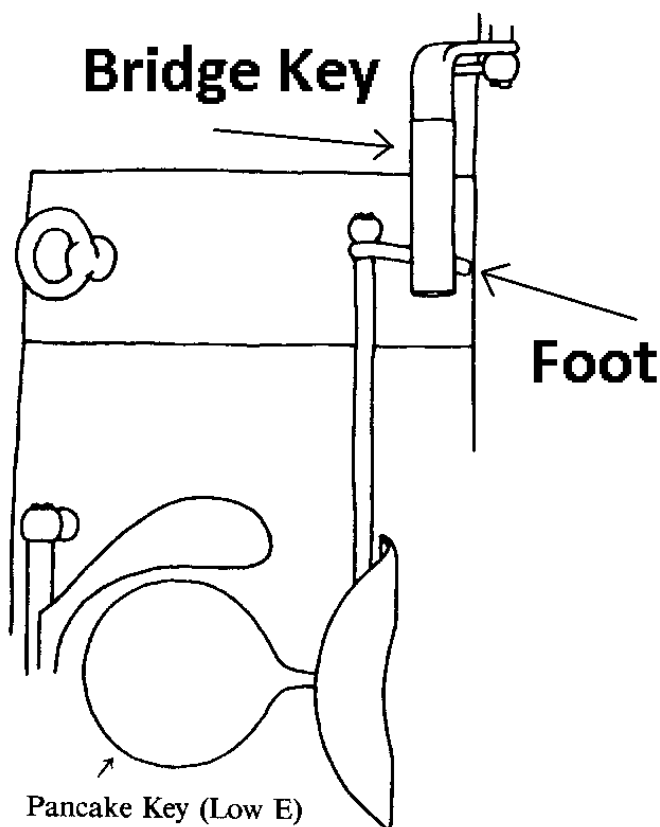
The low E operates the whisper key via a bridge key mechanism between the boot and wing joints. The bridge mechanism will only work if it is properly aligned.

**Note:** The importance of this alignment is the reason for putting the wing joint into the boot joint first when assembling the bassoon.

Check the alignment of this bridge mechanism each time you put the bassoon together.

## INSTRUMENT CHECK:

Once the bassoon is fully assembled, press the low E key. Now look at the whisper-key pad. It should fully cover the vent hole on the bocal nub. If it doesn't quite touch bocal vent, adjust the alignment of the wing joint in the boot. Notice there is a "finger" which extends down from the bottom of the wing onto the boot. This finger rests on top of the "foot" at the top of the boot joint.



The foot has a “hill and a valley” and the finger must rest high enough on the hill of the foot to allow complete coverage of the bocal vent. Try turning the wing joint slightly counterclockwise and check alignment of the two scratches on the boot and wing. If this adjustment does not position the pad to create a solid seal against the bocal, you will need to have the key adjusted by a bassoon repairman.

**Caution:** Notes below low E will not work if the low E key does not fully cover the bocal vent.

If your bassoon passes the instrument check described above, the left thumb will not need to

press the whisper key for low E down to low Bb because the low E key will be doing the job of the whisper key.

## **Relax everything to play the notes below the staff.**

**SOFT** lips

**OPEN** jaws

- **WARM** air

**LIGHT** touch

**SLOW** air

**COVER** all holes completely.

- “Hot pizza mouth”



*One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here:*

<https://lowecc.pressbooks.sunycreate.cloud/?p=371#oemb-ed-2>

**Soak your reed!**

- A dry reed will not play low notes easily. Make sure your reed is well soaked.
- The tip opening should be at least the thickness of a nickel. If the tip opening is too small/

closed, the vibrations will be too fast to play low notes.

**Note:** If soaking the reed does not cause the tip to open, here are instructions for opening the tip using your fingers.

1. Make sure the reed is well soaked! This process will crack a dry reed.
2. Place the index finger and thumb of your weaker hand on the sides of the wire closest to the blades.
3. Watch the tip opening as you use the index finger and thumb of your dominant hand like a pair of pliers. Squeeze the index finger and thumb holding the reed, making sure to keep your fingers ON the wire and squeeze on the sides of the reed wire.



*One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here:*

<https://lowecc.pressbooks.sunycreate.cloud/?p=371#oembed-3>

## Reminders for good left thumb technique:

1. Keep your left-hand soft and slightly curved when moving the thumb between keys.

2. Different passages of music will require that you use your thumb differently.
  - Sometimes you'll need to use the upper edge of your thumb, sometimes you'll need to use the padded end of your thumb.
  - Sometimes you'll need to slide from one key to another; other times it will be better to use a different part of your thumb.
3. Be flexible and creative in planning how best to use your thumb to achieve clean and fluid technique.

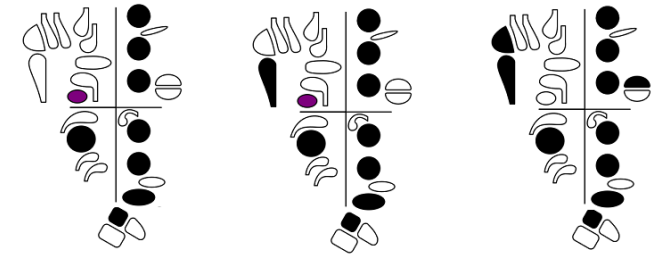
Watch this short video for a demonstration of the thumb motion for notes below the staff.



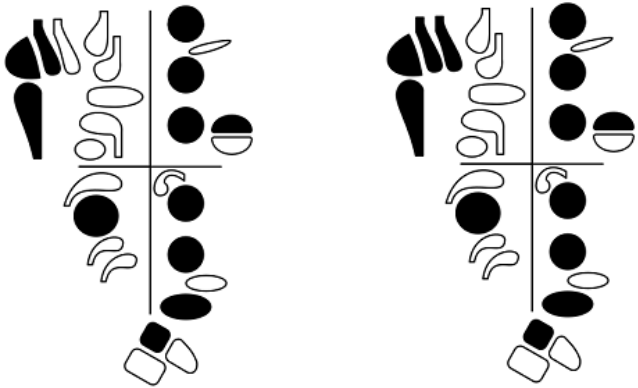
*One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here:*

<https://lowecc.pressbooks.sunycreate.cloud/?p=371#oemb-ed-4>

Play each of these notes using the fingering provided.



● The whisper key is optional for low E and low D because the low E/pancake key also moves the whisper key pad to cover the hole on the bocal nub.



### Troubleshooting Low Notes:

- Soak the reed for 2-3 minutes to open the tip. If

that doesn't open the tip enough use the technique from the video above to open your reed.

- Make sure the low E is pressing the whisper-key pad tightly against the vent hole in the bocal nub.
- Use only enough embouchure to keep the air from leaking out around the reed. Too much embouchure will make the note jump up the octave or sound somewhere between the low and middle octave.
- “Hot pizza mouth” is really helpful for the low notes. Relax your lower jaw to create a lot of space between your teeth and in your oral cavity. A closed space will make the low notes sharp.
- Blow a warm air stream. This will keep your throat and oral cavity open.
- Use a slow but steady air speed. If the air stream is too fast or too hard, the notes will come out in the wrong octave.
- Try not to squeeze with your fingers. You need to press the keys enough to close them but not more. Squeezing comes from tension and that will make it hard to move your fingers.
- All of the tone holes (E, D, C, B, A) must be completely covered. If you leak, you squeak. Use the pads of your fingers to cover the holes.



**58.**

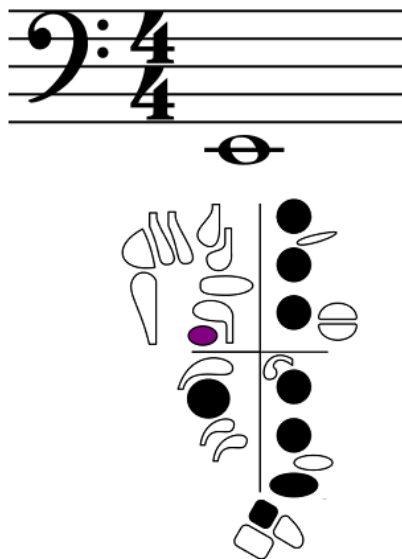
## **Lesson 22: Low E**

### **The Low E key**

The low E key is located on the back of the boot joint and is operated by the right thumb.



## Fingering



**Reminder:** The whisper key is optional on this note because the low E/pancake key also moves the whisper-key pad to close the hole on the bocal nub. If leaving the whisper key down simplifies the technique just leave it down. If it makes the passage harder don't use the whisper key for low E.

## Response

When playing low E, make sure:

- the low E key closes whisper-key pad fully against the bocal,
- reed is well soaked and has a tip opening the

thickness of a nickel,

- to blow slow, warm air with very open oral cavity and relaxed jaw (“hot pizza mouth”)
- Soft lips on the reed
- all tone holes are completely covered
- low F key (RH pinky) is down for all notes below F natural
- hands and fingers are relaxed and hovering in position when not needed.

## Intonation

Low E tends to be a sharp note. To bring the pitch down you will need:

- an open oral cavity (hot pizza mouth),
- to voice a low vowel shape,
- a soft hug with lips,
- lots of space between the teeth.

Play *Matching Pitch on Low E* to learn how open and relaxed everything needs to be.



[tuningdrones.com](http://tuningdrones.com)

## Matching Pitch on Low E

Musical notation for 'Matching Pitch on Low E'. It consists of two staves. The top staff is labeled 'Bassoon' and contains six whole rests. The bottom staff is labeled 'Reference Tone' and contains six whole notes, each with a curved arrow pointing from the note to the 'Bassoon' staff, indicating the target pitch. The notes in the reference tone are E, G, A, B, C, and D.

## Low E practice

Leaving the whisper key down for the entire exercise avoids having to coordinate alternating your left and right thumb activity. Move your right thumb directly from the low E key to the back F# key. Use the front Ab(G#) key to play the G#s with your right pinky.

## Low E practice

Musical notation for 'Low E practice'. It consists of three staves in 4/4 time. The first staff has a sequence of notes: E, G, A, B, C, G, A, B, C, E, with slurs under the first four notes and the last four notes. The second staff has a sequence of notes: E, G, A, B, C, G, A, B, C, E, with slurs under the first four notes and the last four notes. The third staff has a sequence of notes: E, G, A, B, C, G, A, B, C, E, with slurs under the first four notes and the last four notes.

## Thumb Slider

Changing the key signature makes a difference. In this tune your right thumb will need to move directly from the low E key to the back F#. Use the front Ab(G#) key to play the G#s with your right pinky.





**59.**

## **Lesson 23: Low D**

### **The Low D key**

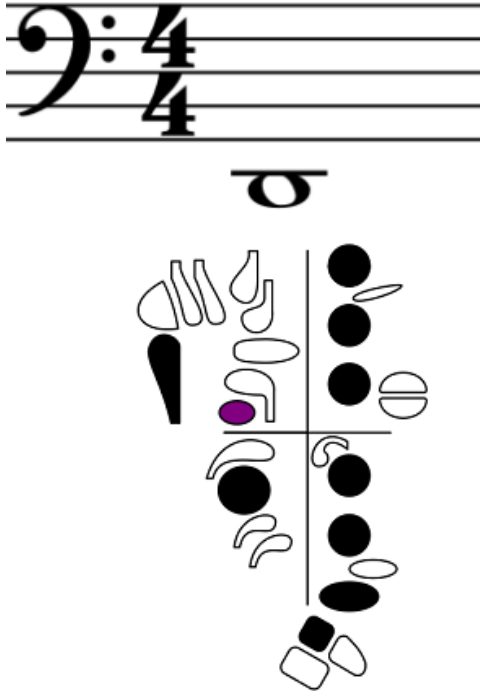
The low D key is located on the long joint and is operated by the left thumb. The middle of the thumb is often used to press the low D key, but the pad of the thumb is used in certain passages. Keep your thumb soft and flexible and use the part that makes the music easiest.

Long Joint

Left Thumb keys



## Fingering



**Reminder:** The whisper key is optional on this note because the Low E/pancake key also moves the whisper-key pad to close the hole on the bocal nub. If leaving the whisper key down simplifies the technique just leave it down. If it makes the passage harder don't use the whisper key for low E.

## Intonation

Low D is **the sharpest note** on the instrument.

To fix this:

- “Hot pizza mouth” – create as much space as possible in your oral cavity.
- “AH” vowel with back of tongue as low as it can go.
- As much space between your back teeth as you can get.
- Extremely loose embouchure. Any unnecessary pressure will push the note up the octave.

Play *Matching Pitch* on low D to learn just how sharp low D can be and practice making these adjustments to bring the pitch down.



[tuningdrones.com](http://tuningdrones.com)

**Matching Pitch on Low D**

The image shows two musical staves. The top staff is labeled 'Bassoon' and contains seven notes that rise in pitch from left to right. The bottom staff is labeled 'Reference Tone' and contains a single, constant low D note. Brackets are drawn under the Reference Tone staff, extending upwards to point to each of the seven notes in the Bassoon staff, indicating that the Bassoon notes should be adjusted to match the pitch of the Reference Tone.

## Learning Low D

For good response you also need to:

- Make sure the reed is soaked.
- Blow slow, warm air.
- Check reed tip opening – space between the blades needs to be the thickness of a nickel.
- Make sure you cover all holes completely.

- Make sure the reed is adequately soaked. A dry reed will not play low notes.
- Make sure your right pinky is on the low F key (not the F# or Ab).

### Learning Low D

Four staves of musical notation for learning low D. The first staff shows a sequence of notes: D, C, B, A, G, F, E, D. The second staff shows a sequence of notes: D, C, B, A, G, F, E, D, C, B, A, G, F, E, D. The third staff shows a sequence of notes: D, C, B, A, G, F, E, D, C, B, A, G, F, E, D. The fourth staff shows a sequence of notes: D, C, B, A, G, F, E, D, C, B, A, G, F, E, D.

### D major scale - low octave

Two staves of musical notation for the D major scale in the low octave. The first staff shows the scale: D, E, F#, G, A, B, C, D. The second staff shows the scale: D, E, F#, G, A, B, C, D, C, B, A, G, F#, E, D.

### *All Through the Night*

This tune requires the use of both thumbs.

Left thumb: use the middle of your thumb to press the low D key and keep the end of your left thumb for all notes.

Right thumb: Use the back F# key for all F-sharps. Your thumb will have to slide directly from the F# key to the low E key for the slur down to low D in bars 2 and 14.

## All Through the Night

Welsh Folk Song

## All Through the Night with finger reminders

\_\_\_\_\_ whisper key

(\_\_\_\_\_) whisper key optional

\_\_\_\_\_ low E key

## All Through the Night

Welsh Folk Song

## Amazing Grace

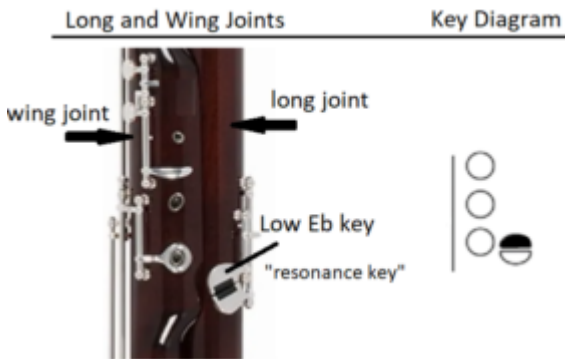
## Amazing Grace

60.

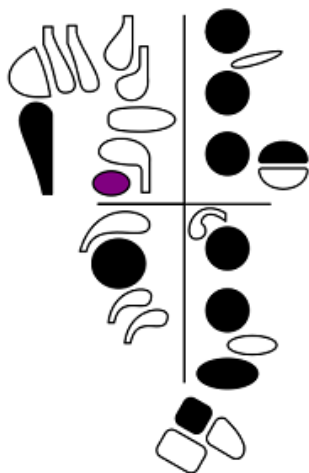
## Lesson 24: Low E-flat/D-sharp (Eb/D#)

### The Low Eb key

You already know the low E-flat key as the resonance key which is located on the front of the long joint and is operated by the left pinky. It is the upper of one of two keys in that location.



## Fingering



**Reminder:** The whisper key is optional on this note because the Low E/pancake key also moves the whisper-key pad to close the hole on the vocal nub. If leaving the whisper key down simplifies the technique just leave it down. If it makes the passage harder don't use the whisper key for notes below F.

## Tips:

Don't confuse the low E/pancake key (played by your right

thumb) with the low Eb/resonance key (played by your left pinky)!

The only difference between low D and low Eb is the addition of the left pinky on the low Eb/resonance key. You've used this key with the top-space G to help round the tone and lower the pitch. This time it will create a different pitch when it is pressed.

Pressing the low E-flat key WILL NOT create an Eb in any other register of the bassoon. It only works below the staff, hence the name Low Eb key.

## Intonation

Low E-flat is not as sharp as low D but you will still need to follow the same suggestions made in the previous chapter.

- Warm, slow but steady air
- “Hot pizza mouth”
- Well soaked reed
- All tone holes completely covered.
- Low voicing (“hot”)



[tuningdrones.com](http://tuningdrones.com)

Matching Pitch on Low Eb



**61.**

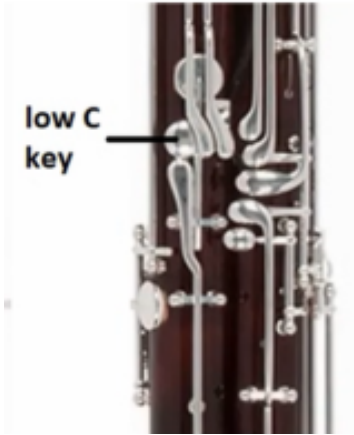
## **Lesson 25: Low C**

### **The Low C key**

The low C key is located on the long joint and is operated by the left thumb. The low C key is only used when playing below the bass staff.

Wing and Long Joints

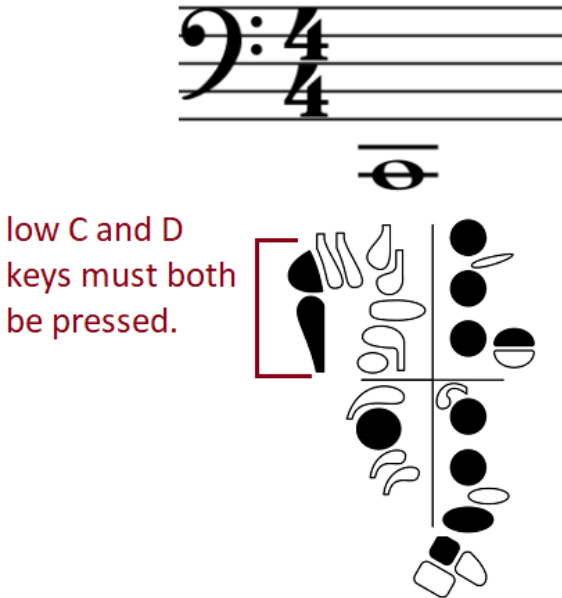
Left Thumb Keys



## Fingering

Your left thumb can no longer rest on the whisper key. The pad of your thumb should now rest on and press the low C

key while the middle part of your thumb holds the low D key down.



