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## What is This Book Designed to Do?

If you are wondering for whom this book was created, rest easy. This book is designed with you in mind. The first book in this series introduced the very basics of Bassoon playing. It took someone with little or no experience musically (geared mostly toward a beginning saxophone player) and helped them to take the initial steps in “Making the Switch” to a different instrument.

Now, the objective of this next book in the series is to build on that introductory level of Bassoon. Again, this is not a complete method, but rather a supplement to help you on your way. We will go more in depth on the playing, reed adjustment and other more intricate aspects of Bassoon.

You are now embarking on the “Beginning” level of this series, a book that is designed for **any** person that has successfully switched to bassoon from any instrument. There will be video segments that you can access on the accompanying DVD. Remember, there is no prize for finishing fast, merely for finishing well. It is the author’s hope that this book and DVD set can be your springboard into a lifetime of playing the bassoon, which, all told, is one of the most unique, storied and interesting instruments in the modern orchestra and band.

As a special note, since all the notes to be learned in the book are in bass clef, I found no need to place one on each staff.

Keep practicing, keep playing, but most importantly, keep learning about this instrument. That dedication can yield great results.

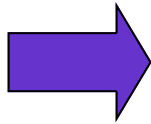
Let the music continue!!!

Chris Buckholtz, Author

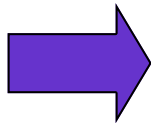


## How is This Book Set Up and How Do I Use it Effectively?

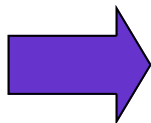
Much like the “Introductory” level of this series, the “Beginning” level will incorporate the use of a DVD in tandem with the written publication. For the sake of continuity, many of the same icons will be used, while others will have a more mature look, as, obviously, you are older and wiser in your bassoon playing. Here is a brief review of the major icons you will see:



This symbol is used when you should take special note of a topic, bit of information or when a fact is exceptionally important.



The question mark is at the top of each new page of material, not at the top of every page. Whenever you are looking for the next section of material, look for this.



When this symbol appears, that means that there are DVD segments that accompany this section of the book. You can access the DVD for further information and examples

You will notice that a good portion of the book as well as the DVD is focused on expanding the range of your bassoon playing. This is because most of the embouchure concepts and “how-to” ideas were covered in the first installment of the series. Additionally, many bassoon fingering charts are confusing and difficult for practical use. So, the fingering chart in this book focuses on the most popular fingerings for given notes and provides a unique way of learning and organizing your newfound range. Also, near the end of the book, you will find a large list of resources, including: other bassoon books, websites as well as reed makers and retailers. As always, remember, there is no substitute for a good private teacher. This book is designed to assist you in band or orchestra and give you an expanding knowledge that you can use to enhance your musical growth.

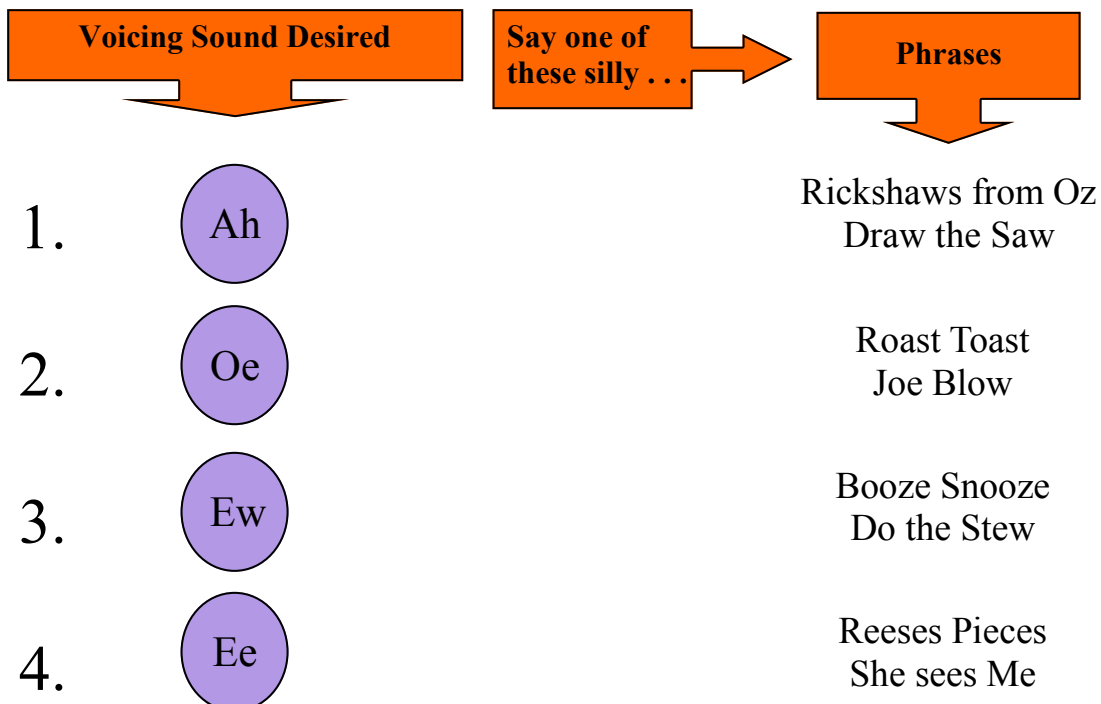


## Voicing - What is It and How Does It Relate to Bassoon?



Voicing is the term used in instrumental playing that means, basically, the formation of your mouth while playing. In other words, the embouchure is the outside, and the inside of your mouth, or the oral cavity and how it is shaped, is referred to as “voicing.” Although this didn’t seem to matter much when you first began bassoon, now it is vitally important. In fact, the wrong voicing on the wrong note can change the pitch as much as a half step. That means, for example, that if you are trying to play an F, an E might be produced.

**There are four voicings used on the Bassoon. For each one, there will be a phrase that will help you set your mouth in the correct shape.**





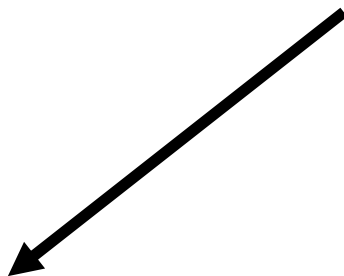
If you access the “Introduction,” you will find a brief description of the DVD and the concept of voicing. Look at the DVD section now, before continuing.

The voicings listed on the previous page are from lowest on the instrument to highest. However, there will be some overlap. This means that some of the voicings will be used more than once. It also means that the lowest to highest organization is true for most of the instrument. In some cases, on the higher notes present in some more advanced literature, the voicings will change in a manner different than simply - ah, oe, ew, ee.

**Important Note:**

Voicings are the different shapes the inside of may take when playing a note on the Bassoon or other instrument

Now that you understand what voicings are, we will do a very brief review of forming the correct embouchure and start expanding your range



The fingering chart in this book is designed unlike any other. The progression of notes will take you from what you know and present new notes based on the same voicings. Then you will progress through different voicings needed to learn notes in another range of the instrument

**Important Note:**

Memorizing which voicings are used for given ranges of notes is very important. Commit this to memory as soon as possible. There will be a quick reference chart presented on each page of the fingering chart



## Embouchure Review A Quick Look Back

This page reviews the embouchure formation process. Get everything correct and produce a good crow. Then, carefully assemble the rest of the bassoon and we can begin.



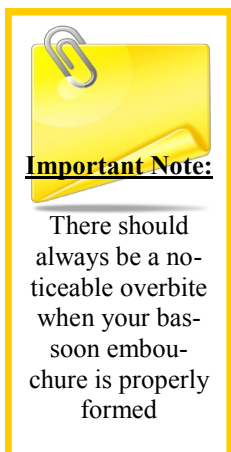
1. Place the tip of the reed on your lower lip. Have the tip of the reed just inside where the pink of you lip starts.



2. Draw the reed into your mouth and take the lower lip with it. This will be like “pushing” the lip into the mouth with the reed.



3. Now, bring the top lip down over the top teeth (like you are trying to cover the edges of your teeth). Then, **gently** close your mouth around the reed.



**Important Note:**  
There should always be a noticeable overbite when your bassoon embouchure is properly formed



Now, we can begin learning some new notes!