## NOTE:

The long joint mechanism is built so that the low C key connects to take the low D down with it. If your bassoon is in excellent adjustment, you should be able to press only the low C key and have the low D key go down too. However, that is rarely the case so you should plan to press both keys when possible.

## Response

As long as your embouchure is soft and your lower jaw is

relaxed (not pushing up on the reed), low C is one of the easier low notes.

If you have trouble getting low C to speak, try the suggestions below.

- Soaked reed
- “Hot Pizza” mouth
- Space the teeth
- Soft lips
- Low back of the tongue
- slow, warm, steady air
- firm articulation
- cover all tone holes completely
- low E key must press the whisper-key pad tightly against the bocal vent,
- Low F, E, D, and C keys must be pressed.
- Tip opening of the reed at least the thickness of a nickel. A reed that is too closed at the tip will not play low notes.

### Low Seas



## Intonation & Tone

Just like all of the other notes below the staff, low C tends to be sharp.



### Mary's BIG Lamb

Musical notation for "Mary's BIG Lamb" in bass clef, 4/4 time. The first staff contains four measures of music: C2, C2, C2, C2; C2, C2, C2, C2; C2, C2, C2, C2; C2, C2, C2, C2. The second staff begins with a measure rest (5) and continues with four measures: C2, C2, C2, C2; C2, C2, C2, C2; C2, C2, C2, C2; C2, C2, C2, C2. The piece ends with a double bar line.

### This Old Man

Musical notation for "This Old Man" in bass clef, 4/4 time. The first staff contains four measures: C2, C2, C2, C2; C2, C2, C2, C2; C2, C2, C2, C2; C2, C2, C2, C2. The second staff contains four measures: C2, C2, C2, C2; C2, C2, C2, C2; C2, C2, C2, C2; C2, C2, C2, C2. The piece ends with a double bar line.

**62.**

## **Lesson 26: Low B**

### **The Low B key**

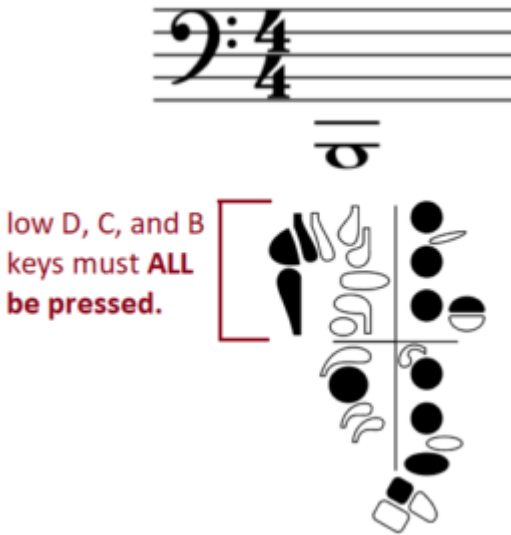
The low B key is located on the long joint and is operated by the left thumb.

Wing and Long Joints

Key Diagram



## Fingering



### NOTE:

The long joint mechanism is built so that the low B key connects to take the low C key down with it, and the low C key connects to take the low D down with it. If your bassoon is in excellent adjustment, you should be able to press only the low B key and have the low C and D keys go down too. However, that is rarely the case so you should plan to press all three keys when possible.

## Response

Low B can be a grumpy note.

- It is more resistant than low C and low Bb
- Embouchure has to be very soft to keep the note from jumping up or splitting the octave.
- Articulation needs to be firm.

### Low Bees



If you have trouble getting low B to speak, try the suggestions below. These suggestions apply to all low notes but need to be exaggerated on low B.

- Soaked reed
- Hot Pizza mouth
- Space the teeth
- Soft lips
- Low back of the tongue
- slow, warm, steady air
- firm articulation
- cover all tone holes completely
- low E key must press the whisper-key pad tightly against the bocal vent
- Low F, E, D, C, and B keys must be pressed
- Tip opening of the reed at least the thickness of a nickel. A reed that is too closed at the tip will not play low notes.

## Intonation

Low B tends to be very sharp.

- Hot pizza mouth
- Back of the tongue as low as possible
- Most open oral cavity possible
- Most space between the teeth possible
- Less reed inside the mouth (move lips a little closer to the tip)
- If you are having trouble relaxing the lower jaw enough, try pressing down with the upper lip instead.

### Matching Pitch on Low B

Play *Matching Pitch on Low B* to learn how open and relaxed everything has to be to get low B down to pitch.



[tuningdrones.com](http://tuningdrones.com)

#### Matching Pitch on low B

Bassoon

Reference Tone







**63.**

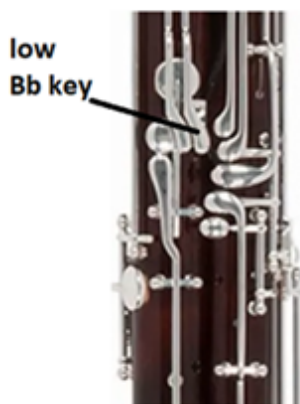
## **Lesson 27: Low Bb**

### **The Low Bb key**

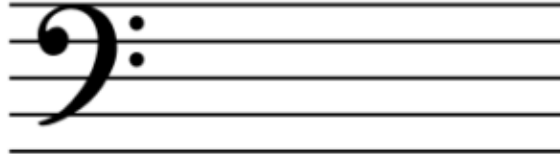
The low Bb key is located on the long joint and is operated by the left thumb. The low Bb key only works in the lowest octave of the bassoon. Higher octave B-flats are played using the right thumb Bb key.

Wing and Long Joints

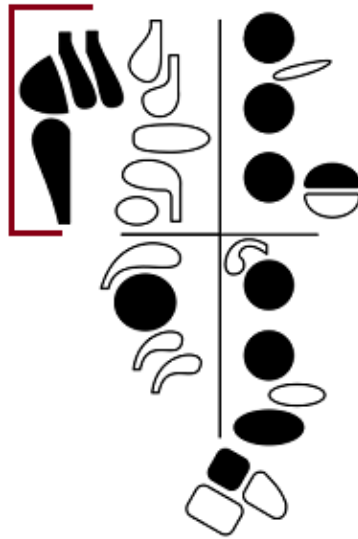
Left Thumb Keys Diagram



## Fingering



low D, C, B  
and Bb keys  
must **ALL**  
go down.



**NOTE:** The low B and low Bb keys are **not connected** to each other. You must press both. Press all four low thumb keys (low D, C, B, and Bb) when playing low Bb.



## Intonation & Tone

Just like all of the other notes below the staff, low Bb tends to be sharp.

- soft lips
- open oral cavity
- space between the teeth
- back of the tongue low in the mouth
- Hot pizza mouth

### Matching Pitch on Low Bb

Play *Matching Pitch on Low Bb* to work on the intonation and tone quality of low Bb.



[tuningdrones.com](http://tuningdrones.com)

### Matching Pitch on low Bb

### Bb on the Down Low

Use the lower half of your left thumb to hold down the low D and C keys and use the upper end of your thumb to press the low B and Bb keys at the same time. This will take



### Mary Had a Little Lamb

The musical score is written for Bassoon in B-flat major (one flat) and 2/4 time. It consists of three staves. The first staff contains the first six measures: four quarter notes (B-flat, D, F, G) followed by a quarter rest, then another four quarter notes (B-flat, D, F, G) followed by a quarter rest. The second staff contains the next six measures: a quarter rest, then four quarter notes (B-flat, D, F, G), then four quarter notes (B-flat, D, F, G), and finally four quarter notes (B-flat, D, F, G). The third staff contains the final two measures: four quarter notes (B-flat, D, F, G) followed by a quarter rest, and then a final quarter note (B-flat) followed by a double bar line.



## 64.

### Lesson 28: Low C-sharp/D-flat (C#/Db)

#### The Low C-sharp Key

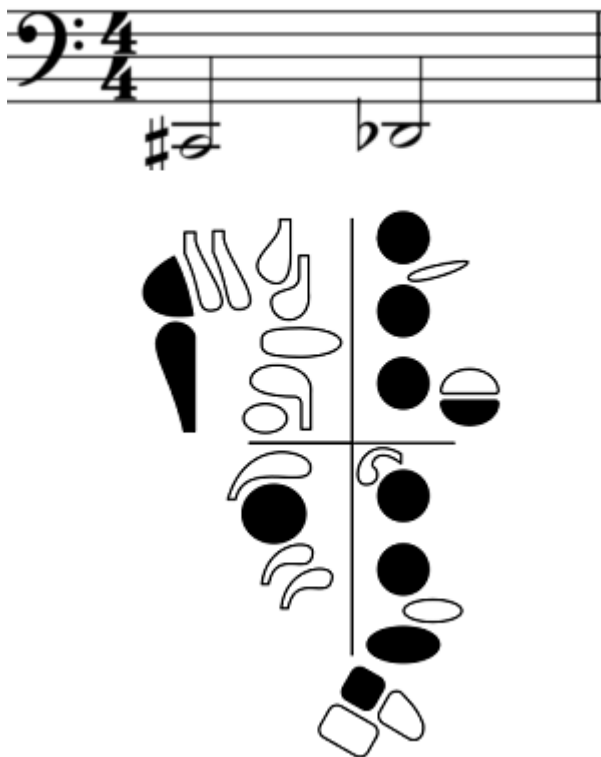
The low C# key is one of two keys on the front of the long joint; both are operated by the left-hand pinky. The low C# key is the lower of the two and it sits just below the low Eb/resonance key.

Wing and Long Joint

Key Diagram



## Fingering



The fingering for low C#/Db is easy if you think about fingering low C and adding the low C#/Db key in the left-hand pinky. It will help to remember which pinky key to add if you think about the note Eb being higher in pitch than Db/C#. The Eb resonance key is higher on the bassoon than the low C#/Db key.

## Left Thumb Position

The left thumb cannot press both the whisper key and the low C key. The thumb must leave the whisper key to press the low C key when playing low C# and rely on the low E key to activate the whisper key. The end of your left thumb needs to point toward the bell of the bassoon when playing low C#. The middle of your thumb will press the low D key and the pad of your thumb will press the low C key.

## Matching Pitch

- Make sure you are blowing a warm, slow steady stream of air.
- Use voicing to adjust the intonation (it is probably sharp).



[tuningdrones.com](http://tuningdrones.com)

### Matching Pitch on low C#

Bassoon

Reference Tone



## Twinkle, Twinkle Little Star

This is a simple tune, but the key signature makes the fingerings a challenge.

**Remember:** Db is fingered like C#, Ab is fingered like G#, and Gb is fingered like F#.

**Tip:** The practice plan outlined for *Baa Baa Black Sheep* will work well for this tune too.

- Note Pairs (Db-Ab, Ab-Bb, Ab-Gb, Gb-F, F-Eb, Eb-Db): practice each pair until your fingers are comfortable and coordinated.
- 3-note Groups (Db-Ab-Bb, Bb-Ab-Gb, Gb-F-Eb, F-Eb-Db): practice each group until your fingers are comfortable and coordinated.
- Outline the Melody (Db-Ab-Bb-Ab-Gb-F-Eb-Db): practice the outline until your fingers are comfortable and coordinated.
- Once you are comfortable with the outline of the melody (the pitch pattern), you are ready to add the articulated rhythms and play the tune as it is written.

Twinkle, Twinkle Little Star

Andante Traditional

7



**65.**

## **Exercises for Low Notes**







## 66.

# Etudes and Solos with Range between Low Bb and Upper F

## Methods

*The First Complete Weissenborn Bassoon Method and Studies, Op. 8 Vols. 1 and 2*, edited by Frank Morelli (Carl Fischer)

Lessons XI – XX (pages 61-107) fit within the range of low Bb to upper F. The lessons include exercises in a variety of meters and rhythms, and several duets with the top line intended for the student. The bottom part is intended for an advanced student or teacher and extends beyond the range covered to date.

*Bassoon Student Instrumental Course – Level Three (Advanced Intermediate)* by Henry T. Paine and James Ployhar (Belwin-Mills Publishing Corp.)

Much of this material fits a smaller range (low F to upper D-E-F). However, notes from the lowest octave are included in a few lessons.

## **Etudes**

*26 Melodic Studies* by Graham Sheen (Emerson Edition Ltd.)

Etudes 9-12 fit this range

## **Solos (short tunes without accompaniment)**

Blue Moon Bassoon by Amanda J. Turley

Chapter 4: American Spirit tune 28, 30

Chapter 5: Night and Day tune 35

Chapter 6: Enchanted Forest tune 44

Chapter 7: Dance Party tune 52, 55, 59

Chapter 9: On the High Seas tunes 64-66, 68, 71

Chapter 10: At the Symphony tune 73

Chapter 11: Haunted Grove tune 83, 86-90

Chapter 13: Out West tune 98

Chapter 14: Wolfie and the Gang tunes 105-106

## **Solos (Collections)**

A Miscellany for Bassoon, Book I – Eleven Moderately Easy Pieces by Michael Rose (The Associated Board of the Royal Schools of Music)

*Merry Andrew*  
(unaccompanied)

Range: low C to upper C

A Miscellany for Bassoon, Book II – Eleven  
Moderately Easy Pieces by Michael Rose (The  
Associated Board of the Royal Schools of Music)

*Scherzo* (unaccompanied) Range: low E to upper E

Classic Festival Solos (Alfred Publishing Co., Inc.)

*Allegro Appassionata, Op. 43* by Camille Saint-Saens (arr.  
Henry T. Paine) Range: low E to upper F

First Book of Bassoon Solos – Bassoon and Piano,  
edited and arranged by Lyndon Hilling and Walter  
Bergmann (Faber Music)

8. *Romance* by Walter Bergmann Range: low E to  
middle F

11. *Passacaglia* by William Bergmann Range: low E  
to middle F

12. *Duet* by Walter Bergmann Range: low E to middle  
E

18. *Jig* by Henry Purcell Range: low D to middle A

28. *Duo* by Georg Philipp Telemann Range: low D to  
upper C

Master Solos Intermediate Level – Bassoon (Hal  
Leonard Publishing Corp.)

*Three Baroque Dances: Gavotte, Menuet I, Menuet II* by  
Joseph de Boismortier Range: low Eb to upper F

*Sonata No. 5* by Johann Ernst Galliard, 4 movements  
Range: low D to high G

Second Book of Bassoon Solos – Bassoon and Piano,  
edited and arranged by Lyndon Hilling and Walter  
Bergmann (Faber Music)

2. Aria by J.S. Bach      Range: low D# to upper E  
8. The Maiden's Blush (an English Country Dance)  
Range: low Bb to upper F

Solos for the Bassoon Player selected and edited by  
Sol Schoenbach (G. Schirmer, Inc. distributed by Hal  
Leonard Corp.)

*Bourree I and II* from Cello Suite No. 3 by J. S. Bach  
Range: low E to upper F

*10 Bassoon Concertos for bassoon and string orchestra* by  
Antonio Vivaldi edited by Sol Schoenbach, piano  
reduction by William Winstead (G. Schirmer, Inc.  
distributed by Hal Leonard Corp.) Volume I

*Concerto in D minor, RV 481* Range: low C to upper F  
(this concerto is also listed as F. VIII No. 5, and Pincherle  
282, as well as M. 67)

*Concerto in E minor, RV 484* Range: low C# to upper F  
(This concerto is also listed as F. VIII No. 6, and Pincherle  
137, as well as M. 71)

*Concerto in C minor, RV 480* Range: low C to upper F  
(this concerto is also listed as F. VIII No. 14, and Pincherle  
432, as well as M. 225)

*10 Bassoon Concertos for bassoon and string orchestra* by

Antonio Vivaldi edited by Sol Schoenbach, piano  
reduction by William Winstead (G. Schirmer, Inc.  
distributed by Hal Leonard Corp.) Volume II

*Concerto in C major, RV 472* Range: low C to upper F  
(this concerto is also listed as F. VIII No. 17, and Pincherle  
45, as well as M. 238)

*Concerto in F major, RV 488* Range: low C to upper F  
(this concerto is also listed as F. VIII No. 19, and Pincherle  
299, as well as M. 240)

*Concerto in Bb major, RV 502* Range: low C to upper F  
(this concerto is also listed as F. VIII No. 24, and Pincherle  
382, as well as M. 270)

*Concerto in Eb major, RV 483* Range: low Eb to  
upper F (this concerto is also listed as F. VIII No. 27, and  
Pincherle 433, as well as M. 273)

## Solos (Individual Pieces)

*Arietta and Scherzo for bassoon and piano* by Thomas  
Schudel, Publisher: Shawnee Press Range: low E to  
upper F

*Allegretto, quasi andantino* from Violin Sonata No. 1,  
Op. 8 by Edvard Grieg, Publisher: Belwin-Mills Publishing  
Corp. Range: low Bb to upper D

*Concerto in A minor, RV. 498* by Antonio Vivaldi  
Publisher: International Music Co. Range: low C to upper  
F (this concerto is also listed as F. VIII No. 2, and Pincherle  
70, as well as M. 28)

*Concerto in Bb major, RV 501 "La notte"* by Antonio  
Vivaldi (ed. by Maurice Allard) Publisher: Billaudot

Range: low D to upper F (this concerto is also listed as F. VIII No. 1, and Pincherle 401, as well as M. 12)

“Lord Jesus Christ Turn Thou to Us”, BWV 655 by J.S. Bach (arr. Ronald Dishinger) Publisher: Medici Music Press Range: low E to upper Eb

*The Teddy Bears’ Picnic* by John W. Bratton (arr. Jerry Sears), Publisher: M. Witmark & Sons Range: low D to upper D

Two Pieces for Solo Bassoon from *Manko* by Alan Hovhaness (ed. Bruce Gbur) Publisher: Prairie Dawg Press Range: low E to upper E

XI

## One Octave Scales



67.

## One Octave Majors




red = half-hole    blue = speaker key

Bassoon


## One Octave Major Scales

(w/accidentals)


C major




5 F major




9 Bb major




13 Eb major




17 G major




21 D major




25 A major




29 Ab major



33 Db major



37 E major (low)



2

41 E major (high)



45 B major



49 Cb major



53 Gb major



57 F# major



61 C# major





# 68.

## One Octave Melodic Minor Scales

Bassoon

### One Octave Melodic Minor Scales (w/accidentals)

red = halfhole  
blue = speaker key

C melodic minor

5 F melodic minor

9 Bb melodic minor

13 Eb melodic minor

17 G melodic minor

21 D melodic minor

25 A melodic minor

29 Ab melodic minor

33 Db melodic minor

37 C# melodic minor

# 528 Carol Cope Lowe

2

41 E melodic minor (low)



45 E melodic minor (high)



49 B melodic minor



53 F# melodic minor



# 69.

## One Octave Harmonic Minor Scales

Bassoon

### One Octave Harmonic Minor Scales (w/accidentals)

red = halfhole  
blue = speaker key

C harmonic minor

5 F harmonic minor

9 Bb harmonic minor

13 Eb harmonic minor

17 G harmonic minor

21 D harmonic minor

25 A harmonic minor

29 Ab harmonic minor

33 Db harmonic minor

37 C# harmonic minor

# 530 Carol Cope Lowe

2

41 E harmonic minor (low)



45 E harmonic minor (high)



49 B harmonic minor



53 F# harmonic minor



XII

**HALF-HOLE NOTES ABOVE  
THE BASS STAFF  
(F#/Gb-G-Ab/G#)**

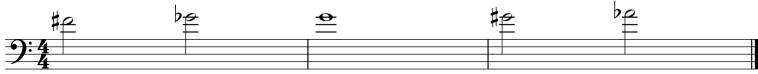


**70.**

## **About Third Octave Half-Hole Notes**



## High F#/Gb, G-natural, and Ab/G#



F-sharp/G-flat, G, and G-sharp/A-flat need half-hole in the second and third octaves on the bassoon. The size of the opening on the half-hole is ever-so-slightly smaller in the third octave.

### Blow Fast Air, Don't Squeeze!

It is tempting to squeeze the notes out by relying too much on your jaws/lips. You'll get a better sound, better response, better intonation, wider dynamic range, and less fatigue if you use:

- Extremely fast air!
- Half-hole
- Support with lips but maintain space in the oral cavity (avoid clamping the jaws)
- Lower back of tongue to form an "Ah" vowel sound to lower pitch of sharp notes (F#4 to C#5)
- Correct fingerings! Fingerings in the top octave are NOT based on their lower counterparts so

make sure your fingers are in the right place.

- Check your reed opening. A smaller opening will facilitate high notes but if the reed is too closed your airstream will blow the tip closed and stop the sound.
- Move your lips closer to the first wire for the highest notes (3rd octave A and above).

## 71.

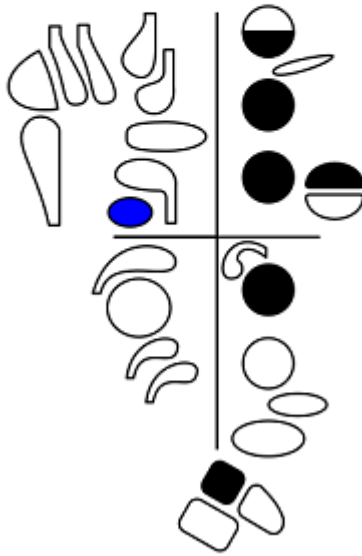
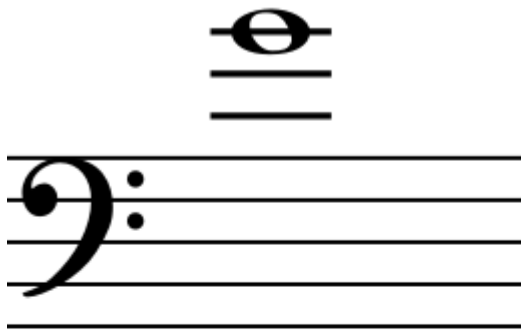
### Lesson 29: High G (G3)

#### Fingering

The left-hand is the same for middle G (G2) and high G (G3). The right-hand is completely different.

Like middle G (G2) the octave below, high G (G3) also requires half-hole and the pinky resonance key. The amount of hole you need to open (uncover) for the half-hole might be a little different from the octave below and you will need to experiment to find just the right position for your left index finger.

The whisper key can help the response, intonation, and tone of the high G, but it can be hard to get to in certain technical passages. Use it whenever you possibly can but know that sometimes you'll have to play G3 without the whisper key.



Response

Good response on G3 requires

- an accurate aural target

- a very cold, fast, steady air stream,
- the right amount of half-hole open,
- adequate but not excessive support from the embouchure.

### Intonation: G3 tends to be quite sharp

- Lower back of tongue to form an “Ah” vowel sound to lower the pitch
- Correct fingering includes half-hole and resonance key as well as the whisper key when possible,
- Check your reed opening. A smaller opening will facilitate high notes but if the reed is too closed your airstream will blow the tip closed and stop the sound.



[tuningdrones.com](http://tuningdrones.com)

**Matching Pitch on High G**

### For a Rich, Resonant Tone

Follow the same tips needed for response and intonation. The tone on G3 can be thin and pinched if the embouchure is too tight, there isn't enough breath support,

the airstream is too weak, the oral cavity is closed, and/or the jaws are clenched.

- Fast, cold, steady air stream
- Open oral cavity
- Space between the teeth
- Voice a low vowel shape (hot or putt)
- Correct fingering includes half-hole, resonance key, and whisper key when possible.

Fifth on G  
(in C major)

Musical notation for the Fifth on G in C major, consisting of three staves of music. The first staff starts at measure 1 and ends at measure 7. The second staff starts at measure 8 and ends at measure 11. The third staff starts at measure 12 and ends at measure 15. The notation includes various fingerings and articulations for the notes G, A, B, and C.

In the key of c minor the E changes to an Eb.

Fifth on G  
(in c minor)

Musical notation for the Fifth on G in c minor, consisting of three staves of music. The first staff starts at measure 1 and ends at measure 7. The second staff starts at measure 8 and ends at measure 11. The third staff starts at measure 12 and ends at measure 15. The notation includes various fingerings and articulations for the notes G, A, B, and C, with the E notes being Eb.

### Kum Ba Yah

Musical notation for 'Kum Ba Yah' in bass clef, 4/4 time, B-flat major. The piece consists of three staves of music. The first staff begins with a whole rest followed by a series of eighth and quarter notes. The second staff continues the melody with quarter and eighth notes, including a slur over the final two measures. The third staff concludes the piece with a final note and a double bar line.

### Alouette in C major

Musical notation for 'Alouette in C major' in bass clef, common time. The piece consists of three staves of music. The first staff begins with a quarter note followed by eighth and quarter notes. The second staff starts with a measure number '5' above the staff and contains a series of eighth notes and quarter notes, ending with a slur. The third staff starts with a measure number '9' above the staff and continues the melody with eighth and quarter notes, ending with a double bar line.



## 72.

### Lesson 30: High F-sharp/G-flat (F#/Gb)

#### Fingerings

There are several fingerings for high f-sharp. There are basically three options in the left hand and two options for the right hand and they are all interchangeable. Check each fingering with a tuner and see which combination works best on your instrument.

\*This is one of the few notes where I use several (4) different fingerings interchangeably depending on which instrument(s) I'm trying to match and the technical demands of the specific passage.

**Note:** The blue colored whisper key in the fingerings indicates that the whisper key is helpful for response, intonation, and tone, but it can be left off in certain technically demanding passages.

# $\flat$   $\flat$   $\flat$

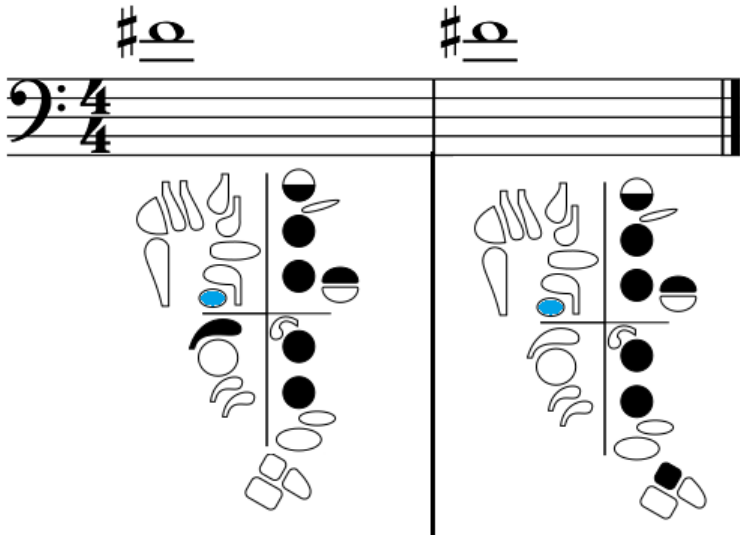
B $\flat$  key fingerings

# $\flat$   $\flat$   $\flat$

F key fingerings

### Recommended for Beginners

These two fingerings have the most resistance and least resonance, but they are popular in band method books because they make it easy to move between high F# and high G. The additional resistance can make response easier for beginners.



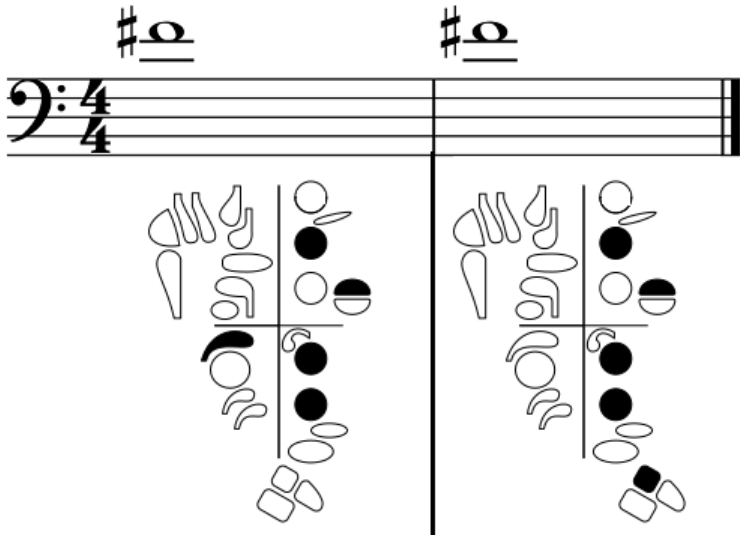
### Recommended for Intermediate Students

These two fingerings offer the best combination of response and stability of tone and intonation. I find it pretty amazing how much difference changing just one finger can make.

The image displays two musical staves, each with a treble clef and a 4/4 time signature. Above each staff is a circled sharp sign (#) with a horizontal line underneath it, indicating the pitch of the note. Below each staff is a vertical line that divides the fingering diagram into two columns. The left column shows the fingering for the first staff, and the right column shows the fingering for the second staff. The fingering diagrams use various symbols: white circles, black circles, blue circles, and white shapes with black outlines, representing different fingerings and techniques for playing the high F# note.

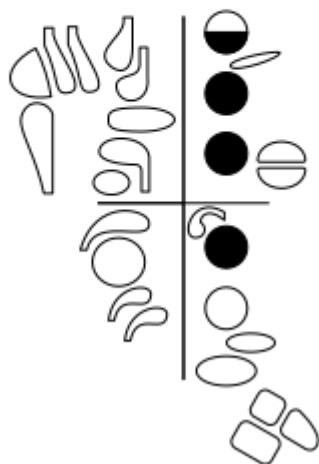
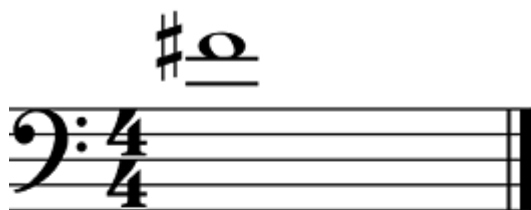
### Recommended for Advanced Students

These two fingerings have the least resistance and the most flexibility of tone color and intonation. These are my two favorite options for high F#.



AVOID the overblown B.

This fingering is the worst choice possible. It sounds awful and is very out of tune. I don't know why it is included in some fingering charts but please don't use it.



### Matching Pitch on F#3

Play *Matching Pitch on F#* with each of these fingerings and see which is the easiest to play in tune and has the best response and tone.



[tuningdrones.com](http://tuningdrones.com)

### Matching Pitch on F#3

Bassoon

Reference Tone





## 73.

### Lesson 31: High A-flat/G-sharp (Ab/G#)

#### Fingerings

The left-hand for Ab3 is the same as the left-hand for the octave below (Ab2) except that you add the resonance key for the third octave. The right-hand is very different.

**Note:** The blue whisper key indicates that the whisper key improves response, intonation, and tone. However, high Ab can be played without the whisper key if necessary.

The image shows two musical staves in bass clef, each with a flat (b) and a sharp (#) above the staff. Below each staff is a diagram of a saxophone mouthpiece and reed. The left diagram is labeled "Best" and shows a fingering with a blue dot on the second finger and a black dot on the first finger. The right diagram is labeled "sharp, less full" and shows a different fingering with a blue dot on the second finger and a black dot on the first finger. The diagrams illustrate the placement of the fingers on the keys and the resulting sound quality.

Best                      sharp, less full

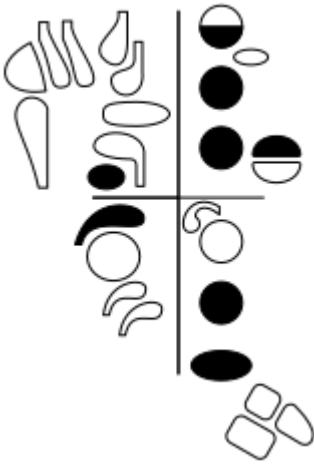
## Response

The fingering on the left gives the best response, intonation, and tone on high Ab/G#. But even with a really good fingering you still need to:

- Have an accurate aural target
- Blow a fast, cold, steady airstream
- Support the reed with your embouchure (lips)
- Keep space between your teeth

- Keep oral cavity open

## Intonation



This fingering gives the best intonation and tone quality. However, too much lip pressure will still make the note sharp, so

- maintain space between your teeth
- open oral cavity
- voice a medium to low vowel shape depending on how sharp the note is.

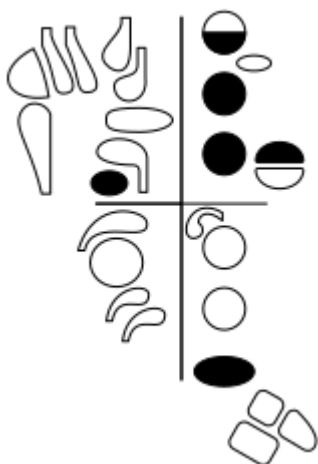


## Matching Pitch on Ab3

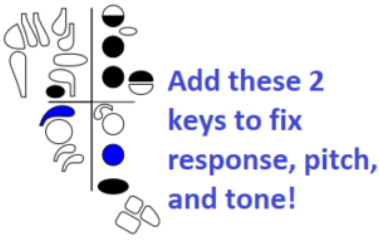
Bassoon

Reference Tone

## Easy or Sounds Best?



This fingering is the easiest technically speaking because it involves the fewest fingers. Unfortunately, it also sounds thin and is very sharp. Simply adding the Bb key and covering the A tone hole make a huge improvement in both tone and pitch so don't take a shortcut and use the "easy" fingering. It takes much more work to get the "easy" fingering to respond in the right octave and then you have to adjust everything to get it in tune.



Playing Ab to G

Ab major Segment

Ab major scale (one octave)

### Ab major scale (two octaves)

Musical notation for the Ab major scale (two octaves) in bass clef, 4/4 time. The first line shows the scale starting on Ab. The second line continues the scale. The third line shows the scale with fingerings. The fourth line shows the scale with a final whole note on Ab.

### Playing G# to F#

Musical notation for playing G# to F# in bass clef, 4/4 time. The first line shows the scale starting on G#. The second line continues the scale. The third line shows the scale with fingerings. The fourth line shows the scale with a final whole note on G#.

### Hot Cross Buns

Musical notation for Hot Cross Buns in bass clef, 4/4 time. The first line shows the scale starting on G#. The second line continues the scale. The third line shows the scale with fingerings. The fourth line shows the scale with a final whole note on G#.

### This Old Man

Musical notation for This Old Man in bass clef, 4/4 time. The first line shows the scale starting on G#. The second line continues the scale. The third line shows the scale with fingerings. The fourth line shows the scale with a final whole note on G#.

**74.**

**Exercises for Third Octave Half-Hole  
Notes**



2

41

Musical staff 41: Bassoon part, measures 41-46. Measures 41-43 feature eighth-note pairs with slurs and sharps. Measures 44-46 feature half notes with slurs and sharps.

47

Musical staff 47: Bassoon part, measures 47-50. Measures 47-49 feature eighth-note pairs with slurs and sharps. Measure 50 features a half note with a slur and sharp.

51

Musical staff 51: Bassoon part, measures 51-56. Measures 51-52 feature eighth-note pairs with slurs, flats, and naturals. Measures 53-54 feature eighth-note pairs with slurs and flats. Measures 55-56 feature half notes with slurs and flats.

57

Musical staff 57: Bassoon part, measures 57-62. Measures 57-60 feature eighth-note pairs with slurs and flats. Measures 61-62 feature half notes with slurs and flats.



**75.**

## **Etudes and Solos with range of Low Bb to High Ab**

### **Etudes**

*26 Melodic Studies* by Graham Sheen (Emerson Edition Ltd.)

Etudes 13-22 fit this range

### **Solos (short tunes without accompaniment)**

Blue Moon Bassoon by Amanda J. Turley

Chapter 10: At the Symphony tunes 77, 79, 81

Chapter 13: Out West tune 95, 102-103 (tenor clef)

Chapter 14: Wolfie and the Gang tunes 108-111

## Solos (Collections)

A Miscellany for Bassoon, Book II – Eleven  
Moderately Easy Pieces by Michael Rose (The  
Associated Board of the Royal Schools of Music)

*Scena* (unaccompanied) Range: low F to upper F

*Square Dance* Range: low C to upper C

*Intermezzo* Range: low C to high G

Baroque Sonatas, Volume I arranged and edited by  
Lazlo Hara and Oliver Nagy (Editio Music Budapest)

*Sonata in G minor for Violoncello and Continuo* by  
Benedetto Marcello Range: low G to high G

*Sonata in F major for Recorder and continuo, TWV:  
41: F2* by Georg Philipp Telemann Publisher: Amadeus  
Verlag Range: low F to high G

*Sonata in Bb major for Violoncello, RV 46* by Antonio  
Vivaldi Range: low Eb to high Ab

Classic Experience Collection (Cramer Music, London)  
Favorite Classical Themes Arranged for Bassoon and  
Piano by Jerry Lanning

*Air on the G String* from Suite No. 3 by J.S. Bach Range:  
middle E to high G

*Canon* by Johann Pachelbel Range: low G to high G

*Chanson Boheme* from Carmen by Georges Bizet  
Range: low A to high F#

*Chorale Symphony (Ode to Joy)* from Symphony No. 9  
by Ludwig van Beethoven Range: low G to high G

*Farandole* from *L'Arlesienne Suite No. 2* by Georges Bizet Range: middle D to high G

*Gymnopédie No. 1* by Erik Satie Range: middle D to high G

*Largo* from *Symphony No. 9* by Antonin Dvorak Range: middle C to high G

*Pavane* by Gabriel Faure Range: middle C# to high G

*Scene from Swan Lake* by Peter Ilich Tchaikovsky Range: middle C to upper F#

*Spring* from *The Four Seasons* by Antonio Vivaldi Range: middle C to high G

*Turkish Rondo* from *Piano Sonata in A* by W. A. Mozart Range: middle C# to high F#

## **Master Solos Intermediate Level – Bassoon (Hal Leonard Publishing Corp.)**

*Reverie* from *Two Sketches* by Edmund J. Siennicki  
Range: low E to upper C

*Chanson Triste* by Peter Tchaikovsky Range: low F to high Ab (includes tenor clef)

## **NYSSMA Folio for Bassoonists (Jack Spratt Music Co.)**

*Canzona* by G. B. Pergolesi (arr. Clifford P. Barnes)  
Range: low G to high Gb (optional high A)

*Romance* by J. P. Duport Range: low F# to high G

Second Book of Bassoon Solos – Bassoon and Piano,

edited and arranged by Lyndon Hilling and Walter Bergmann (Faber Music)

1 Sinfonia from *Cantata No. 156* by J.S. Bach Range: middle C to upper G (some tenor clef)

3. March from *Cantata No. 26* by J.S. Bach Range: middle C to high G (all in tenor clef, includes ornaments)

7. Air from *Sonata No. 6* by J.C. Schickhardt Range: middle C to high G

10. Prelude from F. J. Haydn's String Trios Range: low G to high G (some tenor clef)

11. Menuet from F.J. Haydn's String Trios Range: low C to high G (some tenor clef)

12. Finale from F.H. Haydn's String Trios Range: low F to high G (some tenor clef)

13. Aria "Dalla Sua Pace" from *Don Giovanni* by W.A. Mozart Range: middle D to high G

14. Larghetto from *Sonatina for Violin and Piano, Op. 100* by A. Dvorak Range: low G to high G

15. Album Leaf from Book One of *Lyric Pieces* by E. Grieg Range: low G to high G

Solos for the Bassoon Player selected and edited/  
arranged by Sol Schoenbach (G. Schirmer, Inc.  
distributed by Hal Leonard Corp.)