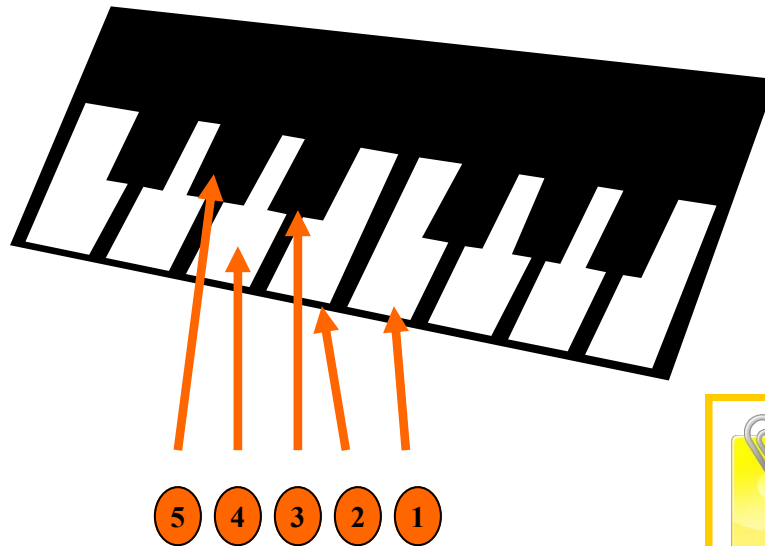
# Expanding Your Range

## Learning the Notes in Between

Our brain remembers things better when we relate new information to what we already know. So, we will start with the first note you learned in book 1, and make alterations to the fingerings to produce the next note. We will learn the notes by going **DOWN CHROMATICALLY** from F. Each change in note is called a half step.

**Important Note:**

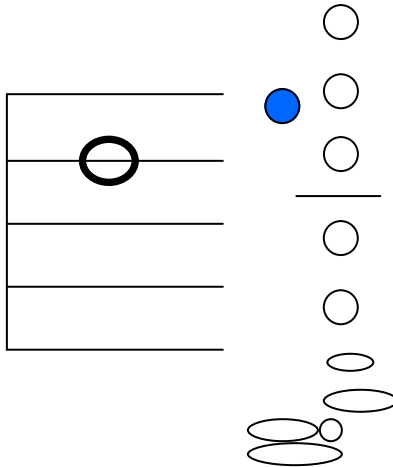
Chromatic movement of notes means that we are playing every note. Its just like hitting every black and white key on the piano, in order



**Important Note:**

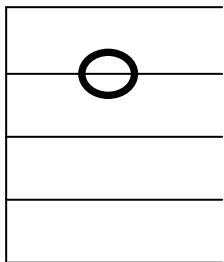
As the fingerings get more complicated, we will add other sections of keys to the diagram. When they are not used, they will be uncolored or left out altogether. If they are used for improving intonation, they will be in yellow

Use the “Ew” voicing from this note down chromatically to C

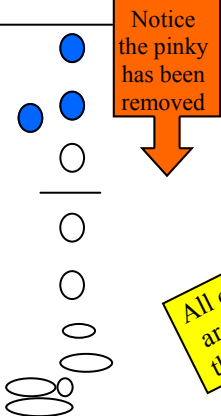
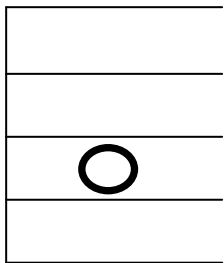
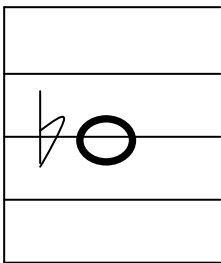
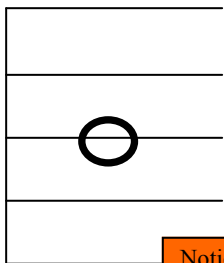
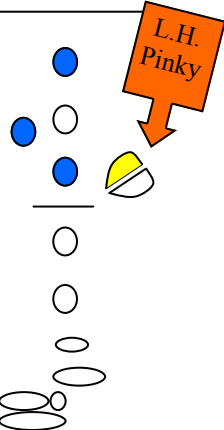
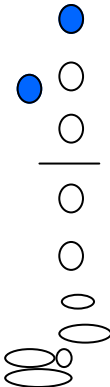
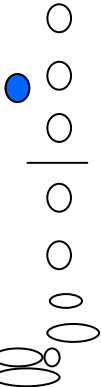
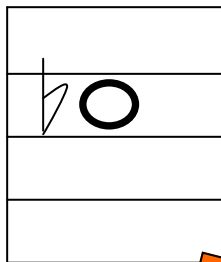
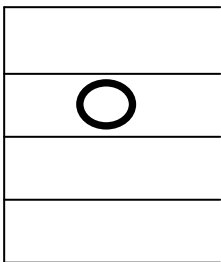


Remember to use the "Ew" voicing for all of these notes

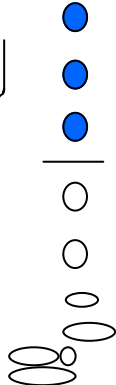
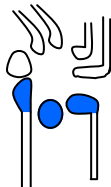
To get the correct voicing, say your funny phrases and freeze the inside of your mouth in that position.  
This does not affect embouchure  
"Booze Snooze"  
"Do the Stew"



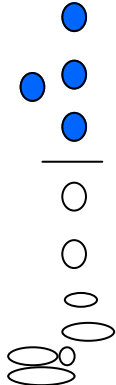
So that you can practice getting the right pitches, fingerings and voicings, each note will be played for 2 whole notes, 2 half notes and 4 quarter notes



All of these keys are played with the L.H. Thumb



**Important Note:**  
At this point, notice that the keys around the whisper key are needed. The whisper key will always be the circular key on the diagram



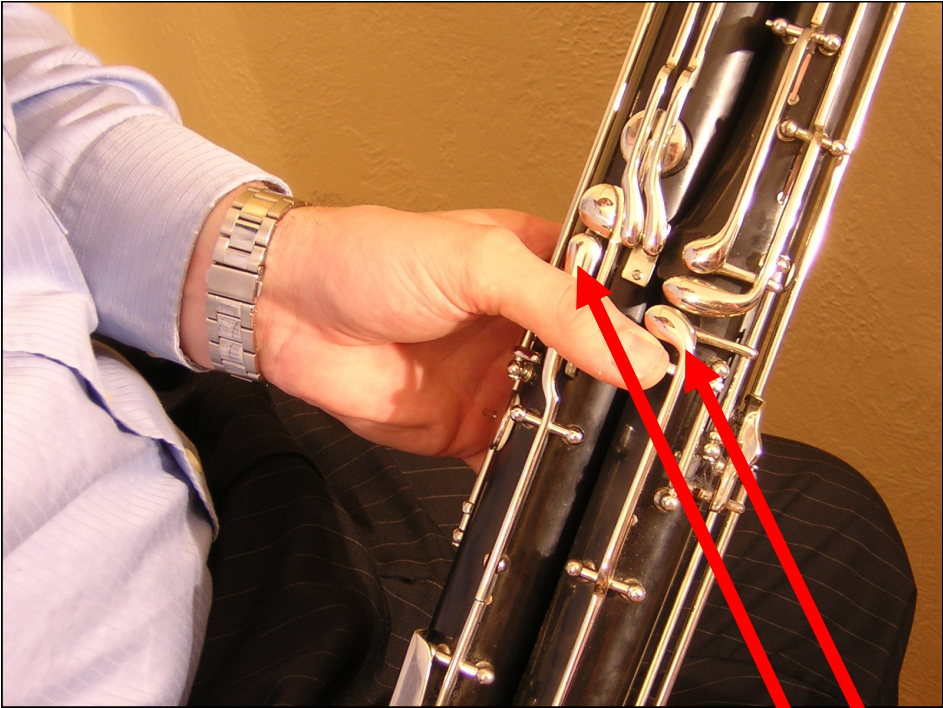
To keep things simple, when only the whisper key is used, the others will be removed from the chart





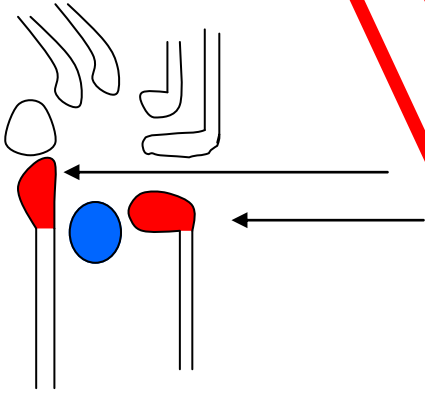
# Left Hand Thumb Technique My Thumb Has to Do WHAT?

One of the more challenging aspects of playing bassoon is controlling the keys operated by your thumbs. This page will show you all of the thumb keys on your bassoon and, more importantly, how to position your thumb so that you can accomplish fluid key movement without a large deal of tension. Remember, the more relaxed your hand, the faster and better it will move.



Notice the position of the thumb. It is relaxed and the top of the thumb is just slightly off from parallel to the ceiling. When playing the C# or Db we just learned, the movement of the thumb should be an easy SHIFT or ROLL upward to activate the needed keys. Don't pick up the thumb and move it.

Keys for L.H. Thumb →



In this picture, the whisper key is pressed. For the C#, you would add the two keys on either side by "rotating the thumb" upward in a relaxed manner.

These are the two keys needed for C# or Db. The whisper key stays down as well. Your thumb is in a lateral position for now, but will change when we learn some of the lower notes that require more thumb keys.