*Berceuse* from *The Firebird* by Igor Stravinsky Range: middle D# to high Ab

*Adagio* from *Sextet, Op. 71* by Ludwig van Beethoven  
Range: low F to high G

*Romanza "Una furtiva lagrima"* from *L'elisir d'amore* by Gaetano Donizetti Range: middle F to high Ab

*10 Bassoon Concertos for bassoon and string orchestra* by Antonio Vivaldi edited by Sol Schoenbach, piano reduction by William Winstead (G. Schirmer, Inc. distributed by Hal Leonard Corp.) Volume I

*Concerto in A minor, RV 497* Range: low C to high G (this concerto is also listed as F. VIII No. 7, Pincherle 72, and M. 72)

*Concerto in C major, RV 477* Range: low C to high G (this concerto is also listed as F. VIII No. 13, Pincherle 46, and M. 224)

*10 Bassoon Concertos for bassoon and string orchestra* by Antonio Vivaldi edited by Sol Schoenbach, piano reduction by William Winstead (G. Schirmer, Inc. distributed by Hal Leonard Corp.) Volume II

*Concerto in G major, RV 495* Range: low C to high G (this concerto is also listed as F. VIII No. 23, Pincherle 384, and M. 269)

Time Pieces for Bassoon, Volume 2 arranged by Ian Denley (The Associated Board of the Royal Schools of Music)

*Vivace* from *Sonata No. 2 in G* by Johann Ernst Galliard  
Range: low D to high G

*Bagatelle, Op. 119, No. 1* by Ludwig van Beethoven  
Range: low A to high G

*Nein, es ist nicht auszukommen (No, it is not possible)* from *Liebeslieder Waltzer, Op. 52* by Johannes Brahms  
Range: low G to high G

*Une larme (A Teardrop)* by Modest Mussorgsky

Range: middle C to high Ab

*The Teddy Bears' Picnic* by John W. Bratton Range:  
low Bb to upper F

*Dance of the Young Maidens* from *Gayane* by Aram  
Khachaturian Range: middle B to upper E

*Minuet* from *Suite in the Old Style* by Alfred Schnittke

Range: low G to high Ab

## Solos (Individual Pieces)

*Adagio and Allegro* by Benedetto Marcello (arr. Lyle  
Merriman) Publisher: Southern Music Co. Range: low G  
to high G

*Alborada – “Dawn Song”* by Gordon Goodwin,  
Publisher: Southern Music Co. Range: middle C# to high  
Gb

*Caprice No. 20* from *24 Caprices for solo violin, Op.  
1* by Nicolo Paganini (arr. David R. Werden) Publisher:  
Cimarron Music Press Range: low G to high G

*Concertino in Bb major for bassoon and orchestra,  
Perger 52/5* by Michael Haydn [piano reduction]  
Publisher: Ludwig Doblinger Range: low F to high G

*Concerto in D major for bassoon and orchestra* by  
Joseph Bodin de Boismortier (Leonard Sharrow, editor)  
Publisher: International Music Co. Range: low E to high  
G

*Concerto in C Major, GWV 301 for bassoon, strings,  
and harpsichord* by Christoph Graupner (Felix Schroeder,  
editor) Publisher: Verlag Thomi-Berg Planegg Bei  
Munchen Range: low Bb to high G (some tenor clef)

*Concerto in C major for bassoon and strings* by Johann

Baptist Georg Neruda Publisher: Musica Rara Range: low Bb to high G (Ab)

*Concerto in C major for bassoon and orchestra* by Johann Baptist Vanhal (K.W. Schwamberger, editor) Publisher: Simrock Range: low D to high G

*Deux Caprices En Forme de Valse pour bassoon and piano, strings, or harp* by Paul Bonneau Publisher: Alphonse Leduc Range: low D to high G

“Galatea Dry Thy Tears” from *Acis and Galatea* by G.F. Handel (arr. Ronald Dishinger) Publisher: Medici Music Press Range: middle F to high G

“Happy, Thou Art My Bliss” from *Acis and Galatea* by G.F. Handel (arr. Ronald Dishinger) Publisher: Medici Music Press Range: middle C to high G

*I Fagott* by Clare Hounsell Publisher: Clare Hounsell Music Range: low Eb to high G

*Impromptu, Op. 35, No. 9 for bassoon and piano* by Reinhold Gliere (Simon Kovar, editor) Publisher: International Music Co. Range: low Bb to high Ab

“Let Our Glad Songs” from *Deborah* by G.F. Handel (arr. Ronald Dishinger) Publisher: Medici Music Press Range: middle D to high G

Prelude from *Prelude and Fugue BWV 537* by J.S. Bach (arr. Ronald Dishinger) Publisher: Medici Music Press Range: middle B to high G

*Sonata Op. 3, no. 4 in G minor for bassoon or cello and basso continuo* by Luigi Mercè (Nancy Hadden, editor) Publisher: Schott Music Range: low G to high G

*Sonata in A minor, Op. 26, No. 2 for bassoon, cello, or gamba and figured bass* by Joseph Bodin de Boismortier (Ronald Tyree, editor) Publisher: Breitkopf & Haertel/Musica Rara Range: low C to high G

*Sonata in G minor, Op. 26, No. 5 for bassoon, cello, or gamba and figured bass* by Joseph Bodin de Boismortier

(Fernand Oubradous, editor) Publisher: Masters Music Publications Range: low D to high G

*Sonata in F minor for bassoon and continuo, TWV: 41: F1* by Georg Philipp Telemann (Winfried Michel, editor) Publisher: Amadeus Verlag Range: low C to high G

*Sonata in F minor for bassoon and continuo, TWV: 41: F1* by Georg Philipp Telemann (Simon Kovar and Robert Veyron-Lacroix, editors) Publisher: International Music Co. Range: low C to high G

*Sonate in C major for bassoon, piano, and continuo, FAWV N:C1* by Johann Friedrich Fasch Publishers: Universal Edition, C.F. Peters, Bocal Music Range: low C to high G

*Sonata in Bb major, K. 292* by W.A. Mozart (William Waterhouse, editor) Publisher: Chester Music Range: low F to high G (some tenor clef)

*Six Sonatas for bassoon and basso continuo* by Johann Ernst Galliard Publisher: International Music Co. Range: low C to high G

*Suite of Pieces for bassoon and continuo* from *Op. 40* by Joseph Bodin de Boismortier (arr. Robert Thompson) Publisher: Shawnee Press Inc. Range: low G to high G

The Lion from "In the African Jungle" HWV 136 by G.F. Handel (arr. Ronald Dishinger) Publisher: Medici Music Press Range: low C to high Ab

*Two Sonatas, opus 50, nos. 4-5 for bassoon and orchestra* by Joseph Bodin de Boismortier (Kim Walker, editor) Publisher: Breitkopf & Haertel Range: low D to high G

*Two Suites BWV 1007-1008* by J.S. Bach (arr. Paul Cammarota) Publisher: G. Schirmer Range: low C to high G

*Variations on Au Clair de la lune for bassoon and orchestra* by Francois Rene Gebauer (Alexandre

Ouzounoff, editor) Publisher: Editions Salabert    Range:  
low G to high G



XIII

# FOURTH OCTAVE NOTES



## 76.

## About Notes in the Fourth Octave

Playing in the fourth octave requires much the same as the top of the third octave:

- Extremely fast, cold, steady air
- Accurate aural target
- Firm embouchure (lips)
- Open oral cavity
- Correct fingerings

### Fourth Octave Notes



The final high notes covered in this volume include high A, Bb, B, C. The practical range of the bassoon extends up to E (the top space of the treble staff), and a possible range of F (top line). Some bassoonists have extended their own range beyond high F through experimentation and perseverance.

Good control over a three-octave range (Bb1 to Bb3) is the generally accepted expectation for high school seniors applying to become music majors. Exceptional students

will have a range up to C (third space treble staff) or D (fourth line treble staff).

## Fingerings

Fingerings in the fourth octave bare little if any resemblance to notes in the lower octaves and must be memorized through practice of extended scales, intervals, and arpeggios. Individual fingers for the final notes are covered in the following chapters.

## Response

Good response on these notes requires the following:

- Extremely fast, cold, steady airstream
- Firm embouchure (lips not jaws)
- More reed in the mouth (move lips close to first wire)
- Correct fingerings

## Intonation

Good intonation on these notes requires the following:

- Accurate aural target
- Open oral cavity
- Space between the teeth
- Voicing

- Long tone practice with drones

## Tone

A rich, resonant tone quality on these notes requires:

- Hear the sound you want in your head
- Open oral cavity
- Space between the teeth
- Voicing
- Use of the resonance key on all notes above F3 (E3 for some)
- Long tone practice

## Tenor Clef

Tenor clef is one of the original C clefs. Middle C is the fourth line up.

### Fourth Octave Notes - Tenor Clef



This register needs a lot of leger lines when written in bass clef. Composers will frequently use tenor clef to avoid leger lines. Once a student learns high G, the study of tenor clef should begin. I recommend *Introductory Studies in Tenor and Alto Clef for Trombone: Before Blazhevich* by Brad Edwards. The book includes examples in alto clef because it is written for trombone students. However, the alto clef examples can either be transposed or skipped because alto clef is not traditionally used in bassoon music.

Composers will occasionally write for bassoon in treble clef. This is more common in music written after 1940.

## Comparison of Clefs

### Clef Comparison

Musical notation for measures 1-7. The score is written for three staves: Treble, Bass, and Bass. The Treble staff contains a whole rest in measure 1, followed by whole notes in measures 2-7. The Bass staff contains a whole note in measure 1, followed by half notes in measures 2-7. The Bass staff contains a whole note in measure 1, followed by half notes in measures 2-7.

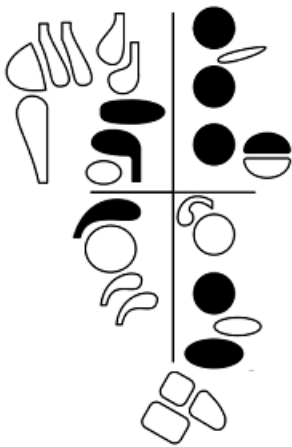
Musical notation for measures 8-12. The score is written for three staves: Treble, Bass, and Bass. The Treble staff contains a whole note in measure 8, followed by half notes in measures 9-12. The Bass staff contains a whole note in measure 8, followed by half notes in measures 9-12. The Bass staff contains a whole note in measure 8, followed by half notes in measures 9-12.

Musical notation for measures 13-16. The score is written for three staves: Treble, Bass, and Bass. The Treble staff contains whole rests in measures 13-16. The Bass staff contains a whole note in measure 13, followed by half notes in measures 14-16. The Bass staff contains a whole note in measure 13, followed by half notes in measures 14-16.

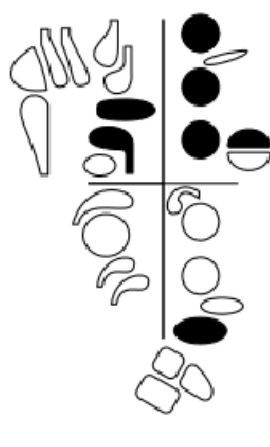
77.

## Lesson 32: High A (A3)

### Fingerings



Best



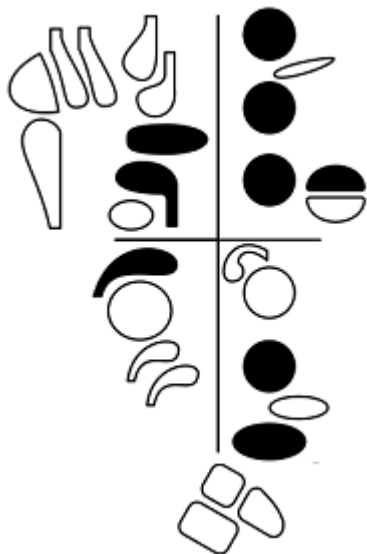
sharp, less full

## Response

The fingering on the left gives the best response, intonation, and tone on high A. But even with a really good fingering you still need to:

- Have an accurate aural target,
- Blow a fast, cold, steady airstream,
- Support the reed with your embouchure (lips),
- Keep space between your teeth,
- Keep oral cavity open.

## Intonation



This fingering gives the best intonation and tone quality.

However, too much lip pressure will still make the note sharp, so

- maintain space between your teeth,
- open oral cavity,
- voice a medium to low vowel shape depending on how sharp the note is.



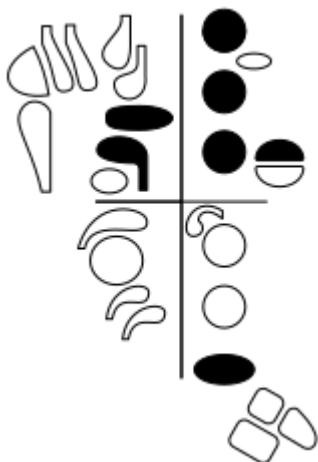
[tuningdrones.com](http://tuningdrones.com)

### Matching Pitch on A3

Bassoon

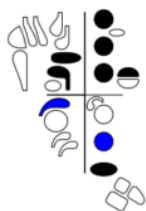
Reference Tone

## Tone



This fingering is the easiest technically speaking because it involves the fewest fingers. Unfortunately, it also has poor response, it sounds thin and is very sharp. Simply adding the Bb key and covering the A tone hole make a huge improvement in both tone and

pitch so don't take a shortcut and use the "easy" fingering. It takes much more work to get the "easy" fingering to respond in the right octave and then you have to adjust everything to get it in tune.



Add these 2 keys  
to fix response,  
intonation, and  
tone!

Playing A to G

Both hands change when playing these two notes.

### Playing A to G

Two staves of music. The top staff is in bass clef with a key signature of one sharp (F#). It contains a sequence of notes: A2, A2, A2, A2, A2, A2, A2, A2, G2, G2, G2, G2. The bottom staff is also in bass clef with a key signature of one sharp. It contains a sequence of notes: A2, A2, A2, A2, A2, A2, A2, A2, G2, G2, G2, G2. Between the two staves are two diagrams of a bassoon key mechanism. The first diagram shows the key in its resting position for playing A2, with the left hand finger (indicated by a blue dot) on the key. The second diagram shows the key in its depressed position for playing G2, with the left hand finger on the key.

### Playing A to G#

The right hand stays the same for both notes but the left hand changes.

### Playing A to G#

Two staves of music. The top staff is in bass clef with a key signature of two sharps (F# and C#). It contains a sequence of notes: A2, A2, A2, A2, A2, A2, A2, A2, G#2, G#2, G#2, G#2. The bottom staff is also in bass clef with a key signature of two sharps. It contains a sequence of notes: A2, A2, A2, A2, A2, A2, A2, A2, G#2, G#2, G#2, G#2. Between the two staves are two diagrams of a bassoon key mechanism. The first diagram shows the key in its resting position for playing A2, with the left hand finger (indicated by a blue dot) on the key. The second diagram shows the key in its depressed position for playing G#2, with the left hand finger on the key.



# Old MacDonald

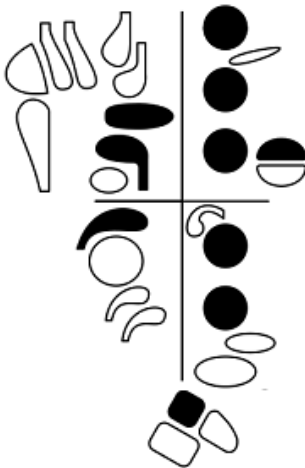
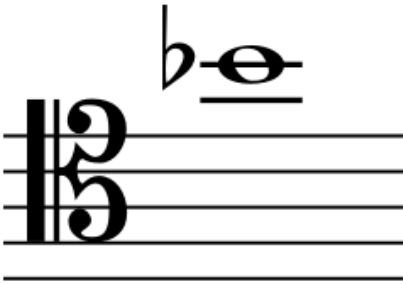




78.

## Lesson 33: High Bb (Bb4)

### Fingering



## Response

This fingering gives good response, intonation, and tone but you still need to:

- Have an accurate aural target,
- Blow a fast, cold, steady airstream,
- Support the reed with your embouchure (lips),
- Keep space between your teeth,
- Keep oral cavity open.

## Intonation and Tone

As with any note, too much lip pressure will make the note sharp and thin. Be sure to

- maintain space between your teeth,
- open oral cavity,
- voice a medium to low vowel shape depending on how sharp the note is.



[tuningdrones.com](http://tuningdrones.com)

### Matching Pitch on High Bb

Bassoon

Reference Tone

The image shows two musical staves. The top staff is labeled 'Bassoon' and the bottom staff is labeled 'Reference Tone'. Both staves are in 2/4 time. The Bassoon staff has four measures of rests, with a 'b e' note above each measure. The Reference Tone staff has a continuous sequence of notes: Bb, Bb, Bb, Bb, Bb, Bb, Bb, Bb.



$b-e$      $b-o$

The image shows a musical staff with a treble clef and a key signature of one flat (B-flat). Above the staff, the notes  $b-e$  and  $b-o$  are written. Below the staff, two diagrams illustrate the fingering for these notes. The first diagram shows the left hand with fingers 1, 2, 3, and 4 on the keys for B-flat, C, D, and E. The second diagram shows the left hand with fingers 1, 2, 3, and 4 on the keys for B-flat, C, D, and F.

Playing Bb to Ab

The image shows two lines of musical notation in a treble clef with a key signature of one flat. The first line contains five measures: the first measure has a whole note B-flat; the second measure has a whole note C; the third measure has a whole note D; the fourth measure has a whole note E; and the fifth measure has a whole note F. The second line starts with a measure number '6' above the staff. It contains five measures: the first measure has a whole note G; the second measure has a whole note A; the third measure has a whole note B; the fourth measure has a whole note C; and the fifth measure has a whole note D.

### Bb major Segment

The first system shows a musical staff in bass clef with a key signature of two flats (Bb major) and a 4/4 time signature. It contains five measures, each with a whole note. Below the staff are five corresponding fingering diagrams for the bassoon, showing the placement of fingers and the use of the left thumb and right index finger. The second system starts with a measure number '6' and contains four measures, each with a whole note, ending with a double bar line.

### Bb major scale (one octave)

The first system shows the Bb major scale (one octave) in bass clef, 4/4 time, starting on Bb. It consists of two lines of four measures each, with notes: Bb, C, D, Eb, F, G, Ab, Bb. The second system continues the scale from the first line, with notes: C, D, Eb, F, G, Ab, Bb, and ends with a double bar line.

### Bb major scale (two octaves)

The first system shows the Bb major scale (two octaves) in bass clef, 4/4 time, starting on Bb. It consists of two lines of four measures each, with notes: Bb, C, D, Eb, F, G, Ab, Bb. The second system continues the scale from the first line, with notes: C, D, Eb, F, G, Ab, Bb, and ends with a double bar line. The third system continues the scale from the second line, with notes: C, D, Eb, F, G, Ab, Bb, and ends with a double bar line. The fourth system continues the scale from the third line, with notes: C, D, Eb, F, G, Ab, Bb, and ends with a double bar line.

### Bb major scale (three octaves)

Musical notation for the Bb major scale (three octaves) in bass clef, 4/4 time signature. The scale is written across four staves, starting from the first line (Bb) and ascending to the first line of the fourth staff (Bb).

### Ode to Joy

Beethoven

Musical notation for 'Ode to Joy' in bass clef, 4/4 time signature. The piece is written across three staves. A 'simile' marking is placed above the first staff. The notation includes various rhythmic values and phrasing.

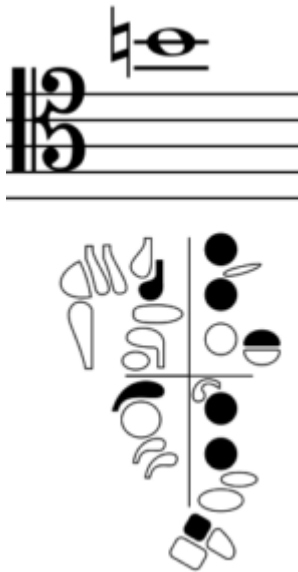
### Kum Ba Yah

Musical notation for 'Kum Ba Yah' in bass clef, 4/4 time signature. The piece is written across three staves. The notation includes various rhythmic values and phrasing, with some notes marked with accents.

79.

## Lesson 34: High B (B4)

### Fingering



**Note:** The high C key must be held down for the duration of the B. It does not function as a speaker key in this octave like it does in the octave below.

## Response

Good response on high B requires:

- an accurate aural target,
- a fast, cold, steady airstream,
- supporting the reed with your embouchure (lips),

## Intonation and Tone

High B is a very sharp note on the bassoon and too much lip pressure will push the pitch even higher. Your lips can be firm but make sure to

- maintain space between your teeth,
- create an open oral cavity,
- voice a low vowel shape with the back of your tongue.

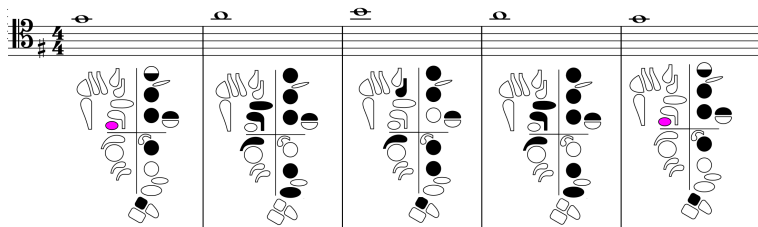


[tuningdrones.com](http://tuningdrones.com)

### Matching Pitch on High B



## G major 3-note segment



## This Little Light of Mine

## Kum Ba Yah

## Playing B to A#

Playing B to A# in the fourth octave requires a change in both hands. The right-hand only needs to lift the Bb key, The left-hand thumb and ring fingers move.



## B major scale (one octave)

Musical notation for the B major scale (one octave) in treble clef, 4/4 time. The scale is written in two lines of music. The first line contains the notes B4, C5, D5, E5, F5, G5, A5, B5. The second line contains the notes B5, C6, D6, E6, F6, G6, A6, B6.

## B major scale (two octaves)

Musical notation for the B major scale (two octaves) in bass clef, 4/4 time. The scale is written in four lines of music. The first line contains the notes B2, C3, D3, E3, F3, G3, A3, B3. The second line contains the notes B3, C4, D4, E4, F4, G4, A4, B4. The third line contains the notes B4, C5, D5, E5, F5, G5, A5, B5. The fourth line contains the notes B5, C6, D6, E6, F6, G6, A6, B6.

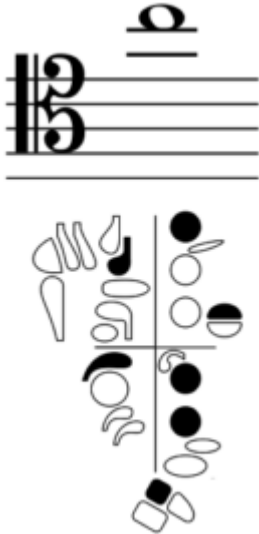
## B major scale (three octaves)

Musical notation for the B major scale (three octaves) in bass clef, 4/4 time. The scale is written in four lines of music. The first line contains the notes B2, C3, D3, E3, F3, G3, A3, B3. The second line contains the notes B3, C4, D4, E4, F4, G4, A4, B4. The third line contains the notes B4, C5, D5, E5, F5, G5, A5, B5. The fourth line contains the notes B5, C6, D6, E6, F6, G6, A6, B6.

80.

## Lesson 35: High C (C4)

### Fingering



**Note:** The high C key must be held down for the duration of the C. It does not function as a speaker key in this octave like it does in the octave below.

## Response

Good response on high C requires:

- an accurate aural target,
- a fast, cold, steady airstream,
- supporting the reed with your embouchure (lips),

## Intonation and Tone


High C can be a very sharp note on the bassoon and too much lip pressure will push the pitch even higher. Your lips can be firm but make sure to

- maintain space between your teeth,
- create an open oral cavity,
- voice a low vowel shape with the back of your tongue.



[tuningdrones.com](http://tuningdrones.com)

### Matching Pitch on High C

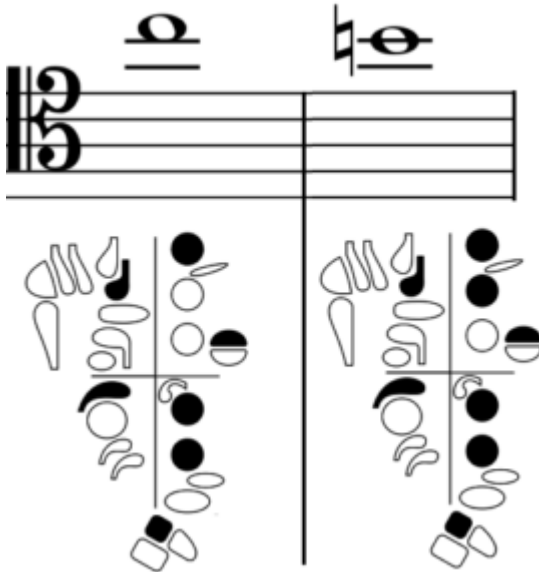


Bassoon

Reference Tone

## Playing C to B

Playing C to B in the fourth octave only requires moving one finger. Lift the index finger of the left-hand; the fingers of the right-hand stay the same.



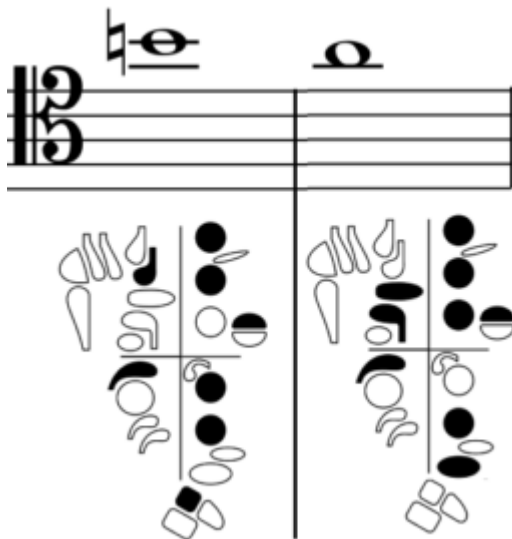
Playing C to B



## Playing B to A natural

Playing from B to A in the fourth octave requires changes in both hands. The left thumb moves down to the A and C# keys and the left ring finger goes down. The right-hand

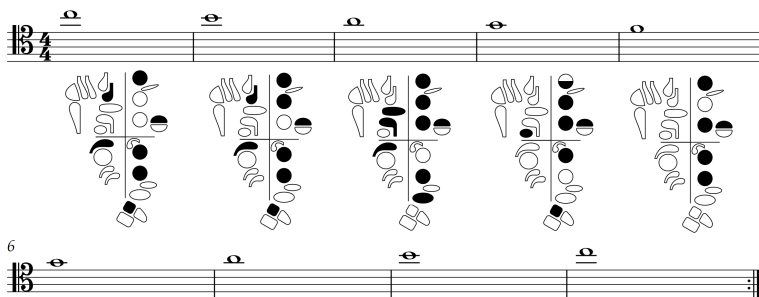
index finger lifts and the ring finger goes down and the right pinky adds the low F key.



Playing B to A



C major Segment



C major scale (one octave)

C major scale (two octaves)

C major scale (three octaves)

Playing C to Bb

Playing from C to Bb in the fourth octave requires changes in both hands. In the left hand the thumb, middle, and ring fingers have to change. In the right hand the thumb lifts off of the Bb key.

The image shows a 13-string guitar with a treble clef. Two chord diagrams are provided: a C major chord (x32010) and a Bb major chord (x21020). The diagrams use circles to represent strings and lines to represent frets.

Playing C to Bb

Musical notation for the first line, showing a treble clef and a key signature of one flat. The notes are C4, Bb4, F5, Bb5, F5, Bb5, F5, Bb5, F5, Bb5.

Musical notation for the second line, starting with a measure rest and a '6' above the staff. The notes are F5, Bb5, F5, Bb5, F5, Bb5, F5, Bb5, F5, Bb5.

When the Saints Go Marchin' In

Musical notation for the third line, showing a treble clef, a key signature of one flat, and a 4/4 time signature. The notes are G4, A4, Bb4, C5, G4, A4, Bb4, C5, G4, A4, Bb4, C5.

Musical notation for the fourth line, showing a treble clef and a key signature of one flat. The notes are G4, A4, Bb4, C5, G4, A4, Bb4, C5, G4, A4, Bb4, C5.

Musical notation for the fifth line, showing a treble clef and a key signature of one flat. The notes are G4, A4, Bb4, C5, G4, A4, Bb4, C5, G4, A4, Bb4, C5.

Playing C - Bb - Ab

The diagram shows three measures of music in bass clef with a key signature of one flat (Bb). Above each measure is a note with a flat: C, Bb, and Ab. Below each measure is a fingering diagram for the bassoon. The diagrams show the placement of fingers on the keys and the position of the reed and lip. The first measure shows the fingering for C, the second for Bb, and the third for Ab.

Eb major 3-note segment

The diagram shows five measures of music in bass clef with a key signature of two flats (Bb, Eb) and a 4/4 time signature. Above each measure is a note with a flat: C, Bb, Ab, Gb, and F. Below each measure is a fingering diagram for the bassoon. The diagrams show the placement of fingers on the keys and the position of the reed and lip. The first measure shows the fingering for C, the second for Bb, the third for Ab, the fourth for Gb, and the fifth for F.

The Bridge at Avignon

The diagram shows three staves of music in bass clef with a key signature of two flats (Bb, Eb) and a 4/4 time signature. The first staff shows a sequence of notes: C, Bb, Ab, Gb, F, E, D, C. The second staff shows a sequence of notes: C, Bb, Ab, Gb, F, E, D, C. The third staff shows a sequence of notes: C, Bb, Ab, Gb, F, E, D, C.



**81.**

## **Exercises for High Notes**

### Exercises for High Notes

1

7

11

17

21

27

31

37





## 82.

# Etudes and Solos with range of Low Bb to High C

## Methods

*The First Complete Weissenborn Bassoon Method and Studies, Op. 8 Vols. 1 and 2*, edited by Frank Morelli (Carl Fischer)

Lessons XXI – XXVI (pages 108-136) fit within the range of low Bb to high C. The lessons include exercises in a variety of meters and rhythms, duets, as well as excerpts from the orchestral repertoire.

**Note:** The last two lessons in this method (pages 137-144) extend the range up to E5, the top space on the treble staff.

## Etudes

*26 Melodic Studies* by Graham Sheen (Emerson Edition Ltd.)

Etudes 23-26 fit this range.

## Solos (Collections)

Classical Experience Collection (Cramer Music, London) Favorite Classical Themes Arranged for Bassoon and Piano by Jerry Lanning

*Berceuse from the Dolly Suite* by Gabriel Faure Range: low A to high A

*Clair de Lune* from *Suite Bergamasque* by Claude Debussy Range: middle C# to high B

*Nessun Dorma* from *Turandot* by Giacomo Puccini Range: middle D to high A

*Oh! Mio Babbino Caro* from *Gianni Schicchi* by Giacomo Puccini Range: middle E to high A

*Romeo and Juliet Overture – Fantasy* by Peter Ilich Tchaikovsky Range: middle C to high B

*Scheherazade* Third Movement by Nikolai Rimsky-Korsakov Range: middle D to high B

*The Swan* by Camille Saint-Saens Range: middle B to high A

Master Solos Intermediate Level – Bassoon (Hal Leonard Publishing Corp.)

*Arioso and Humoreske* by Julius Weissenborn Range: low C to high A

*Menuetto* from *Piano Sonata No. 11, Op. 22* by Ludwig van Beethoven Range: low D to high Bb

*Two Impromptus* by Edmund Siennicki Range: low Eb to high A

Second Book of Bassoon Solos – Bassoon and Piano,

edited and arranged by Lyndon Hilling and Walter Bergmann (Faber Music)

6. Largo from *Sonata in C* by F. Barsanti Range: middle D to high A (some tenor clef)

9. Allegro con Spirito (transcription of first movement from *Sonata, op. 16 No. 5*) by J.C. Bach Range: low G to high A

Solos for the Bassoon Player selected and edited/  
arranged by Sol Schoenbach (G. Schirmer, Inc.  
distributed by Hal Leonard Corp.)

*Es ist vollbracht* from St. John Passion by J. S. Bach  
Range: middle D to high B

*The Sorcerer's Apprentice* by Paul Dukas Range: low C to high A

*Entr'acte* from Carmen by Georges Bizet Range: low G to high Bb

Four Excerpts from *Pictures at an Exhibition* Range:  
low G# to high B

First Movement from *Symphony No. 4, Op. 36* by Peter I. Tchaikovsky Range: low Bb to high C

Second Movement from *Symphony No. 4, Op. 36* by Peter I. Tchaikovsky Range: low A to high Bb

Third Movement from *Symphony No. 5, Op. 64* by Peter I. Tchaikovsky Range: low A to high A

*Cool* from West Side Story by Leonard Bernstein  
Range: low C to high B

612 Carol Cope Lowe

Time Pieces, Volume II arranged by Ian Denley (The Associated Board of the Royal Schools of Music)

*Shepherd's Hey* by Percy Grainger    Range: low D to high A

## **Solos (Individual Pieces)**

XIV

# INTONATION



**83.**

## **Playing In Tune**



The goal is to achieve accurate intonation while maintaining a pleasing tone quality. These suggestions will allow you to achieve this goal.

- Maintain adequate air support no matter the pitch issue.
- Hear the pitch you are aiming for before you play it.

## **Good Ears and Good Air are the key!**

Everything you do as a wind player has an effect on intonation.

- The position of your tongue
- The pressure from your lips
- Whether your lips are rolled out (puckered) or rolled in
- The space between your teeth/jaws
- The space of your oral cavity
- The position of your lips on the reed
- The angle of the bocal and reed as they enter the mouth
- The amount of breath support you provide

Each of these elements might feel a little different on any given day and they can all change with hardly any effort. The only way to gain consistent control of intonation and tone quality is to develop excellent listening skills and breath support.

Develop your listening skills so that you can hear where your notes need to be to fit within the harmonic structure BEFORE you play them.

1. Start with interval and pattern studies. Learn to hear the difference between a half-step and a whole step.
2. Start by getting really familiar with the sound of the major scale by learning it in every key.
3. Next, learn the sound of the three forms of minor scales (natural, harmonic, and melodic). Learn what is the same about the three scale and what makes each one different from the other two forms. Compare the major and minor scales. How are they similar and how are they different?
4. Follow this by learning to identify the different qualities of chords beginning with major and minor.

Remember, if you can hear it, you can play it!

**If the notes are sharp, think “hot**

## **pizza” mouth**

- Open the oral cavity,
- Voice a low vowel shape to lower the back of the tongue (“ah”),
- Space the teeth – relax the lower jaw,
- Soften lips/reduce pressure on reed,
- If necessary, use a lower fingering.

## **“If the notes are flat, think “blowing cold air”**

- Increase breath support,
- Natural space in oral cavity,
- Voice a higher vowel shape to raise back of tongue (“eee”)
- Reduce space between teeth
- Increase lip support slightly, primarily from the center of the bottom lip.

## **Reminders**

1. Intonation is second only to rhythm in the musical hierarchy.
2. Listen and Aim. Your ears are the tuning slide for the bassoon.
3. Always play with your best air support.
4. Intonation is a serious challenge because

bassoon pitch is very flexible. You must have an accurate aural target to play in tune.

5. Developing a “good ear” is crucial so start early by having working with a Tuning CD and tone-generating tuners which train the ears instead of needle-indicator or strobe-type tuners which train the eyes.
6. Accurate intonation with the best tone quality requires the proper balance between breath support, volume and speed of air, and lip support. Aim to produce a middle C with the reed on the bocal.
  - Too much lip and too little breath support will produce a thin, pinched, sharp sound with unstable response.
  - Too little lip and too great a volume of air will produce a flabby, flat sound with unstable response.
  - The ratio of lip to air will change as the register and/or dynamic changes.
  - Breath support remains constant. Adequate breath support will allow the player to use very little lip to control the tone, pitch, and response of a note. Minimal or absent breath support will force the player to use more lip to control the sound.
  - Said another way, maximum breath support allows the lips to be used for other things (tone color and nuance). If you do not have good breath

support, you have to compensate by using your lips which means they cannot do anything else, and you have no nuance of expression or range of tone color.



**84.**

## **Equipment and Intonation**



## The Bassoon.

### General Condition:

- Make sure all pads seal completely.
- Make sure all keys move freely.
- Make sure there are no cracks.
- Make sure all corks and felts are in place and in good condition. A missing or damaged cork will allow a key to open too much, changing the intonation.

### Intonation Adjustments:

Bassoon, unlike clarinet, does not adjust intonation by pulling out or pushing in on the various joints.