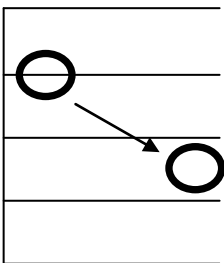


# Time for the Next Voicing What Shape Do I Use Now?

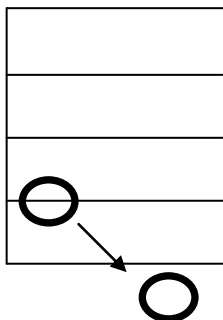
For this section, we will be learning the voicing “Oe”. Remember, the shape of the inside of your mouth should not change your well-formed embouchure.

To get the correct voicing, here are your phrases:  
Roast Toast  
Joe Blow  
Emphasize the “oe” sound of each word. This will give the voicing. Below is a partial chart of the voicings we have uses so far, and the notes for which we use them.

Use the “Ew” voicing for these notes

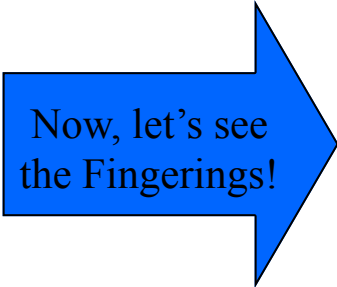


Use the “Oe” voicing for these notes



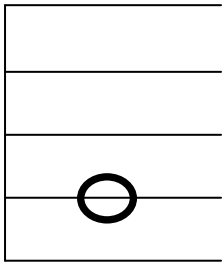
**Important Note:**

These charts show only two notes on the staff, so you must realize that the voicings are used for the notes shown AND all the chromatic notes in between.

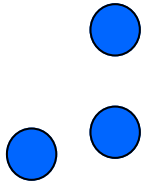
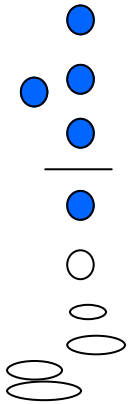
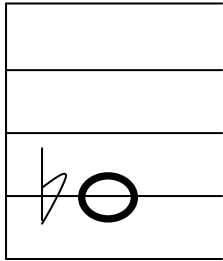




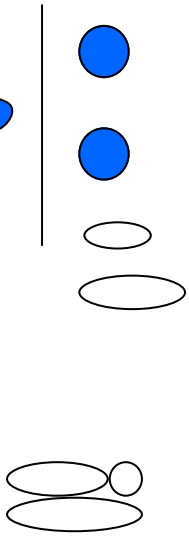
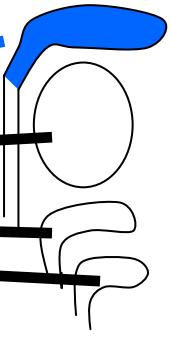
# Fingerings for the Next Range B through Low F

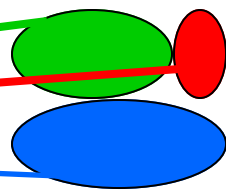
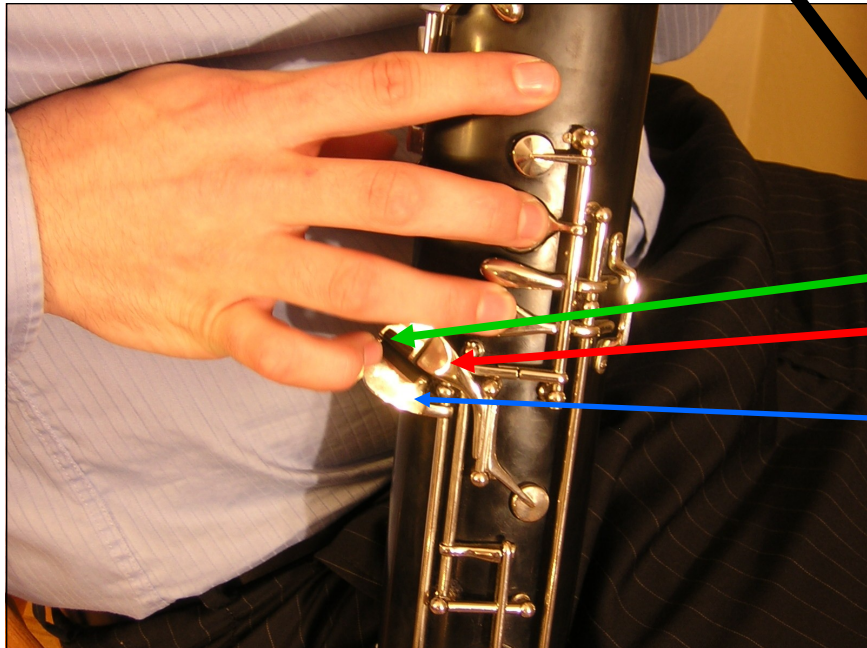
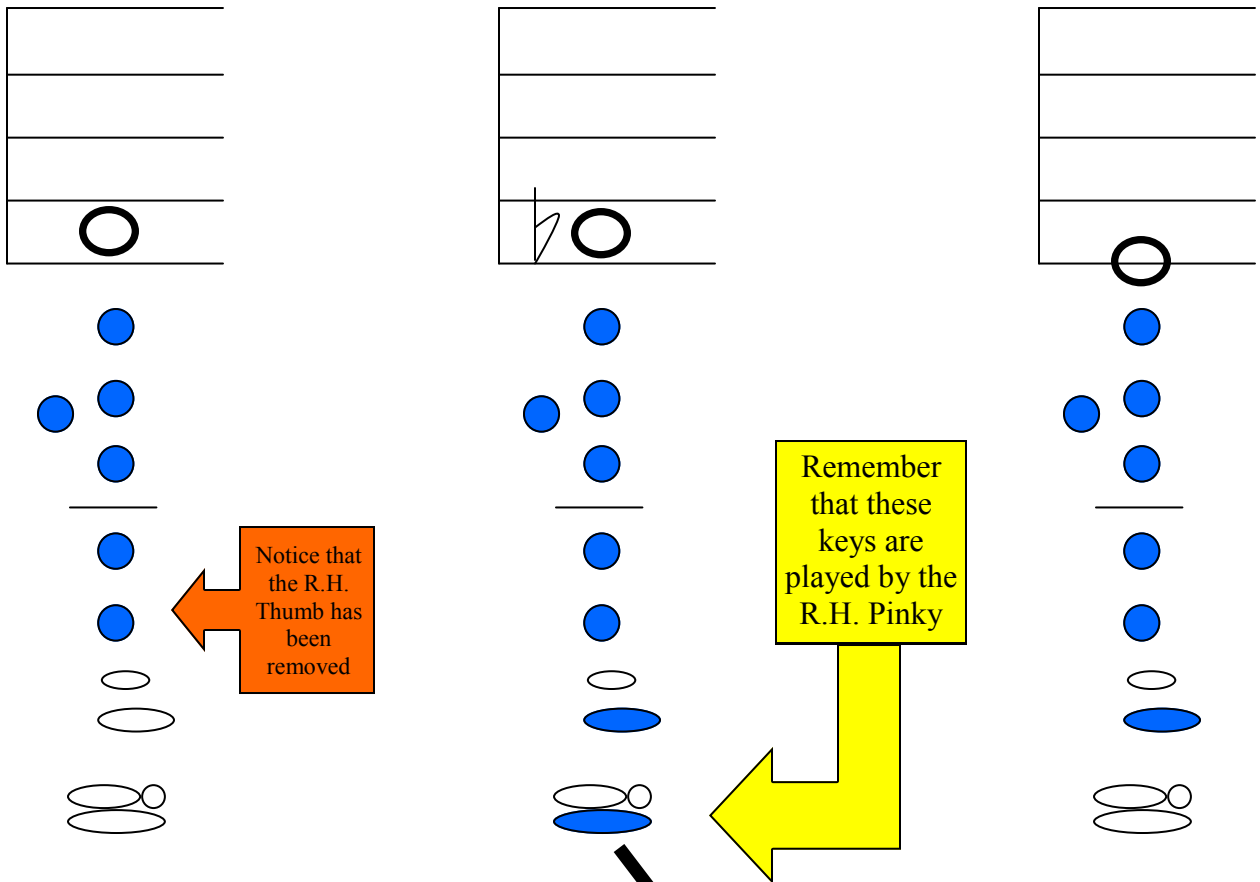