- The joints need to fit snugly to prevent leaks.
- The bassoon is much longer than the clarinet and it is not possible to pull out on a joint enough to make a significant difference in intonation.

## The Bocal

### General Condition:

- Make sure the curve of the bocal is smooth and has no dents.
- Make sure there are no cracks or dents at the tip end.
- Make sure the cork is secure and in good condition.
- Make sure the inside of the bocal is clean and free of deposits or buildup.
  - Clean by running with warm, soapy water (use gentle liquid dish detergent or antibacterial hand soap) and a bocal swab through the bocal.
  - Avoid using a bocal brush if possible. I have had the tips break off inside the bocal.
  - Dry the cork after cleaning.

### Intonation Adjustments:

Think of the bocal similar to the barrel of a clarinet:

1. A longer barrel lowers the pitch on the clarinet and a longer bocal lowers the pitch.
2. A shorter barrel raises the pitch on the clarinet and a shorter bocal raises the pitch on the bassoon.

Bocals are numbered from 0 to 4 according to their length.

- The smaller the number the shorter the bocal.
- Shorter will be higher in pitch; longer will be lower in pitch.
- #2 is the standard length used by most players.

Intonation can be altered by changing to a longer or shorter bocal.

However:

- The difference between consecutively numbered bocals is small and may not make a significant difference unless the player moves to a much longer or shorter bocal.
- Most early issues with intonation are also accompanied by poor tone quality and/or limited dynamic range. This suggests a problem with breath support and/or embouchure.
- Review [Chapter 6: Breathing](#) and [Chapter 7: Embouchure](#) for suggestions to improve these areas before investing in a shorter or longer bocal.

## The Reed

- Select a good quality reed (See [Chapter 3: Buying Reeds](#) for what to look for during visual inspection).
- The shape, length, and thickness of the reed and hardness of the cane affect the pitch of a reed so

if you have several brands, other than Bel Canto, you may also wish to compare the measurements and pick something in the middle.

- A reed that vibrates adequately can usually be played in tune no matter its measurements.
  - I do not recommend using Jones brand reeds. My experience has been that students who have played Jones reeds use too much jaw pressure because they are excessively wide and heavy. These reeds can be adjusted but I do not recommend them for beginners. If your student is generally flat, make sure they are not using a Jones reed.
- Reducing the resistance (scraping the blade, loosening wires) will lower the pitch.
- Increasing the resistance (clipping the blade length, narrowing the blade width, and tightening wires) will raise the pitch.

## Intonation Adjustments:

### Fit on the Bocal

- Make sure the reed fits on the bocal securely:
  - 7-9mm of the bocal should go inside the reed tube.
  - Fits securely with no wobbling.
- If there is a problem with the fit, the tube of the reed will need to be reamed.

Raise the Pitch:

- Shortening the reed by clipping the tip back will raise the pitch. But it will also make the reed feel harder and response will take more effort.
- Narrowing the sides of the reed with sandpaper will raise the pitch without as much change to the response and lip feel.

Lower the Pitch:

You can't make a reed longer to lower the pitch, so you have to reduce the resistance in the reed by:

- Scrapping cane off of the blade
- Flatten the height of the first wire.
- Raise the height of the second wire.

[See Chapter 89: Simple Reed Adjustments](#) for additional information.



XV

## **More About the Reed**

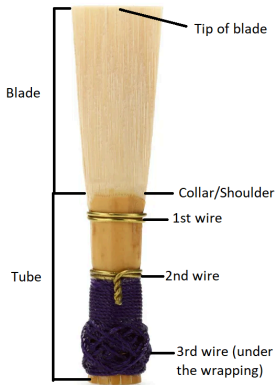


**85.**

## **The Bassoon Reed**



## THE BASSOON REED



The **blade** of the reed is the part that goes in the mouth when playing. The blades of a finished reed will have the bark removed and will be scraped to meet specific parameters so that it will vibrate easily. The blades of a reed can be adjusted using a knife, file, and/or sandpaper.

The **tip of the blade** is the end that goes in your mouth. The tip is the part your tongue will touch when you articulate notes.

The **collar** is located where the bark of the tube meets the reed blade. Some reeds are made with a distinct ledge at this point, and some have no discernable collar at all. Some bassoonists use the term **shoulder** instead of collar.

When you hold a reed, hold it by the **tube**. The tube of the reed is covered in bark and has been formed to create a circular opening at the end. The bottom end of the tube is the part that goes on the bocal. It must be very round, have no gaps, and needs to fit between 7-9mm on the bocal.

There are three wires on the tube.

**Top (1st) wire:** This wire is responsible for keeping the tip of the reed open. It also controls how much your lips need to work to play the reed.

**Middle (2nd) wire:** This wire affects tone quality and resistance of the reed. It also affects the tip opening, but to a lesser extent than the first wire.

**Bottom (3rd) wire:** The wire determines how round the open end of the tube will be. It is also called the “bocal wire.” Unlike the first and second wires, the third wire is covered by wrapping so it cannot be adjusted without removing the wrapping.

### Length & Width of the Bassoon Reed

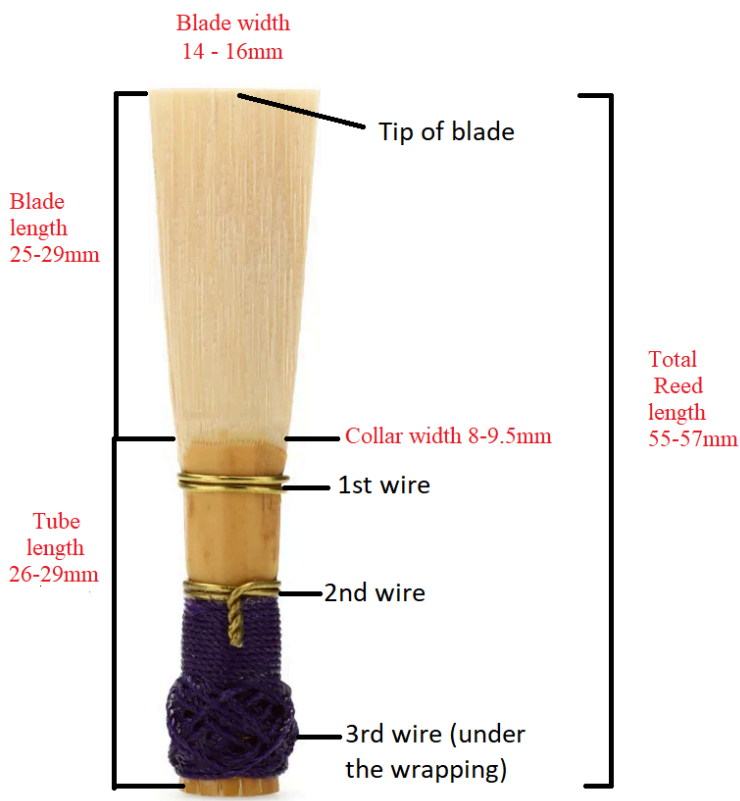
- A wider reed favors the low register while a narrower reed favors the upper register.
- A longer reed is generally lower in pitch while a shorter reed is generally higher in pitch.
- A heavier reed will require more air and more embouchure while a lighter reed will require less air and less pressure from the embouchure. However, a heavier reed will withstand a stronger embouchure better than a lighter reed.

Bassoon reeds are not standardized because there is no one kind of reed that is perfect for all instruments or players. There are an almost infinite variety of shapes and sizes. Unless you are buying reeds from a professional, there will not be a choice of shape or length. The better reeds sold in music stores and through online sites are made to a set of dimensions that will allow them to be played in tune without too much effort.

Range of reed lengths and widths:

- Total Reed length: 55-58 mm
- Tube length butt to collar: 27-29 mm
- Blade length collar to tip: 26-29 mm
- Blade width at tip: 14-16 mm
- Blade width at collar: 8-9.5 mm

Some bassoonists prefer a short, wide reed while others prefer a long, narrow reed; and others like something in between. Some bassoonists also prefer a very light reed that is easy to blow while others want a heavier reed with more resistance to blow against. Most manufactured (commercially produced in bulk) reeds use an average length and width shape aiming to reach the largest number of buyers.



**86.**

**What Makes a Reed "Good"?**



# Reed Quality.

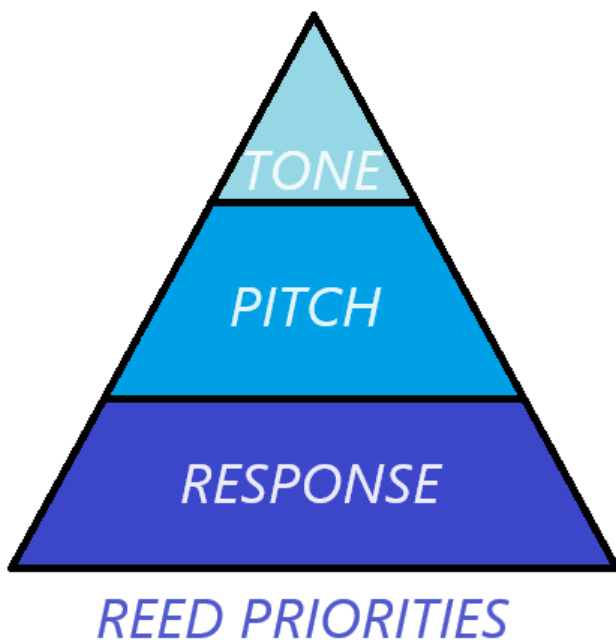
What makes a reed good or bad?

A playable reed has predictable **response**, stable **pitch**. Any reed that is not predictable should not be used in rehearsal with any ensemble. A **good reed** has easy response, accurate pitch, and acceptable tone quality.

**Response** is how the reed responds when you try to start the sound. The better the response is, the easier it is to start notes in all registers and at all dynamic levels.

**Pitch** can be another word for **intonation**. A reed with stable pitch is one that allows you to play in tune without making unexpected adjustments in voicing, support, or embouchure.

A reed with good **tone quality** is hard to describe because we all have our own ideas about what makes a good tone on the bassoon. Some people prefer a vibrant and colorful sound with lots of overtones while others prefer a sound that blends more with other instruments and has fewer overtones. A good tone quality is basically whatever you like in a sound.



The fundamental and most important quality of a good reed is good response. Your top priority is to play your notes at the right time and right dynamic. If you have to use all of your energy and concentration to get the required response you won't have anything left to think about playing in tune.

The next highest priority of a good reed is making it possible, or even easy, to play your notes in tune. If the reed is too hard, too narrow, and/or too short, it will be pitched high. This will make your notes sharp no matter how much you try to adjust. If the reed is too soft, too long, or too wide, it will be pitched low. This will make your notes flat no matter how much you try to support the sound and voice the notes higher. If you have to put all of your

energy and concentration into playing in tune, you won't have anything left to make music.

The final priority, and it is really icing on the cake, is a pleasing tone quality. This means you can make the quality of sound you want regardless of the register and/or dynamic.

**A good reed allows you to play the way you want with the tone and musical expression you desire.** A bad reed will make it a struggle to play the way you want.

A few things that can cause a reed to be “bad” include:

- A leak in the blade or the tube,
- A crack or chip in the blade,
- Splinters inside the tube,
- Uneven blades,
- Blades that are uneven, too thick, or too thin.

Some of these problems can be addressed to improve the reed's performance but others cannot. See [chapter 88 Tools for Simple Adjustments](#) and [chapter 89 Simple Reed Adjustments](#) for more information.



**87.**

## **Choosing a Good Reed**



## Visual Cues for Choosing a Good Reed

Whether you are picking out reeds at a music store, or choosing a reed from your reed case, here is a reminder of 6 visual cues to help you choose a good reed.

1. Check the reed blade for **chips or cracks**. Avoid buying a reed with a chipped or cracked blade and throw away any cracked reeds in your case.
2. Make sure the **end of the tube** (the part that will go on the bocal) is completely round and has no gaps or thin spots in the wall of the tube.
3. Choose a reed with a **symmetrical tip opening**. It will be more consistent across registers and dynamics.
4. Check the **sides of the two blades** to make sure they line up. If the side of one blade sticks out beyond the other blade the reed will probably leak.
5. Make sure the **string wrapping or other binding** (heat shrink tubing, hot glue, wax) is snug. The reed will leak around the bocal if the binding is loose.
6. The grain of the cane should be **smooth** and there should be **no splinters** of cane in the tube or along the sides of the blades.

## Reed Strength

Commercial reeds and even some handmade reeds are generally sold according to their level of strength or hardness. Reed strength is a measure of the resistance you have to blow against, and how much lip pressure the reed requires to play. There are five categories of reed strength.

- **Soft** (very easy to blow but will close up with any more than light embouchure pressure).
- **Medium Soft** (easy to blow, will close up with moderate embouchure pressure).
- **Medium** (requires more air and embouchure, closes with strong embouchure).
- **Medium Hard** (requires good breath support, moderate embouchure pressure, and firm articulation).
- **Hard** (requires strong breath support, strong embouchure pressure, and firm articulation).

I do not recommend buying reeds in the soft or hard categories until you have tried reeds in the middle categories. Start with a medium reed and a medium hard reed and see which gives you the best response, intonation, and tone quality.

- **When starting on bassoon** with no previous wind instrument experience I suggest starting on a medium reed.
- **When transferring from another instrument**, especially from clarinet or saxophone, I recommend starting on a medium hard reed.

- If you've been playing bassoon for a while and **want to try another brand of reed**, I suggest trying a medium-hard reed in the new brand.

You might need to move up a category as your embouchure and breath support muscles develop. If the reed makes your embouchure gets tired quickly (after only 5-10 minutes of playing) you can either adjust the reed or try a softer reed.



## 88.

# Basic Tools for Simple Adjustments

## Sources for Special Tools

Some of these tools will need to be purchased through a double reed supply store. There are many such stores online. The four I use most often are:

[Miller Marketing Co. | Double Reed Instruments & Supplies](#)

[Double Reed Specialist: Oboe Reeds, Bassoon Reeds, Double Reed Supplies \(forrestsmusic.com\)](#)

[About Us \(hodgeproductsinc.com\)](#)

[Charles Double Reed Company – Oboe & Bassoon reeds, accessories, instruments, repair, appraisals, and consignment services. \(charlesmusic.com\)](#)

## Tools for Making Simple Adjustments

### Bassoon Reed Reamer

The reamer is used to remove cane from the inside of the tube to get a better fit on the bocal.



- The reed needs to fit between 7-9mm onto the bocal. If the reed doesn't go on that far, the reamer is used to remove material from the inside of the reed tube.
- The reed tube must be free of splinters to allow adequate air flow through the reed. The reamer is used to remove splinters inside the reed tube.
- Check the reed tube for splinters before you soak the reed each time it is played.
- The taper of the reamer tip will determine where cane is removed. The parabolic shape of the more expensive model by Rieger will take cane off more evenly from tube opening up to the second wire. The more sharply tapered shape of the 2XREED model requires more practice and care to avoid removing too much cane at the tube opening which would cause the reed to rock on the bocal.
- Clean the reamer after every use by using a clean dry toothbrush to remove any material on the cutting surfaces of the tip. (Dedicate a toothbrush solely to this purpose. Don't use one that has been used on your teeth!)
- Once the reamer has dried, slide a section of plastic tubing over the metal tip to protect the cutting surfaces of the reamer.

**REAM DRY.** Best practice is to ream the tube when the reed is dry. The internal geometry of the tube is most stable when the cane is dry; reaming dry should prevent damaging the tube. However, a high-quality multi-fluted spiral reamer can be used when the reed is wet if necessary. Reaming dry will leave a cleaner, smoother surface whereas reaming wet may leave behind small splinters/fuzzies that will have to be removed with a round file.

Miller: [Rieger Spiral Reamer – F8](#) @ \$89.00 or [2XREED Bassoon Reed Reamer](#) @ \$30.00

Forrests: [#E-31 Rieger Spiral Reamer](#) @ \$109.95 or [#E-01](#) @ \$49.95

Hodge Products: [RR Rieger Spiral Reamer](#) @ \$99.95 or [RSBR Reeds-n-Stuff Spiral Reamer](#) = \$69.95 (\*best choice of the less expensive options due to the taper of the reamer tip)

Charles: [BRE830 Rieger Spiral Reamer](#) @ \$109.95 (no acceptable lower cost option)



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## Diamond Fine-Grit Round Needle File

The round file is used to remove debris and small splinters

of cane from the inside of reed tube to improve air flow through the reed.



- Always check the reed tube for splinters before you soak the reed.
- The round file is used to remove small splinters or fuzzy bits from the inside of the reed tube. Large splinter should be removed using a reamer.
- It is best used on a dry reed but can be used on a wet reed.
- Clean the file after every use by rinsing it in clean water. Let the file air dry before returning it to your tool kit.

Miller: [2XDFS 4-piece diamond file set](#) @ \$20.00 (The 3 additional files in the set can be used to adjust the taper and balance of the reed.)

Forrests: [#E-27 Fine Grit Round Diamond File](#) @ \$9.95

Hodge: [DNFR E-Z Lap Diamond Needle File – Fine Grit, Round](#) @ \$10.95

Charles: [BFW130 Rat Tail File](#) @ 17.95 (no round diamond file available)

Using the Diamond Fine-Grit Round Needle File (2:30-5:02)

## Bassoon Short Mandrel

Insert the short mandrel into the reed tube prior to adjusting the wires or the tube.



- The mandrel is inserted into the tube of the reed to prevent the tube from collapsing or getting crushed during the adjustment process.
- The mandrel also helps hold the reed during adjustment.
- Inexpensive “holding mandrels” fit too far into the reed tube, often allowing the mandrel tip to extend into the interior of the blade. This makes it impossible to use a plaque when scraping/adjusting the blades of the reed.
- **ALWAYS** insert a mandrel when working on the tube of the reed.

Miller: [Miller Pro Bassoon Mandrel](#) @ \$29.00

Forrests: [#E-30 Rieger Bassoon Mandrel](#) @ \$40.95

Hodge: [Reeds-N-Stuff Holding Mandrel](#) @ \$29.95

Charles: [Fox Short Forming Mandrel](#) @ \$20.95



## Bassoon Plaque

- The plaque fits between the blades of the reed and fills the space between the blades to prevent them from cracking when scraping, filing, or sanding the blades.



- ALWAYS insert a plaque when working on the blades.
- Soak the reed before inserting the plaque.
- Carefully insert the plaque between the blades

starting with the tip of the arrowhead.

- They are small and can get lost easily so get two or three if you can.
- Remove any debris on the plaque using a clean toothbrush and water. Dry the plaque prior to storage.

**Note:** I prefer a plastic plaque because I find it doesn't slide out of the reed when scraping the blades with a knife, and my knife doesn't dull as quickly as with a metal plaque.

Miller: [2XREED Bassoon Plaque – Plastic](#) @ \$5

Forrests: [#G-14 Contoured Plastic Bassoon Arrow Plaque](#) @ \$6.99

Hodge: [PPBPA-36.2 Pisoni Plastic Bassoon Arrow Plaque](#) @ \$3.95

Charles: [Black Plastic Arrowhead Bassoon Plaque](#) @ \$4.95

Using the Plaque (00:00-00:53)



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## Brass Wire (22 Gauge)

22 Gauge brass wire is used to hold the two halves of the reed tube together.



- The traditional bassoon reed has three wires holding the tube together.
  - The first wire is the one closest to the blades of the reed.
  - The second wire is the one in the middle.
  - The third wire, also called the bocal wire, is near the bottom of the tube. It is usually covered with some sort of binding (string, heat shrink tubing, or hot glue) and cannot be adjusted without removing the binding material.
- Each wire has a specific point of placement on the tube that affects intonation, response, tone, and mouth feel of the reed.
- Soft brass wire will conform to the shape of the reed tube and can usually withstand manipulation during the reed making process.

However, the wires can break and will need to be replaced.

- 22 gauge is the thickness used by most bassoonists because it provides adequate support for the tube without restricting the vibrations of the reed.
- Reed wires might be a little loose on a dry reed but need to be snug on a soaked reed. However, wires that are too tight will limit the reed's ability to vibrate.

Miller: [2XREED Soft Brass Wire – Spool of c. 100'](#) @ \$10.00

Forrests: [#G-05 Bassoon Reed Wire, 22 Gauge – Spool of 35'](#) @ \$7.95

Hodge: [Bassoon Wire – 22 Gauge, 45ft](#) @ \$13.95

Charles: [22 Gauge Brass Wire, 4 oz.](#) @ \$14.95

**Note:** While hardware stores and craft supply stores sell wire, it is generally the wrong metal, wrong gauge, or the wrong shape. It is best to buy this wire from a double reed supply shop.



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## Linesman Pliers

Linesman pliers are used to adjust the tightness and shape of the wires and tube, as well as the size of the tip opening.



- Stubby needle-nose pliers from the hardware store can be a less expensive substitute.

Miller: [2XREED Linesman Pliers](#) @ \$10.00

Forrests: [#E-38 Bassoon Reed Pliers](#) @ \$31.95

Hodge: [RSBP Reeds 'n Stuff Bassoon Pliers](#) @ \$41.95

Charles: not available

Lowe's: [Kobalt 7" linesman pliers with wire cutter](#) @ \$15.98

Home Depot: [Crescent 8' linesman cutting pliers](#) @ \$15.71

Ace: [Performance Tool 7' Alloy Steel Linesman Pliers](#) @ \$8.59

### Wet/Dry Sandpaper (220 and 400 grit)

Wet/Dry sandpaper is used to smooth the surface of the blades.



- Wet the reed before using sandpaper. The water will combine with the particles of cane and sandpaper to form a fine abrasive paste.
- Rinse the reed well after using sandpaper to remove the grit and paste.
- Sand the blades using 400 or 600 grit after every adjustment you make with a knife or file.

- Wet/Dry sandpaper comes in many grits. The larger numbers have a finer grit.
  - Use course grit sandpaper (220 or 320 grit) to remove cane from the blade.
  - Use finer grit sandpaper (400 or 600 grit) to give the blades and smooth finish.
- Sanding the inside of the blades at the tip can tame a bright reed.
- Use scissors to cut 2' to 3' strips from the sheets of sandpaper. The smaller strips are easier to aim and manipulate.

Miller: [2X999](#) – 2XREED Sandpaper Combo with 1 each of 220, 320, 400, and 600 grit @ \$5

Forrests: [#E-17](#) Norton Sandpaper in 220, 320, 400, 600 grits @ \$2.25/sheet = \$9 **\*Each grit** must be added separately.

Hodge: [NSP320](#), [NSP400](#), [NSP600](#) (220 not available) @ \$6.95 per grit = \$20.85 **\*Each grit** must be added separately.

Charles: [GGA070](#) Waterproof sandpaper in unspecified grit @ 0.50 cents/sheet



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## Ruler (6 inch metric)

The ruler is used to measure various dimensions of the reed.



- The ruler is needed to measure parts of the reed:
  - Total length (from bottom of tube to the tip)
  - Width of blade at the tip
  - Length of blades
  - Length of tube
  - Distance between the first and second wires
- Measurements in this book use the metric system and are given in millimeters

Miller: [2XRU](#) – 6' metal ruler @ \$4

Forrests: [#R-05](#) 6' stainless steel ruler @ \$4.95

Hodges: [RU](#) Hodge Steel Ruler @ \$3.95

Charles: [ORM080](#) Steel Ruler @ \$3.95

## End Nippers or Tip Cutter

End nippers or a tip cutter are used to shorten the reed blades.



End Nippers



Tip Cutter

- End nippers or a tip cutter shorten the blades by clipping off a small amount (0.5 to 1.0 mm at a time).
- Go slowly! You can always take more off, but you can never put any back on!
- Shortening the blades will increase resistance and raise the pitch of the reed.
- Clipping the tip is a common fix for a sagging third-space E natural.
- End Nippers are less expensive, but they require a steady hand, a good eye, and a bit of practice to make a straight cut across the entire width of both blades.
- Tip Cutters are more expensive but are much easier to use.
- Remove any debris from the blade with a clean,

dry toothbrush after each use.

- Dry the tool before it is returned to your toolkit.

Miller: [BNPEN](#) Precision End Nippers @ \$69.95 or [RBTC](#) Rieger Bassoon/Contrabassoon Tip Cutter @ \$199.00

Forrests: [#B-29](#) Forrests Reed Tip Cutter @ \$54.95 or [#B-31](#) Rieger Bassoon Reed Tip Cutter @ \$285.00

Hodge: [RCP](#) Rigotti Tip Cutting Nippers @ \$76.95 or [RBRTC](#) Rieger Bassoon Reed Tip Cutter @ \$269.95

Charles: [BPT210](#) Bassoon End Nippers by Swiss Grobet @ \$49.95 or [BPT810](#) Rieger Bassoon Tip Cutter @ \$329.00



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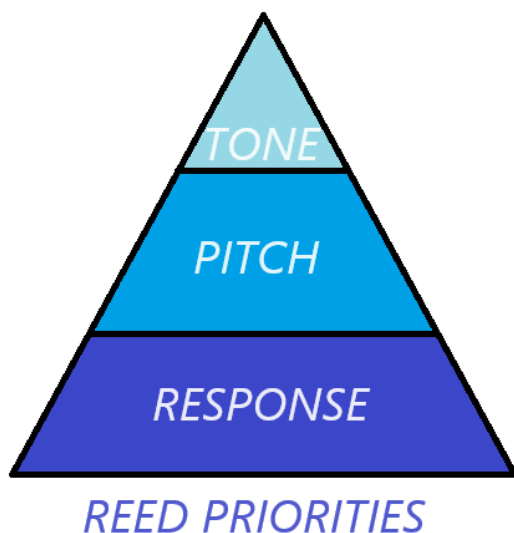


## 89.

# Simple Reed Adjustments

## Rules for Adjusting Reeds

1. **Maintain** good posture, breath support, and an active ear when testing and playing the reed.
2. **PLAY** the reed after **EVERY** adjustment. Sometimes only a little is needed. If you make several adjustments without testing after each one, you will not know which adjustment(s) helped.
3. **Address response**, then pitch, then tone. [OBJ]



Fix the response first because if you can't produce the note when it is needed, the tone doesn't matter. Fix the pitch (intonation) next because if you can't play the note in tune, the tone doesn't matter. Play the reed for a few days before making adjustments for tone quality. If response and tuning are good, the tone will probably be acceptable.

4. **ALWAYS** insert a mandrel into the tube of the reed before making any wire adjustments. Wire adjustments can usually be undone if they don't provide desired results. Once you scrape or trim the reed you can't put that cane back on. Try adjusting the wires before scraping or trimming a reed.
5. **ALWAYS** insert a plaque between the reed blades before scraping or sanding them.

6. **Reaming** should be done on a **DRY** reed.
7. **All other adjustments** should be done on a **WET** reed.
8. When adjusting the reed blades, **maintain a gradual and even taper** from center to sides and from collar to tip



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## Adjustments for Response

**Problem #1:** The reed will not vibrate easily or evenly.

**Tool:** Container of room temperature water.

**Solution:** Soak the reed in a container of water, not in your mouth.

**Problem #2:** The reed feels hard to blow and has poor response, intonation, and/or tone.

**Tools:** Reamer (multi-fluted spiral or diamond type), Round file

**Solution:** Make sure the inside of the reed's tube is free from splinters. Splinters can be removed using a reamer and/or a round file.

**Problem #3:** Your lips have to squeeze the reed very

hard to make a sound and the reed makes your mouth muscles tired quickly.

**Tools:** Linesman's pliers and mandrel.

**Solution:** Insert the mandrel as far as it will go into the tube. Hold the mandrel so the tip of the reed is in a horizontally straight position. Place the pliers directly on the top and bottom of the first wire and give a gentle squeeze to close the tip a little. This will reduce the resistance of the reed and help it respond more easily.



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**Problem #4:** The reed often falls off of the bocal. It may also have poor response, intonation, and/or tone.

**Tool:** Reamer (multi-fluted spiral or diamond type) and round file

**Solution:** Make sure the reed fits securely on the bocal. The bocal should go between 7-9mm into the reed tube. If the reed does not go far enough on the bocal, use a reamer to gradually increase the space inside the tube of the reed.



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## Adjustments for Intonation (and Tone Quality)

**Problem #5:** The reed is FLAT and feels too SOFT you need to add resistance.

**Tools:** Pliers and bassoon mandrel for options 1 and 2, tip clipper for option 3

### **Solutions:**

1. Open the tip of the reed by gently squeezing the sides of the first wire.
2. Open the tip of the reed by gently squeezing the top and bottom of the second wire.
3. Clip tip back 1/2mm at a time until Center of Crow rises to E or Eb.



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**Problem #6:** The reed is FLAT and sounds too BRIGHT.

**Tools:** Pliers and mandrel

**Solutions:**

1. Open the tip of the reed by gently squeezing the sides of the first wire.
2. Close the tip by gently squeezing the top and bottom of the second wire.
3. If the reed is extremely bright, buzzy, and flat do Step B followed by Step A.
4. To make the reed darker and more robust, and raise the pitch, squeeze the top and bottom of the second wire, then squeeze the sides of the first wire.

**Problem #7:** The reed is SHARP and feels too HARD you need to decrease resistance.

**Tools:** Pliers and bassoon mandrel for options 1 and 2, flat file for option 3.

**Solutions:**

1. Close the tip of the reed by gently squeezing on the top and bottom of the first wire.
2. Close the tip of the reed by gently squeezing the sides of the second wire.
3. File or scrape lightly across back  $\frac{1}{2}$  of reed until the Center of Crow falls to E or Eb.



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**Problem #8:** The reed is SHARP and sounds STUFFY.

**Tools:** Pliers and mandrel

**Solutions:**

1. Close the tip of the reed by gently squeezing the top wire from the top and bottom.
2. Open the tip of the reed by gently squeezing the middle wire from the top and bottom.
3. Close the tip a lot by doing Step B and then Step A.

### Adjustments for Feel & Tone Quality

**Problem #9:** The reed feels/sounds too STUFFY

**Tools:** Reamer, round file, wax, butane lighter or alcohol lamp, mandrel, pliers.

**Solutions:**

1. Check tube – ream if fuzzy inside.
2. “Pop” test: Wet the end of your finger and place it securely over the tube opening. Put the reed in your mouth and such the air out. Pull the reed out of your mouth while keeping the tube securely covered. If the blades stay closed and

then “pop” open there is no leak. If there is no “pop”, the tube probably has a leak. Heat the wax and coat the mandrel tip. Insert the mandrel into the tube and turn to coat the inside of the tube. Repeat the entire process until the leak is sealed.

3. Insert the mandrel into the tube and adjust the wires by squeezing the top and bottom of the first wire and then squeezing the sides of the second wire.
4. Insert the mandrel and use pliers to loosen first wire slightly.

**Problem #10:** The reed sounds too BRIGHT.

**Tools:** Pliers and mandrel for options 1, 2, and 3; Fine grit (400 or 600), tip clipper for option 4.

**Solutions:**

1. Insert mandrel and use pliers to tighten the first and second wires.
2. Insert mandrel and open the tip of the reed by gently squeezing the sides of the first wire.
3. Insert mandrel and open the tip of the reed by gently squeezing the top and bottom of the second wire.
4. Insert sandpaper between the blades and pinch the tip of the reed closed while removing the sandpaper to sand the inside of the blade. Flip the sandpaper over and repeat to sand the inside of the other blade.
5. Clip back tip 1/2mm at a time. **Note:** This will

raise the pitch of the reed.

**Problem #11** Reed tip won't stay open and/or the reed is very flat.

**Tools:** Mandrel, pliers, reed wire, wire clippers

**Solutions:**

Check both the first and second wires for 'snugness.' Tighten each wire if loose. Don't be surprised if the wire breaks while you are tightening it. Wires break pretty often.



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**Problem #12** Low notes are hard to start, it's hard to start a note at a soft dynamic, and light/soft articulation doesn't work.

**Tools:** Mandrel, plaque, wet/dry sandpaper, reed knife

**Solutions:**

1. Thin the tip using sandpaper. (See video at top of page, beginning at 02:25 for demonstration).
2. Thin the tip using a reed knife. (See video below).





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XVI

## TEACHING TIPS



# 90.

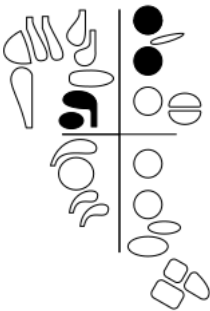
## Fingerings to avoid

Many of the popular series of band methods include inaccurate fingering charts in their bassoon books. Here are some of the most notorious fingerings to avoid:

### Middle C#



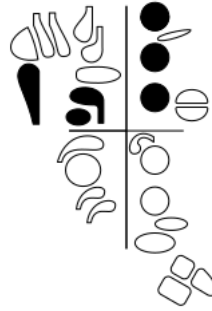
**BAD Fingering**



**Awful tone & pitch**



**GOOD fingering**

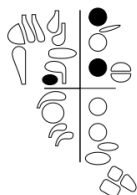


**Good tone & pitch**

## Middle Eb



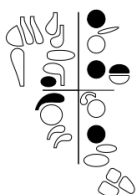
**BAD** Fingering



**Unstable tone & pitch**



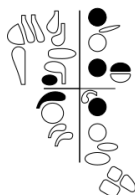
**GOOD** fingering #1



**Good tone & pitch**



**GOOD** fingering #2

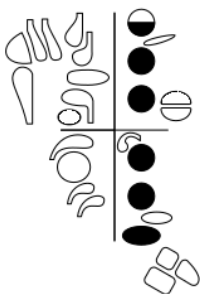


**Good tone**  
Pitch is slightly lower than Good #1

## Middle G



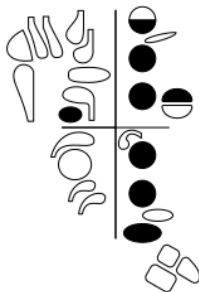
**BAD**



**sharp and very bright**  
**poor response**



**GOOD**

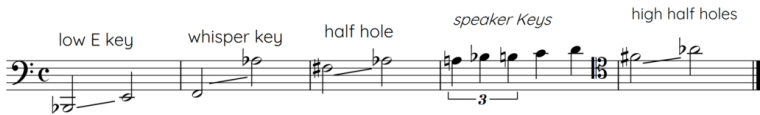


**stable, blending tone**  
**pitch is less sharp**

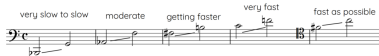
# 91.

## Response and Intonation Tips by Register

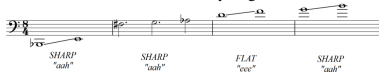
### Use of Special Keys & Techniques



### Air Speed



### Pitch Tendencies by Register



## Low Register

- Slow, Warm Air
- Low E and Low F keys down and whisper-key pad fully pressed against bocal nub
- Hot Pizza mouth
- Voice lowest vowel
- “Barely there” embouchure
- Lots of space between the teeth

- Downward bucal flex

## Whisper Key Register

- Medium air speed
- Whisper key down and whisper-key pad fully pressed against bucal nub
- Medium space in oral cavity and between teeth
- Lips give medium hug on reed
- Voice low to medium vowel as needed for intonation

## Half hole Register

- Whisper key down and whisper-key pad fully pressed against bucal nub
- *Opening MORE of the top hole will lower pitch on all half hole notes*
- For clear response & tone:
  - I note growls – cover LESS of the top hole
  - If note squeaks – cover MORE of the top hole
  - F# needs most open, G is middle, Ab is less open
  - Intonation
  - ***F# and G*** tend sharp

- Open more of top hole
- Voice low vowel
- Hot pizza mouth
- More space between teeth
- **G** tends bright and sharp
  - ADD Resonance key (top left pinky key)
- **Ab** is usually okay with good breath support and accurate aural target

## Speaker Key Register

- Fast Air
- Choose speaker key which creates the least pitch disruption
- A, Bb, and B can tend sharp if embouchure is too tight
- C and D are very flat
  - Accurate aural target
  - Voice highest vowel
  - Very fast cold air
  - Closed oral cavity
  - Least space between teeth
  - ADD support from center of bottom lip

## High Half Hole Register

- Same as lower half hole register but with faster air

## High Register

- Faster and colder Air as you go up
- more reed in the mouth
- Use Resonance Key
  - **A to C** tend quite sharp
    - Voice low vowel
    - Open oral cavity
    - Firmer hug with lips but NO jaw pressure
  - **C# and higher** requires
    - very firm hug from lips on reed
    - even more reed in the mouth (to first wire)

## 92.

# Instrument Care and Maintenance

Prioritize the following to avoid damaging the bassoon:

## 1. Careful assembly and disassembly

Taking extra care when putting the bassoon together and taking it apart will make the most difference in the health of your bassoon.

1. Avoid pushing against or bending any key. If your hand or fingers need to make contact with a key or pad-cup, fully depress the key or pad-cup and keep it pressed down while inserting the joint.
2. Pay attention to the keys that extend beyond the joints.
  - **Whisper-Key Pad:** this extends above the top of the wing joint. Bumping this pad against the nub on the bocal (or anything else) can tear the pad or cause it to fall off. A torn or missing whisper-key pad will make it nearly impossible to play notes on and below the bass staff.

- **Alternate Whisper Key (Wing-Boot Bridge Key):** this metal ‘finger’ extends below the bottom of the wing joint and rests on a metal foot at the top of the boot joint. Allowing this finger to hit against the mechanism at the top of the boot joint (or anything else) will bend the key or cause it to break off. Proper alignment of the alternate whisper key bridge mechanism is crucial for notes below the bass staff. Keep an eye on this metal finger when inserting the wing into the boot.
- **Low Bb bridge key:** the low Bb key connects to the low Bb pad-cup via a bridge key between the long joint and the bell. The pad-cup arm extends down from the bell and rests on top of the low Bb key that extends up from the long joint. Hold the low Bb pad-cup (found on the bell) down when sliding the bell onto the long joint. This will raise the pad-cup arm and allow it to slide over top of the low Bb key on the long joint. Avoid letting the two parts of the bridge key hit together during assembly.