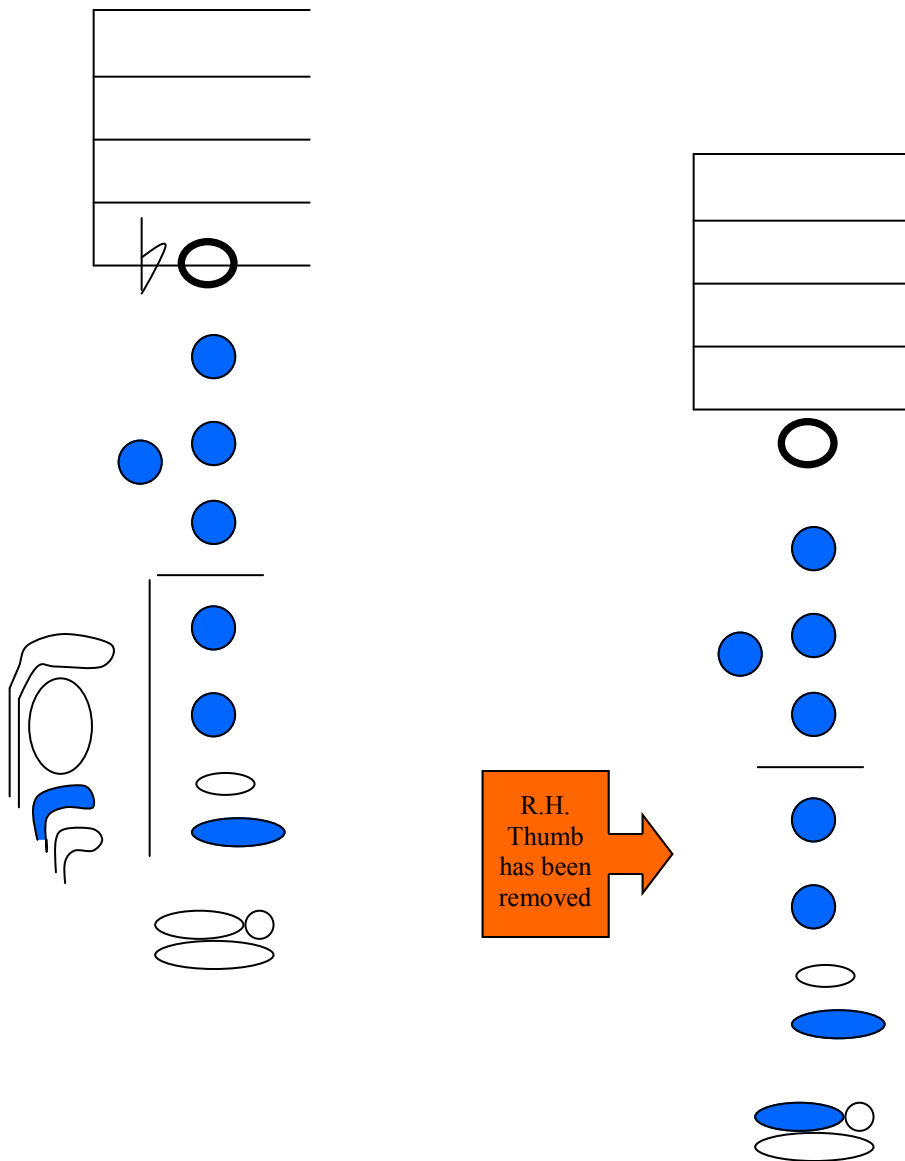
For the sake of clarity, the fingering diagram will be getting larger for the notes that use more fingers and key combinations.



These keys are all played with the R.H. Thumb







**Important Note:**  
 Keep both of your hands relaxed when playing. Try not to “cock” your wrist in or out.

**Special Practicing Note**

All of these notes require the “Oe” voicing. Also, it is important to realize that when you move from one voicing section to another, you do not stop playing to reset, but rather, adjust your oral cavity (inside of your mouth) to play the next note. Practice going from voicing to voicing without the bassoon. Then, put it all together and practice the two notes leading from one voicing to another. For example, play C to B and back, concentrating on the voicing. While doing this, it would be a good idea to use an electronic tuner and listen very carefully. Then, try the same exercise without the tuner and see how close you can get to perfectly in tune.



# Expanding Range at the Bottom How Low Can You Go?

Through the rest of the lower section of the bassoon, we will switch to the voicing “Ah”. Your phrases for this section are:  
Rickshaws from Oz  
Draw the saw  
Try to focus on the vowel sound more than the consonant sound. Its that ah sound in each word that we are interested in using for these notes.

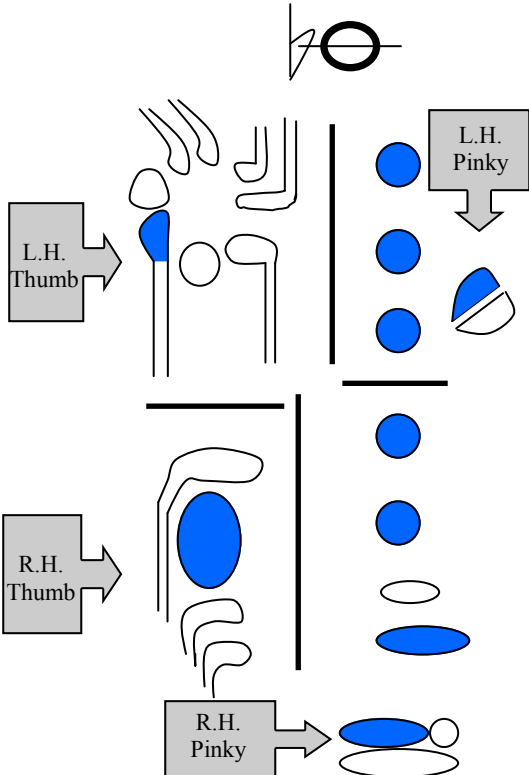
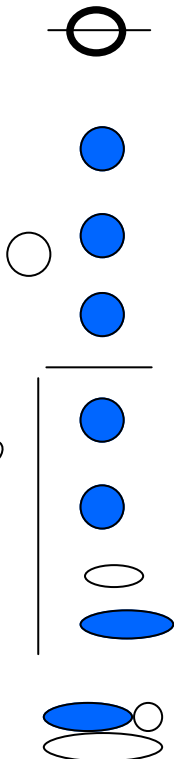
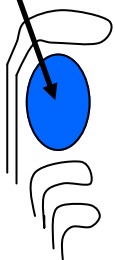


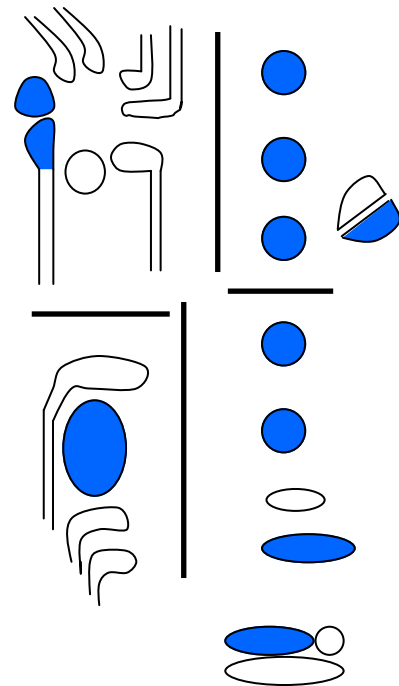
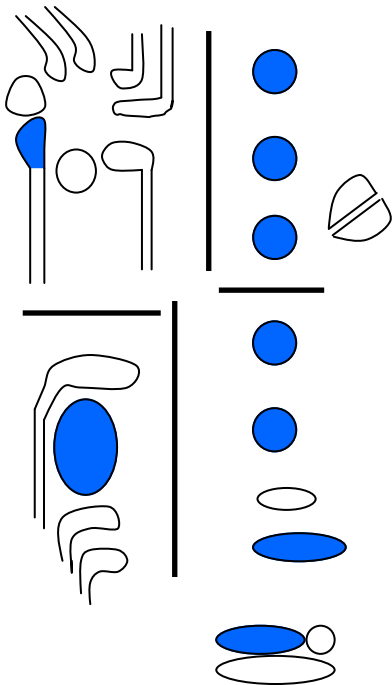
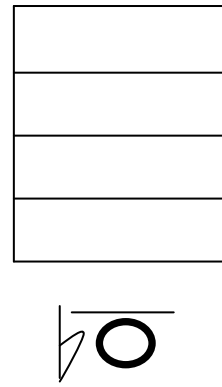
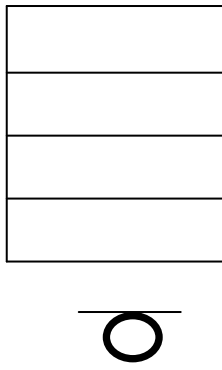
**Important Note:**

When you press the pancake key, this activates the whisper key automatically, so you no longer have to worry about pressing it down individually with your L.H. thumb.



This is called the pancake key

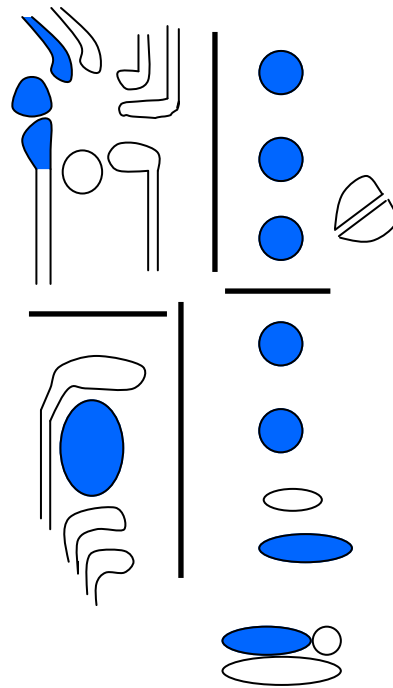
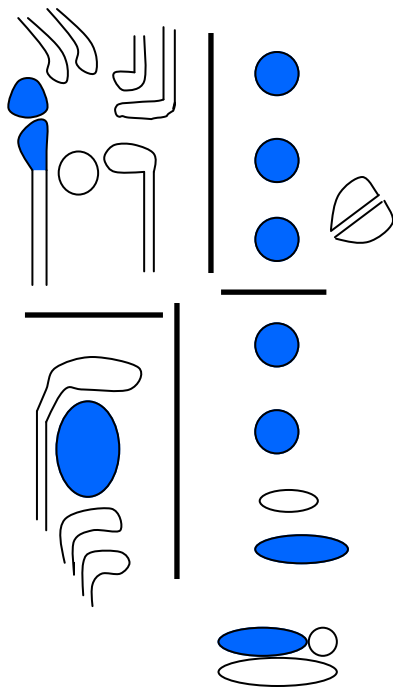
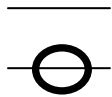




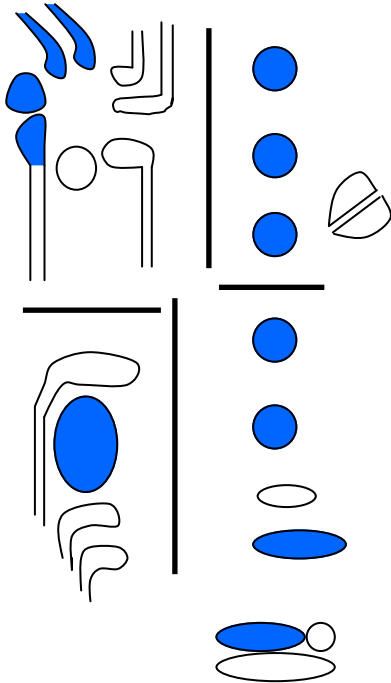
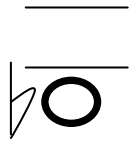
### **Additional Left Hand Thumb Technique**

Your left hand thumb must adjust position as you go for these lower notes. Because you no longer have to press the whisper key individually, you have the freedom to move the thumb to a more vertical position. Once in this position (about a 30 degree change from its normal whisper key location) you can operate the other required thumb keys - up and to the left of the whisper key. Think of the motion as a slide/roll. The keys are polished and curved to make this motion easier.

All of these notes still use the “Ah” voicing. Make sure that the inside of your mouth stays in position. If you notice difficulty producing these lowest notes, reform embouchure and check to ensure you have the proper voicing. If you are still having trouble, it may be an instrument problem, or a reed problem. See your private teacher or band director for assistance.

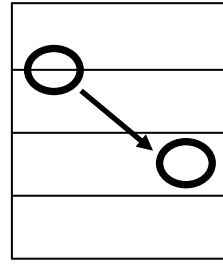




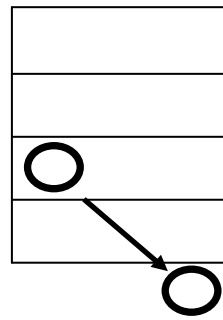


That finishes up the low sections of the bassoon. Review this section often. You can restart the DVD at any time.

On the other half of this page, the voicing chart has been updated. Once again, try to commit this to memory as soon as possible.



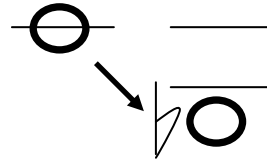
Use the "Ew" voicing



Use the "Oe" voicing



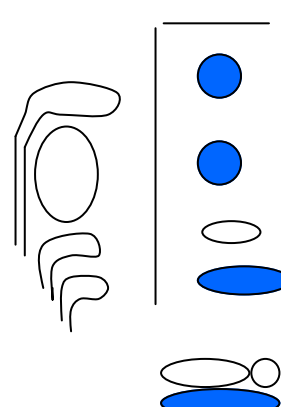
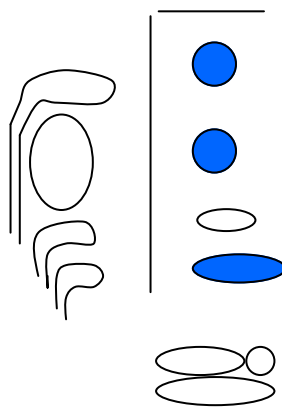
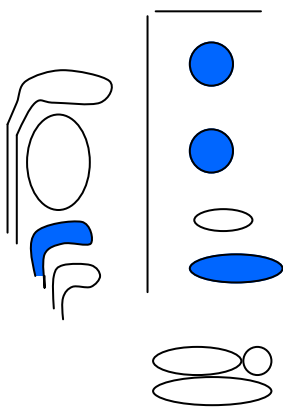
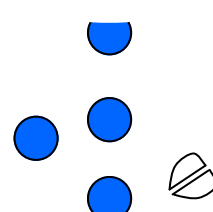
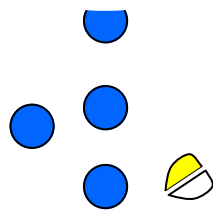
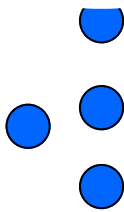
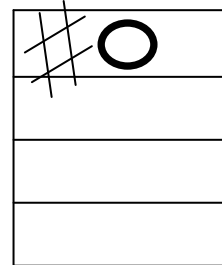
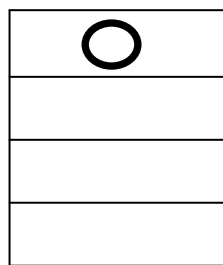
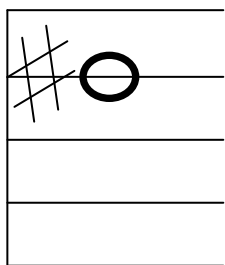
Use the "Ah" voicing





# Expanding Your Range Upward Half-hole Notes

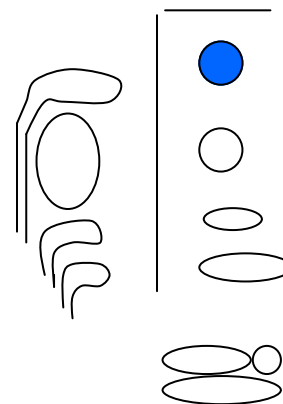
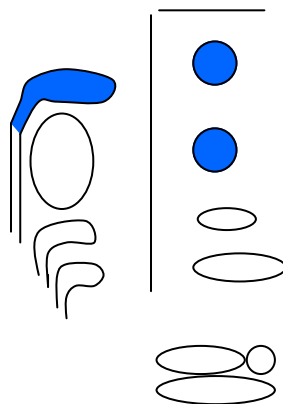
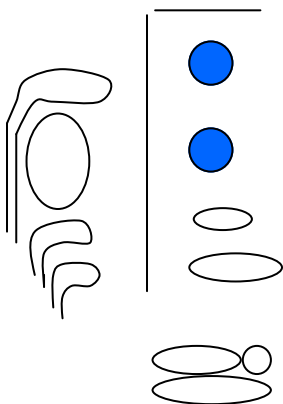
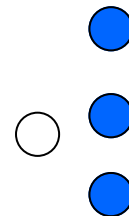
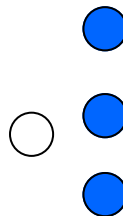
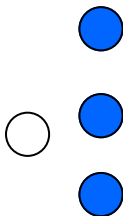
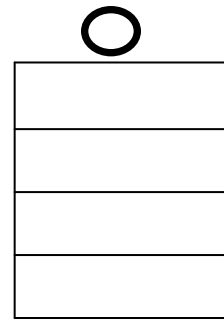
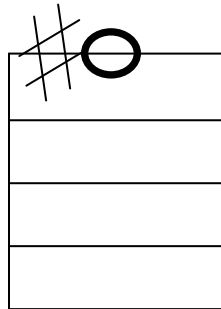
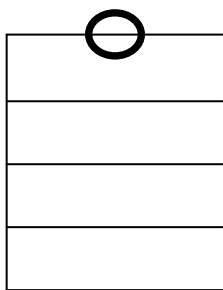
There are three very unique notes on the bassoon. They are called “half-hole notes”. These notes require a slight rolling down of the first finger on the left hand. About half the first hole is covered rather than all of it, hence the term. These notes should speak well if you use the voicing of “Oe”.