## 2. Swab After Every Use

Removing all moisture will help your bassoon have a long and happy life. Even plastic bassoons need to be swabbed.

1. Pads: thoroughly swabbing the boot and wing joints every time you play the bassoon will allow pads to maintain good seals on the tone holes. If pads stay damp, they will swell and harden creating leaks at the tone holes.
2. Wooden Body: removing all moisture by thoroughly swabbing the boot and wing joints will prevent damage to the body and tone holes. If water is allowed to remain in the instrument, the wood will swell, crack, and eventually rot.
3. Health: germs grow in warm, moist environments. Keep your bassoon clean by thoroughly swabbing the boot and wing joint after every use.

## Dusting/Polishing the Exterior of the Bassoon

1. A clean, dry, soft cloth can be used to wipe down the exterior of the bassoon as needed.
  - **AVOID** using any type of furniture polish and/or polishing cloth on the bassoon. If the bassoon's exterior needs attention beyond wipe-down with a dry, soft cloth take it to a bassoon repair specialist.
  - **AVOID** letting students use any type of silver/metal polish and/or polishing cloth on the bassoon keys. While removing tarnish with a dry polishing

cloth can improve the bassoon's appearance, it is dangerously easy to bump one of the many corks and felts on and between the keys. If any of these corks or felts are displaced or knocked off, the bassoon will not play properly. Save polishing the keys for the bassoon's annual maintenance by a qualified repair specialist.

2. A soft-bristled brush can be used to gently remove dust from around the keys, posts and springs. If you work with young students, save this step for the repair specialist.

## Oiling the Keys

Save this for the annual maintenance by the repair specialist! While this is not a difficult task, you need the right materials. The keys generally need to be removed and cleaned before they are oiled. It is too easy to create a new problem by knocking off a cork, felt, or pad, and using too much oil can make a big mess and damage the pads.

## Cleaning the Bocal

1. Use a bocal swab instead of a bocal brush. Check for and remove any knots in the chain/string/fabric before inserting the swab.
2. I recommend doing this once a month and after any illness.

3. Use hot water and dish soap (antibacterial hand soap after any illness) along with the bocal swab.
4. Dry the bocal cork gently but thoroughly.

## Joint Instrument Checks

### 1. Long Joint:

- There is a mechanism under the low C key that allows it to also hold the low D key down when the C key is pressed. Press the low C key and make sure it fully closes the pad on the low D key.
- There is a mechanism under the low B key that allows it to also hold the low C key down (which then also holds the low D key down) when the low B key is pressed. Press the low B key and make sure it fully closes the pads on the C and D keys.

### 2. Alternate Whisper Key:

- The bassoon needs to be fully assembled for this instrument check. When you close the low E key on the boot, it should press the whisper-key pad tightly against the nub on the bocal.
  - Check the alignment of the

wing joint in the boot joint.  
[See Chapter 57 About the Low E Key](#) for additional information.

Any leak will make playing these lowest notes impossible. If there is any give or leak in the low D, low C, or alternate whisper key, you will need to take the instrument to a repair specialist for adjustment.

XVII

# Repertoire



## 93.

### Method Books

**Note:** This is a short list of resources recommended for new bassoon students, non-bassoonist music educators, and bassoon teachers beginning their careers. It is by no means an exhaustive or complete list of available methods for the bassoon. Please let me know if you have a resource to recommend for inclusion.

### Beginner Level through Advanced High School & Collegiate Level

*The First Complete Weissenborn Bassoon Method and Studies, Op. 8, Vols. 1 and 2* Edited by Frank Morelli  
Publisher: Carl Fischer

This volume combines and reorganizes Weissenborn's pedagogical materials into a hefty but very useful and user-friendly resource.

Features:

- Carl Fischer's Bettoney edition of the Weissenborn Method, in print for more than 85 years, has been revised and expanded by noted bassoonist and teacher, Frank Morelli.

- For the first time, Weissenborn's Method and both volumes of his Op. 8 Studies are presented in one book.
- As in the Bettoney edition, Ludwig Milde's Scale and Chord Studies are also included.
- Newly added lessons introduce all notes beyond high Bb to high E while affording the student the opportunity to master the tenor clef.
- A new, innovative Study Key has been provided, organizing the entirety of the book's contents into a fully integrated method. This allows the student and teacher to easily locate music, exercises and studies found in the rest of the book appropriate for study at each lesson's level of advancement.
- A new section, "Intermediate Studies" by Julius Weissenborn, provides an important bridge to the more advanced studies that follow.
- Frank Morelli's "The Essentials of Bassoon Playing" and "Advanced Practice Methods for Improving Intonation, Tone Production, Tonguing and Finger Technique" offer comprehensive basic and advanced pedagogical instruction.
- To further enhance the learning experience, thirty-six Bonus Duets

have been added, based upon popular themes and many important orchestral bassoon solos.

- “Fun Facts” have been added to promote greater musical appreciation and curiosity.
- Modernized fingering charts and a revised and expanded glossary complete this landmark volume.

*The New Weissenborn Method for Bassoon*

*Compiled/Edited by: Douglas Spaniol*      *Publisher:*  
*Hal Leonard*

Level: Beginner to Advanced High School/  
Collegiate

For well over a century, students all over the world have learned to play the bassoon using Julius Weissenborn’s *Practical Bassoon Method*. At long last, *The New Weissenborn Method for Bassoon* presents the complete 1887 publication in an updated, user-friendly version. With over 50 photographs, modern fingering charts, and in-depth instruction on performance basics, instrument care, and reeds, *The New Weissenborn Method* is a must-have for all bassoon students.

Features:

- Carefully researched and edited from the original 1887 edition
- All lessons and exercises re-engraved
- New notes, techniques and

terminology introduced before each lesson

- Weissenborn's original sections on tenor clef and the "speaker" keys restored and expanded
- Original ornamentation chapter restored with added modern performance practices
- Supplementary scale exercises now include all major and minor keys.

*Practical Method for the Bassoon* by Julius Weissenborn Publisher: Carl Fischer

This is a comprehensive method with useful text descriptions of various parts of the bassoon and the assembly process. The fingering chart is not user friendly. Exercises include many meters and challenging rhythms (6/4 appears on the second page of musical exercises and 6/8 appears on the third page). Take your time to go through every page and every exercise! It will pay off.

**Note:** This method has long been a staple of bassoon pedagogy due to the great deal of excellent musical material it contains. However, I find Mr. Morelli's edition more user friendly for teachers and students, as it contains many detailed descriptions and pedagogical instructions not found in the original Weissenborn Method.

## Beginning Level

*Primary Handbook for Bassoon* by Richard Polonchak

Publisher: Meredith Music Publications

Level: Good for the true beginner or someone switching from another instrument

Excellent pictures for instrument assembly and posture as well as a good fingering chart and sensible progression of new notes and rhythms balanced with increasing range.

*My First Weissenborn* Compiled and edited by Daniel Schmidt  
Publisher: Carl Fischer

Level: Beginner

This book provides an Introduction to the Weissenborn *Practical Method for the Bassoon* with a good layout, fingering chart, and explanation of purpose for each exercise.

*Foundations for Success: Technical Training for the Young Bassoonist* by Cheryl Ann Huddleston  
Publisher: Southern Music

Level: Beginner taking lessons

Author states that *Foundations* is intended for use with a private instructor and as such does not include detailed descriptions of embouchure or correct performance posture. The author also suggests that the lessons in the book can be used as “technical

training etudes to complement etudes” from Julius Weissenborn’s *Practical Method for Bassoon*.

## Intermediate Level

*New Millennium Bassoon Method* by Mike Curtis

Publisher: MSS Publishing

Level: Intermediate

Includes nice duets at end, closely based on ideas of Weissenborn method, introduces and defines common musical terms, includes some advanced (modern) playing techniques, has good fingering chart.

## Intermediate to Advanced Level

*Bassoon Fundamentals: A Guide to Effective Practice* by

Georg Klutsch Publisher: Schott Music

Level: Intermediate to Advanced (This is not for the absolute beginner. There is no fingering chart included.)

The method provides specific exercises that target several of the principal areas involved in playing the bassoon (tone quality, finger technique, articulation, upper register, trills, and intonation). Each exercise includes a clear description of its purpose and practical application. An excellent method for intermediate and advanced students.





## 94.

### Scales Books

**Note:** This is a short list of resources recommended for new bassoon students, non-bassoonist music educators, and bassoon teachers beginning their careers. It is by no means an exhaustive or complete list of available scales books for the bassoon. Please let me know if you have a resource to recommend for inclusion.

#### Scale Books

*The Complete Bassoon Scale Book: Scales and Arpeggios*  
Publisher: Boosey & Hawkes

Appropriate for any level, includes scales and arpeggios of increasing range, thirds, fourths, chromatic, whole tone, etc.

*Pares Scales for Bassoon* Publisher: Rubank/Hal  
Leonard

For Individual study or “like-instrument” class instruction, exercises in all keys, including half-hole, chromatic, and long tone exercises.

*Complete Study of the Bassoon: Part 1 – Scales and Daily Exercises* by Fernand Oubradous Publisher: Alphonse LeDuc

Fernand Oubradous (1903-1986) was a French bassoonist, conductor and composer. He is best remembered for his tutoring compilation, *Complete Study of the Bassoon*. This Oubradous series comprises three parts. The first of these focuses on scales and daily exercises. These cover a range of keys, articulation, intervals, rhythms and range, among other aspects. Moreover, Oubradous' *Complete Study of the Bassoon Part One*, contains a detailed fingering chart for the instrument. *Complete Study of the Bassoon* is essential to the progression of aspiring bassoonists.

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## Books on Playing the Bassoon

**Note:** This is a short list of resources recommended for new bassoon students, non-bassoonist music educators, and bassoon teachers beginning their careers. It is by no means an exhaustive or complete list of available books about the bassoon. Please let me know if you have a resource to recommend for inclusion.

### Helpful Books on Bassoon Playing

*The Bassoon* by William Waterhouse Publisher: Kahn & Averill (Yehudi Menuhin Music Series)

*The Art of Bassoon Playing* by William Spencer  
Publisher: Summy-Birchard Co.

*Teacher's Guide to the Bassoon* by Homer Pence  
Publisher: Selmer Co.



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## Sight-Reading and Tenor Clef

**Note:** This is a short list of resources recommended for new bassoon students, non-bassoonist music educators, and bassoon teachers beginning their careers. It is by no means an exhaustive or complete list of available methods for the bassoon. Please let me know if you have a resource to recommend for inclusion.

## Sight-Reading

*ABRSM Specimen Sight-Reading Tests for Bassoon, Grades 1-5*

*ABRSM Specimen Sight Reading Tests for Bassoon, Grades 6-8*

*Develop Sight Reading (Bass Clef)* by Gaston Dufresne, Edited by Roger Voisin Publisher: Charles Colin Publications

## Tenor Clef

*Introductory Studies in Tenor and Alto Clef for Trombone: Before Blazhevich* by Brad Edwards  
Publisher: Ensemble Publications

A collection of etudes and studies designed to help students learn alto and tenor clefs. Exercises in melodic lines, leaps, and switching from clef to clef. This method uses a progression of guidepost notes to facilitate learning these clefs.

*The Key to Tenor Clef* by Gilbert Hirtz Publisher: Anselma Music

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## Supplemental Studies/Etudes

**Note:** This is a short list of resources recommended for new bassoon students, non-bassoonist music educators, and bassoon teachers beginning their careers. It is by no means an exhaustive or complete list of available studies for the bassoon. Please let me know if you have a resource to recommend for inclusion.

*90 Easy Bassoon Studies* (grades 1-5) by June Emerson  
Publisher: Emerson Edition, LTD.

From the composer:

“There is a great lack of material specifically written for the beginner on the bassoon, and these studies are intended to help fill that need. They begin at the point when the student knows the fingering for the first octave G-G and progress to approximately the level of Associated Board Grade 5. They are designed to encourage players to play musically at an early stage. So many beginners try to acquire a good technique without giving much attention to the way the *music* should be played. It is never too soon to encourage good phrasing, a smooth flowing tone for a lullaby or a neat staccato style for a dance. Concentration on technical studies can lead to a

clever mechanical style, but this is not what bassoon playing is about.

The studies are graded progressively, each one dealing with a specific point. Orchestral and chamber music extracts are included as early as possible, giving the pupil a chance to play the music that they will meet later on. Some of the passages towards the end of the book are difficult, and extremely embarrassing when encountered for the first time in public. If taken slowly as studies, and worked on in short sections, they will help to build up familiarity with many classical note-patterns.

These studies were compiled in response to a request from a friend who had decided to learn the bassoon in her mid-fifties and had no wish to be frightened by any unreasonable demands.”

## *26 Melodic Studies* (grades 1-6) by Graham Sheen

Publisher: Emerson Edition Ltd.

From the composer:

*26 Melodic Studies* is intended as a supplement to preparation for grades 1 to 6 [ABRSM]. I have used as my guide the required scales at each level by both the ABRSM and Trinity examination boards. The Studies remain within the compass of the set scales and arpeggios and employ only the notes which they contain. Nevertheless, the student will encounter some challenging combinations of notes within these tonalities. In addition, each study focuses, though not exclusively, on either articulation, technique, or phrasing. Most importantly, the Studies cover a wide variety of styles both serious and humorous, ranging from classical models through to jazz and modern

dance forms: finding the right character for each one is as essential as finding the right notes.

### *The Singing Bassoon*

Composer: Giuseppe Conconne Publisher: Emerson

This volume includes 40 legato exercises with a range from the lowest Bb up to and including G above the bass staff. Several meters, rhythms, and key signatures are included.

### *First Book of Practical Studies*

Composer: D. McDowells Edited by Nilo W. Hovey

Publisher: Alfred Publishing Co., Inc.

Published for additional instruments

Foreword

“Exercises and studies in this book have been written for the specific purpose of supplementing any of the elementary methods available. The book is in no way intended to serve as a method or as a course of progressive instruction for the bassoon.”

The material herein is divided into two general classifications:

1. Section One contains forty-eight *Studies for rhythmic development*. This section is designed to aid the student in developing the ability to sight-read in the most common keys. The author has used as much variety in tempi and rhythms as seemed musically practical. Each study is in a different key from the preceding one in an attempt to get the student into the habit of

noticing the key signature at all times. The student who has a thorough understanding of the rhythms in this book will subsequently read more complex rhythms with greater ease.

2. Section Two contains the scale, arpeggio and interval exercises which are so indispensable in mastering any instrument. Some of these exercises should be included in the daily routine. The instructor should use tempi and articulations according to the needs of the student.

A well-balanced assignment should include some material from each section.

### *Second Book of Practical Studies*

Composer: D. McDowells Edited by Nilo W. Hovey  
Publisher: Alfred Publishing Co. Published for additional instruments

#### Foreword

This book is intended as a logical continuation of the "FIRST BOOK of PRACTICAL STUDIES." The range has been extended to three full octaves and two more key signatures have been added. Each *Study* is in a different key from the preceding one in order to further develop a sense of key-consciousness.

The material is divided into two general classifications:

1. Section One contains *Studies for rhythmic development*. Continuing from SECTION ONE in the FIRST BOOK, this section is designed to aid

the student in developing the ability to sight-read in various keys. The author has used as much variety in tempi and rhythms as seemed musically practical.

The following rhythms are introduced and explored in this section:

Common 16th note figures through 66	Etudes 49
Dotted 8ths and 16ths through 78	Etudes 67
Eighth notes triplets through 84	Etudes 79
3/8 rhythm through 90	Etudes 85
6/8 rhythm through 96	Etudes 91
Syncopation through 102	Etudes 97

Careful preparation of these etudes will result in greater rhythmic accuracy and improved ability to sight-read.

2. Section Two contains scale and technical exercises which are so indispensable in mastering any instrument. Some of these exercises should be included in the daily routine. The instructor should use tempi and articulations according to the needs of the student.

A well-balanced assignment should include some material from each section.

*Progressive Studies for Bassoon* by Chris Allen

Publisher: Spartan Press

Level: Grades I-VI

From the composer

The aim of these studies is to provide students with instructive material, written in a modern style to supplement existing, though more traditional pieces. Some of the studies are in familiar rhythms; others adopt 5 or 7 beats in a bar, and further pieces exploit the odder groupings to be found in 9 in a bar (e.g. 2+2+2+3 etc.).

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## Solo Collections with piano accompaniment

**Note:** This is a list of resources recommended for new bassoon students, non-bassoonist music educators, and bassoon teachers beginning their careers. It is by no means an exhaustive or complete list of available solo collections for the bassoon. Please let me know if you have a resource to recommend for inclusion.

### Beginners

*The Really Easy Bassoon Book* by Graham Sheen  
Publisher: Faber Music

“If you can play just a few notes on the bassoon, then you’re ready for this book. Here are 13 imaginative little pieces for the absolute beginner – traditional tunes, classics and specifically composed melodies, all with attractive piano accompaniments.

The pieces are arranged progressively, so you can hear the step-by-step improvement in your playing as well as simply enjoying the music.

When you’ve finished this book, you’ll be ready for *First Book of Solos*. –Sheen

*First Book of Bassoon Solos* edited/arranged by Hilling & Bergmann Publisher: Faber Music

From Hilling & Bergmann:

*This book will provide the beginner on the bassoon with a repertoire of solos playable from the very first lesson. It is hoped that it will offer a variety of pieces in contrasting styles which can be enjoyed for their musical merit and enable the player to explore the expressive potential of the instrument.*

*These pieces have been graded according to finger technique.*

\*See Chapters [34](#), [40](#), and [49](#) for listing of specific solos from this volume.

## **Intermediate to Advanced**

Most of these include increased range, use of tenor clef, and advanced key signatures.

*Classic Festival Solos, Volumes I and II* edited by Jack Lamb Publisher: Alfred Publishing

Offers the advancing instrumental soloist an array of materials graded from easy to more challenging. An assortment of musical styles has been included to give variety and to allow an opportunity for the musician to develop interpretive skills.

*Classical Solos for the Bassoon, Volume 2* arranged by Philip Sparke Publisher: Hal Leonard

*Das Fagott, Volume 5* by Werner Seltmann and Gunter Angerhofer Publisher: VEB Deutscher Verlag für Musik Leipzig/ Broude Brothers

*Master Solos, Intermediate Level* edited by Leonard Sharrow Publisher: Hal Leonard

*A Miscellany for Bassoon, Books 1 and 2* by Michael Rose Publisher: ABRSM

*Repertoire Classics for Bassoon and Piano*, edited by Kevin Fuller Publisher: Carl Fischer

37 recital pieces for bassoon and piano with downloadable MP3 files and PDF piano accompaniments.

*Second Book of Bassoon Solos* edited/arranged by Hilling & Bergmann Publisher: Faber Music

*Solos for the Bassoon Player*, arranged by Sol Schoenbach Publisher: G. Schirmer

These solos are taken from the orchestral repertoire and include works by Bach, Beethoven, Donizetti, Dukas, Mussorgsky, Stravinsky, and Tchaikovsky.

\*See Chapters [34](#), [40](#), [49](#), [56](#), [66](#), [75](#), and [82](#) for listing of specific solos from these volumes.