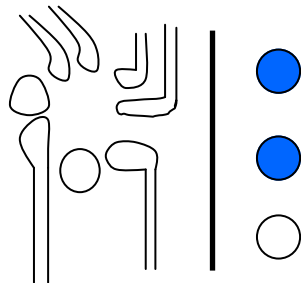
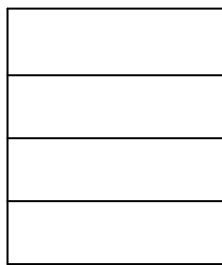
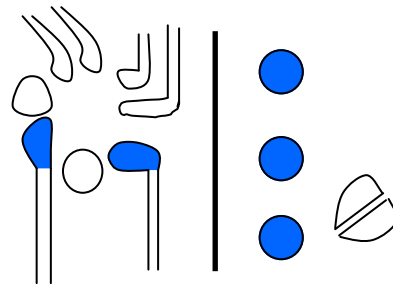
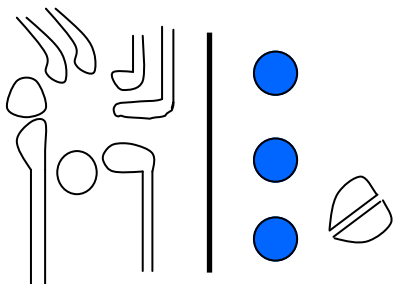
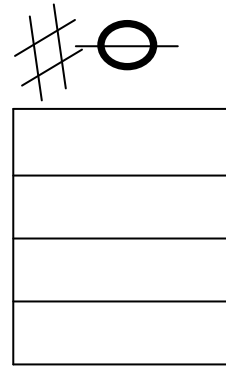
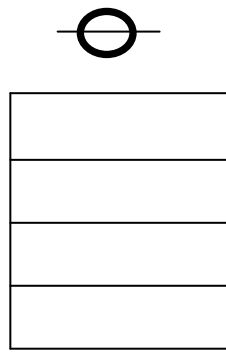




# Above the Half-hole Final Notes for the Book

For the final notes in the book, we return to the “Ew” voicing. It is the same voicing as the one used for the beginning notes of the book. Take special note that the whisper key is no longer used for any of these notes.







# Voicing A Note Range Chart

**EW**

**OE**

**OE**

**AH**

**EW**



## Thoughts on Intonation and Venting

As you progress in your playing, you will notice that some notes on the bassoon seem out of tune. Darryl Durran, professor of bassoon at Penn State Univeristy had this to say:

“Your bassoonists will be greatly helped if they keep in mind that intonation is not controlled by the jawsz, but rather by a fast air stream and the modulation of voicings. This, combined with the idea of singing the note, should provide your players with some important tools to achieve a higher level of performance”

So, in reality, intonation is the responsibility of the player, and not the instrument. By using the proper voicings and the correct amount of air together with a well-formed embouchure and a good reed, many intonation issues will resolve themselves.

The idea of “venting” is mentioned only briefly in this book, as the concept can get complicated very quickly. If you noticed the yellow keys that were suggested on some of the notes, these were an example of venting - the thought that some notes are so out of tune that opening or closing other, normally unused keys will help to bring them more in tune. This concept and a list of common venting solutions will be available in the final book of this series.



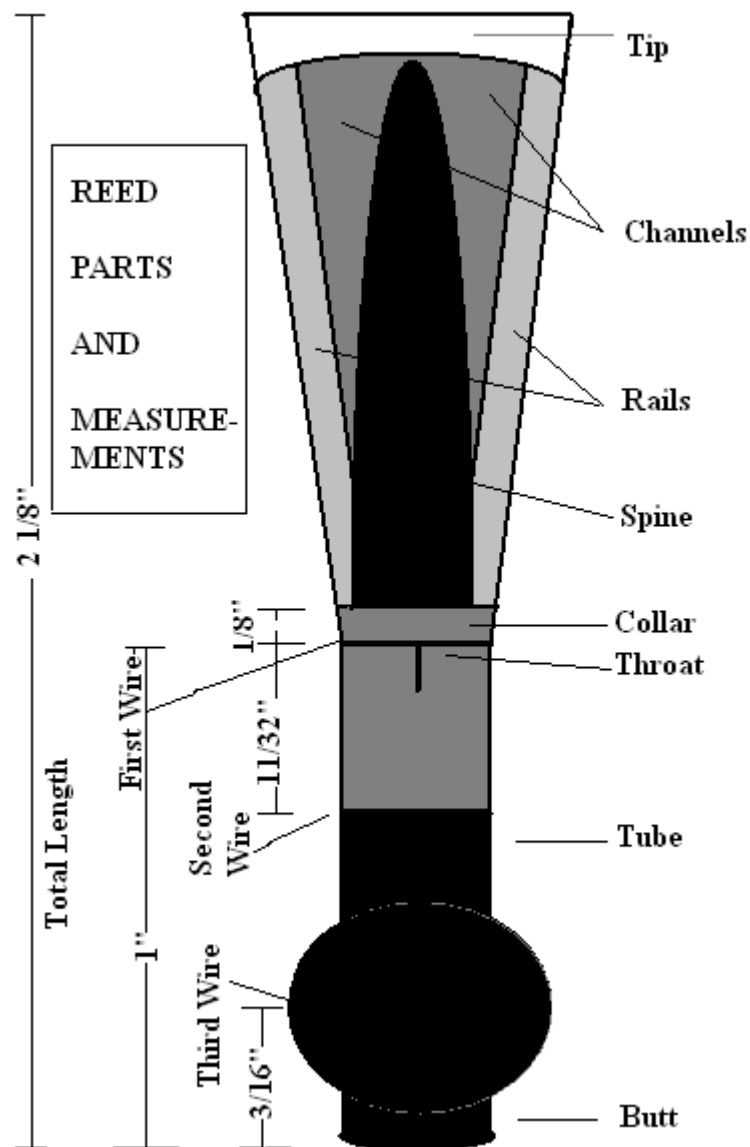
# Reeds Types

## General Measurements

Reeds are as individual as the players that use them. However, all reeds have the same general beginning and measurements. From this point, people make adjustments of all kinds with all different kinds of tools. Most reeds can come in soft, medium soft, medium hard or hard. These terms can change, but generally refer to the thickness of the cane that makes up the blades of the reed.

To the right you will see a basic diagram of a standard bassoon reed. Refer to this diagram when you have questions about reed adjustment and where to shave or file a reed.

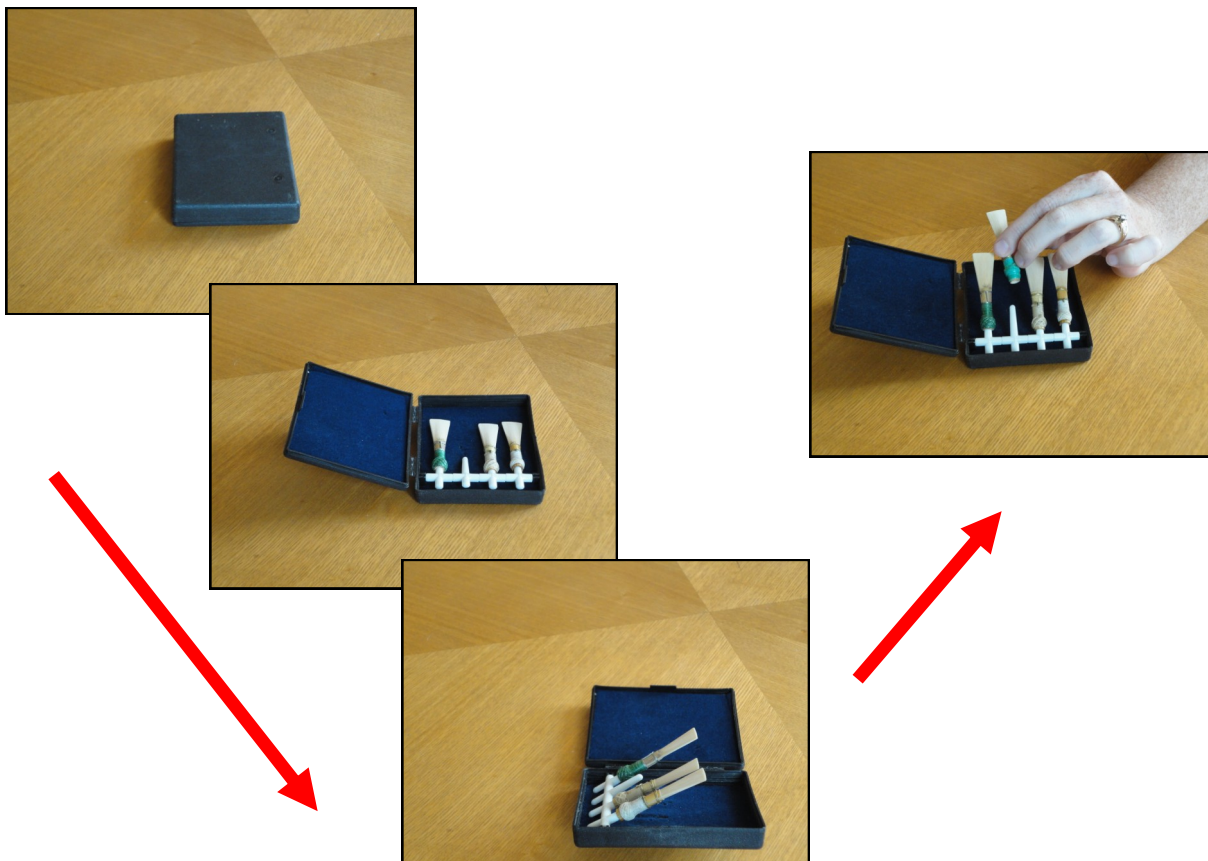
All measurements are given in inches and increments thereof.





## Reed Adjusting Tools and Standard Bassoon Equipment

Now that you know how big a reed is supposed to be, keep it that way by getting a reed case. This means more than the plastic box filled with cotton in which it came. Reed cases range in price from \$15.00 all the way into the hundreds of dollars. You do not have to spend a fortune. Most music stores can order you a simple one like what is pictured below. Reeds are expensive and you should have two or three in rotation at any given time. A simple reed case will keep them in much better shape for a much longer time and save you and your parents money and heartache in the long run.

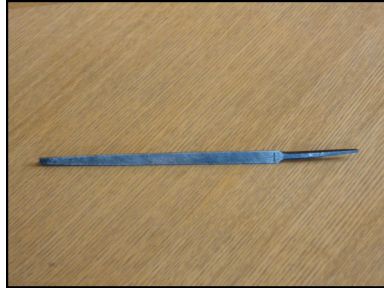




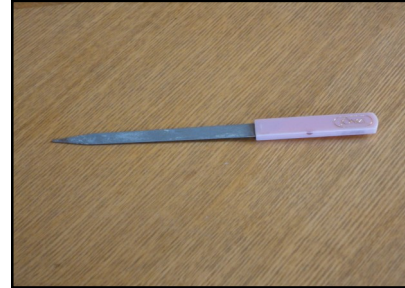
These are some of the **basic** reed adjusting tools that many players have at their disposal. You do not need to buy all of these at once. Starting with a simple file and building from there is the way to go. Each type of file is listed. The only thing not specifically listed is 320 grit (or very, very fine) sandpaper



Flat File  
Any hardware store should have it



Triangle File  
Not as good as the flat file, but usable



Metal Nail File  
Any beauty supply store



Rattail file  
Optional, but handy for cleaning out the tube of the reed



Reed knives are very sharp. They are supposed to be and should remain that way. So, to protect both yourself and your knife, if it comes with a cover, use it.

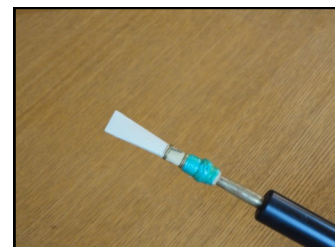




Both of these pictures are shown larger than the rest for a reason. The top tool is a **reamer** while the bottom tool is a **mandrel**. Notice the difference in how the metal shaft is shaped

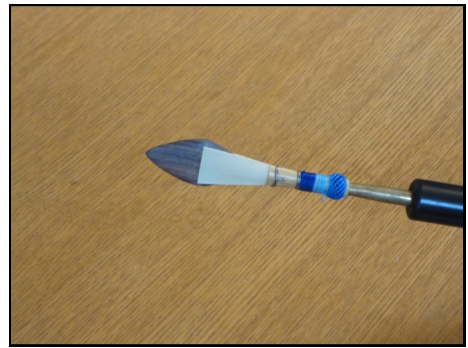


The **mandrel** is used to hold the reed while you are working on it. It saves your fingers and your reed.

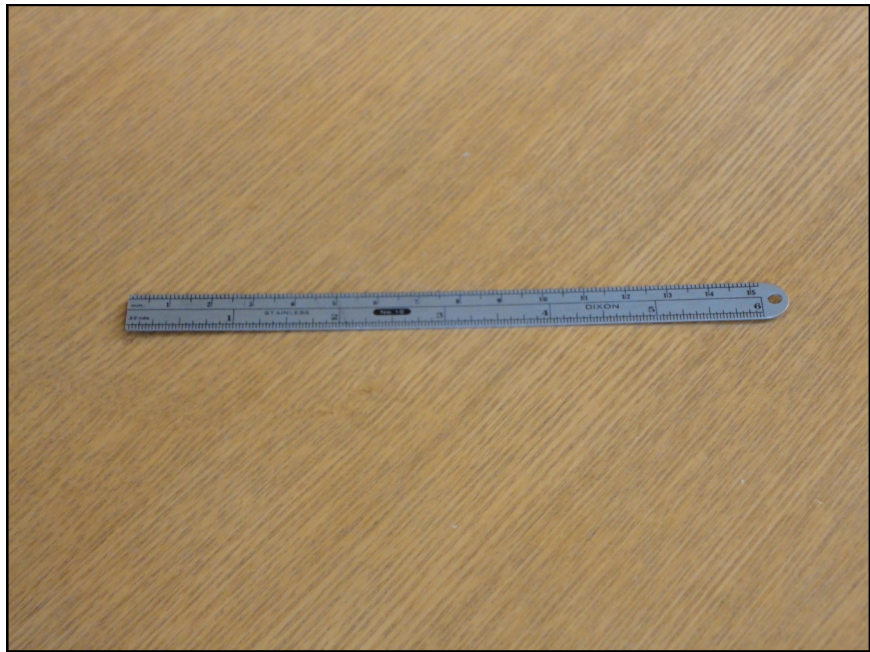
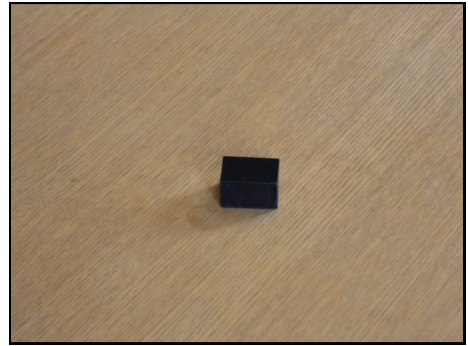




When removing material from a reed, ALWAYS use a reed plaque. It sits between the blades of the reed, inserted not quite half way.



A razor blade can remove a hair's width of the tip of the reed. The chopping block provides the surface on which to do it



If you decide to remove some of the tip of the reed, or if you want to check the dimensions of a new reed, get a good metal ruler.

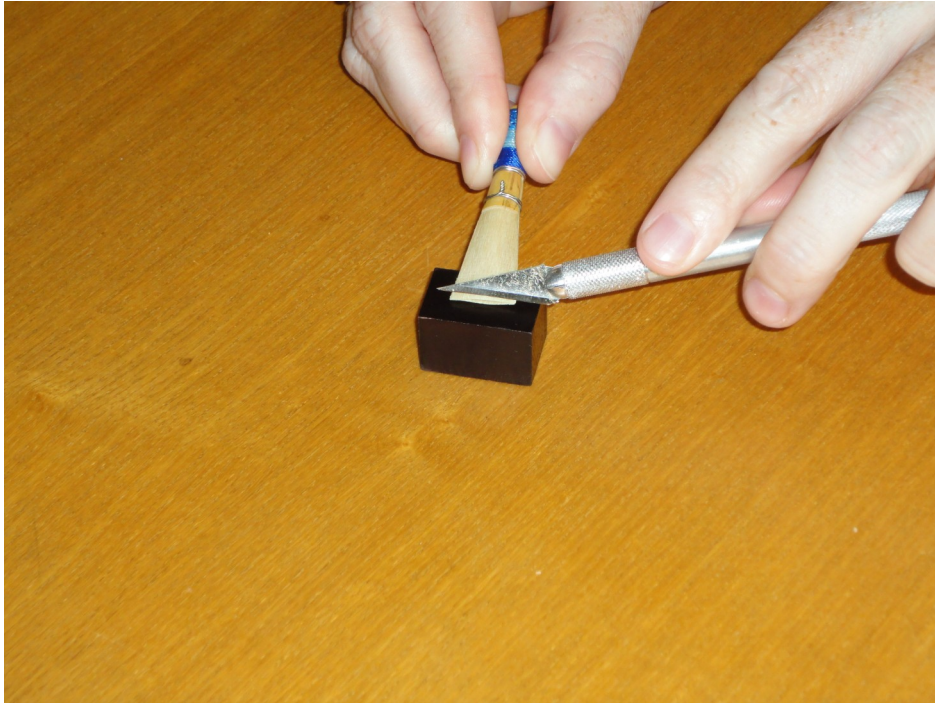
One more tool that is indispensable in a bassoonist kit, it a small pair of pliers. There are two types shown here, spring loaded (for ease of use) and regular needle-nosed pliers. Both can be found at any hardware store.



There are a myriad of other tools available for bassoon reed-making and reed-adjusting. However, they become much more specialized and expensive. Just to name a few, there is a bassoon reed trimmer (takes the place of a razor and clips a fraction of an inch off the tip), a bassoon specific micrometer that will measure the thicknesses of the reed as well as the distance between the reed blades on the inside of the reed at any given location. As you can tell, making bassoon reeds is a monumental task that may be best reserved for times when you are with a private teacher or have had years of practice yourself. There are many professional bassoonists that do not make their own reeds. They simply do what you do, buy a reed and then do your best to adjust it to the way they play. On that note, lets go to the next, and final, section on adjusting reeds.



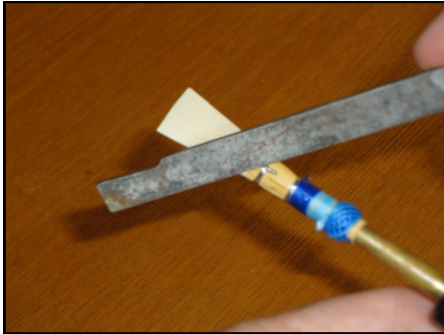
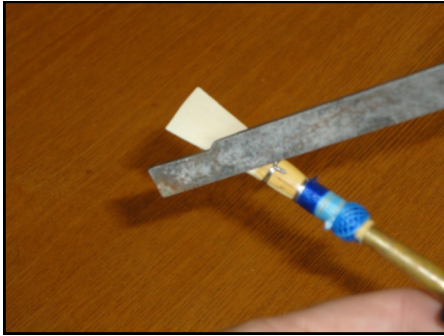
## Various Ways to Alter and Adjust a Reed



### Clipping

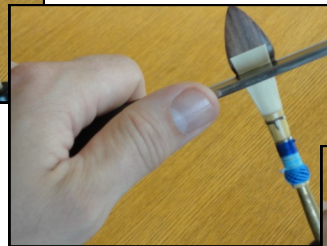
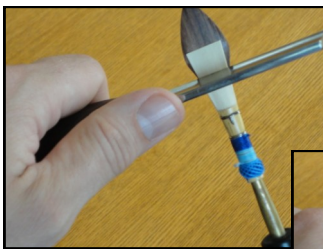
If you are ABSOLUTELY certain that you are providing enough air support, that your voicings and fingerings are correct and that your embouchure and instrument are properly adjusted, and you feel that the reed needs to be adjusted, there are many things that you can do. You can clip the reed as shown above. This will make the reed harder and will make it sharper in pitch as well. Don't do this unless you are certain that it needs to be done.

When you clip the tip, make sure that the knife blade is straight up and down and square to the reed (the reed tip should be straight across when you finish, never at an angle) Remove only a fraction of an inch (no thicker than a human hair) at a time. Keep a ruler handy to check the measurements of the reed. It should never deviate too far from our the diagram that was provided earlier.



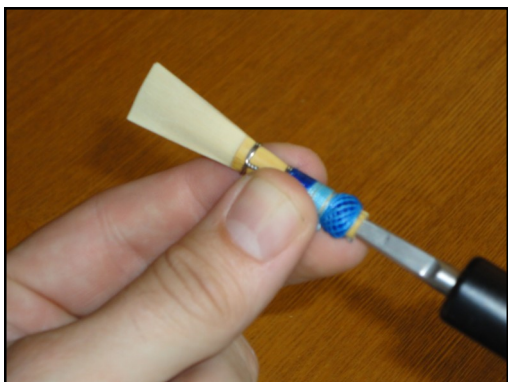
### Filing or Sanding

This method of adjusting a reed removes a small portion of the cane on either side of the spine. Do not remove material from the spine of the reed. Notice in the picture that the direction of the file is from back to front and inside to outside and always toward the tip of the reed. Going the opposite way can cause the tip to break, rendering the reed completely useless. Always use the mandrel and hold on to the base of the reed when you do this.

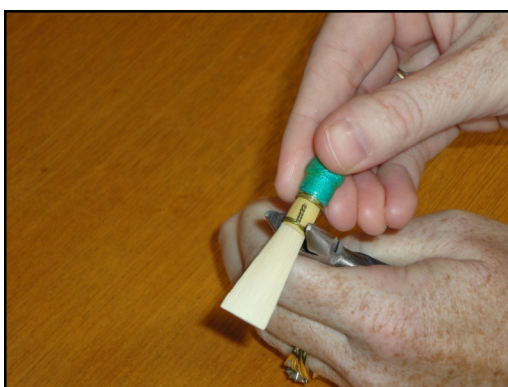


### Scraping

When scraping with a knife on the tip of the reed, be extra careful and follow the same rules as sanding or filing, but stay square to the tip and don't go too far back (avoiding the spine).



If the reed doesn't sit on the bocal properly, you can place it on the reamer and twist. This will remove some cane from the area, but don't remove too much as this will affect intonation



Using pliers, you can adjust the reed by squeezing the first wire. You can open the tip of the reed by squeezing the sides of the wire (top picture) or close it off slightly by squeezing top to bottom. Some pressure is needed, but don't go overboard.





# When Should I Adjust or Alter a Reed?

The following chart was provided by Jim Lotz

Problem	What may be wrong	Possible Solutions
High notes don't speak	Tip too closed	Squeeze sides of 1st wire to open tip to width of a dime
	Reed too thin	Squeeze sides of 2nd wire and adjust tip with the 1st wire
	Reed too thin	Clip the tip
Overall poor response	Reed too dry	Dip reed in water
	Poor balance	Turn the reed upside down on the bocal
	Poor balance	If tip has a smile, the curved side is thicker than the flat side, scrape the thick side
	Tip too thick	Scrape the tip or use sandpaper
	Poor balance	Check for and scrape thick spots
	Reed is not sealing	Round out the back of the reed with mandrel or reamer
Poor Low Response	Reed too stiff	Flatten 2nd wire and adjust tip with 1st wire
	Too heavy on back of reed	Scrape the back of the reed
	Poor balance	Turn the reed upside down on the bocal
Inflexible, hard to slur	Mid-section too thick	Scrape the hinge area
	Poor balance	

When using the chart, if you see poor balance, for example, try all the things listed. Hence the reason for the last square in the chart left blank.





## Resource Pages

### **Reeds**

Once you have played for 3-4 months, you will probably decide that store bought reeds are no longer ideal to your playing. You will no doubt want something handmade. The following websites or stores may have suitable reeds. They can range in price from 14 dollars and up.

[www.charlesmusic.com](http://www.charlesmusic.com)  
[www.arundoreeds.com](http://www.arundoreeds.com)  
[www.forrestsmusic.com](http://www.forrestsmusic.com)  
[www.millermarketingco.com](http://www.millermarketingco.com)  
[www.jonesdoublereed.com](http://www.jonesdoublereed.com)  
[www.nielsen-woodwinds.com](http://www.nielsen-woodwinds.com)

### **Tools**

If you feel that you are ready to start working on adjusting your own reeds, here is a list of stores that will be willing to help you along in your purchase. Some have websites and some are just listed with phone numbers online. So, just the names of the companies are listed.

Forrest's Music	Frederic H. Weiner
Vigder's Bassoon Supplies	Emerald Reeds
Jones Double Reed Products	Fox Products
The Berdon Co.	Russell Hinkle Contra Reeds
Wichita Band Instrument Co.	Bill Woodward
Accurate Double Reeds	Charles Double Reed Company
Christlieb Products	The Woodwind

### **Recommended Printed Materials**

The Art of Bassoon Playing - William Spencer  
Let's Play Bassoon - Hugo Fox  
Reed Adjustment Brochure - Mark Eubanks  
Methode de Basson - Allard  
Fagottschule vol. 1 and 2 - Hara  
Tutor for Bassoon - Langey  
Complete Method - Julius Weissenborn

## **Beginning Literature**

Arthur Best - Little Elephant  
Erickson/Best - March of Leprechauns  
Alan Hawkins - March for Bassoons  
Gavotte for Bassoon  
Roy Johnson - A Little Song  
A Little March  
Waltz for Bassoon  
Gavotte  
Gigue  
Schumann/ Johnson - The Happy Farmer  
Tchaikovsky/Hawkins - A Russian Folk Song  
Benson- Song and Dance  
Weissenborn - Arioso and Humoresque  
Jacob - Four Sketches  
Dubois - Tropical  
Vaughn Williams - A Winter's Willow

This list is by no means comprehensive, but should give you a good start with solo literature.

As a suggestion, if you are interested in continuing to play the bassoon and would like online help or suggestions as well as access to great “how-to” articles and tips, join the International Double Reed Society  
IDCS

You can do this online for a very reasonable registration process.

## Acknowledgements

### Printed

ABC book - 2008, 2009, 2010; various authors; compiled for the American Band College course of study

The Art of Bassoon Playing - William Spencer

Lectures - All lectures were presented at the American Band College. Information used was gathered from notes on these lectures as well as personal interviews or help sessions with the presenters.

Darryl Durran - 2009

Jim Lotz - 2008

David Rachor - 2010

### Picture Credits

Reed Diagram - Courtesy of [www.steesbassoon.com](http://www.steesbassoon.com)

All Still Shots - Taken with Sony Cyber-Shot  
Edited with Adobe Photoshop Elements

Tools - Provided by Kristi Ripley-Hancock  
Rettig Music  
Michael Buckholtz Sr.

Reeds - Provided by Rettig Music  
Kristi Ripley-Hancock

### DVD Credits

All Footage - Taken with Sony Handycam  
Edited with Final Cut Express for Macintosh  
Edited with iMovie09 for Macintosh

Starring - Kristi Ripley-Hancock - Bassoon  
Chris Buckholtz - Voice Over

### Printing Services

DVD and Insert Covers - printed at residence

Main Content - printed at FedEx Office - Special thanks to Carlos  
printed at residence