



Max McKee
Executive Director
(541) 840-4888



Scott McKee
Managing Director
(541) 778-4880



Paul Kassulke
Director of Operations
(541) 778-3161

Visit us @ www.bandworld.org

Another ABC Presentation

American Band College of
Sam Houston State University



BASSOON

Keys to Success

A Practical Guide for Students
Who Want To Switch to
Bassoon in Middle School or High School

Shawn Roller



TABLE OF CONTENTS

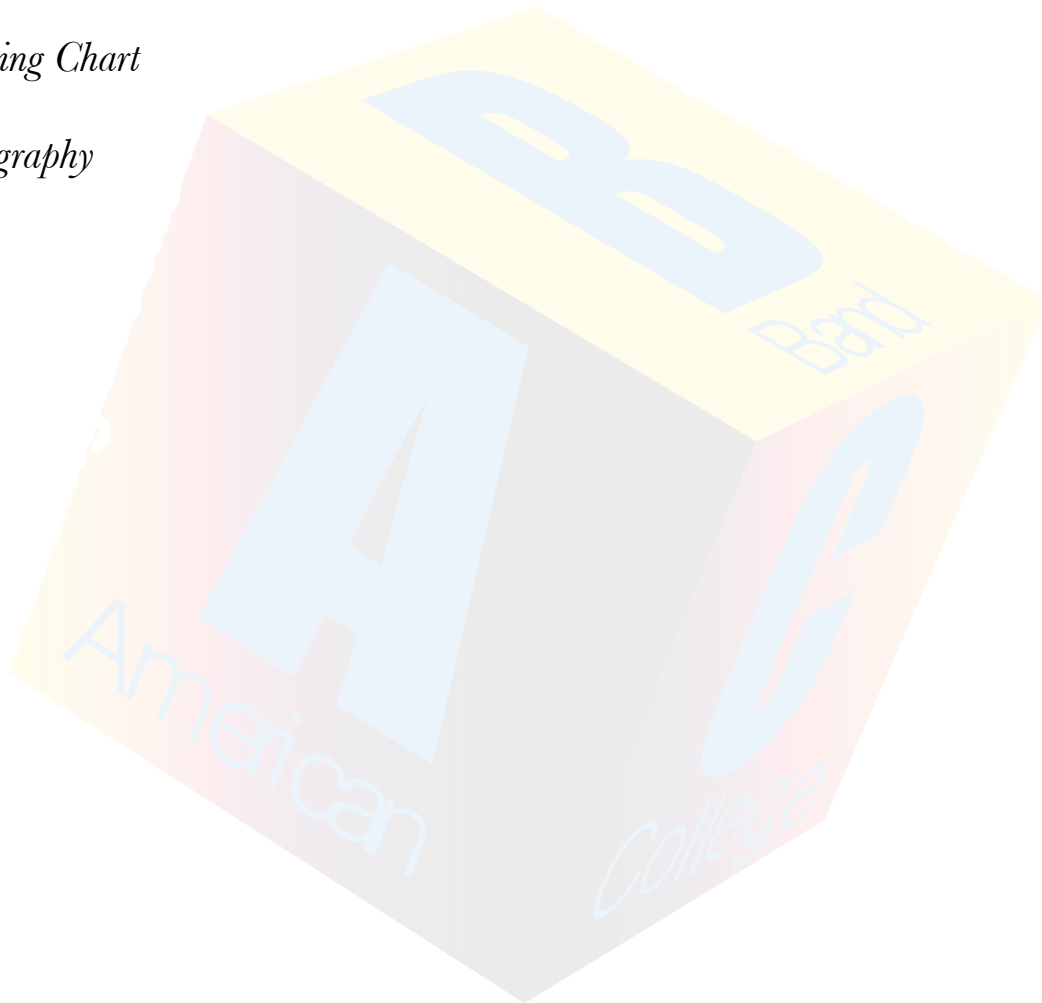
<i>Introduction</i>	5
<i>Why This Book</i>	5
<i>Overview</i>	5
<i>Why the Bassoon?</i>	6
<i>Why the Bassoon?</i>	6
<i>The Breathing Gym</i>	7
<i>The Breathing Gym</i>	7
<i>Helpful Hints on Breathing Form</i>	7
<i>Flow Studies</i>	7
<i>First flow study</i>	7
<i>Shorten the Inhalation</i>	8
<i>Reeds</i>	9
<i>Reed Selection</i>	9
<i>Reed Adjustment</i>	10
<i>Putting the Bassoon Together and Holding It</i>	11
<i>Putting the Bassoon Together</i>	11
<i>Holding the Bassoon</i>	14
<i>Hand Positions</i>	14

TABLE OF CONTENTS (Cont.)

<i>Forming the Embouchure</i>	15
<i>Forming the Embouchure</i>	15
<i>Making a Crow</i>	15
<i>Tongue Position for Good Articulation</i>	16
<i>First Sound - Problems, Causes and Remedies</i>	16
<i>Reading the Bass Clef</i>	17
<i>Reading the Bass Clef</i>	17
<i>Memorizing the Lines</i>	17
<i>Memorizing the Spaces</i>	17
<i>Ledger Lines and Spaces</i>	18
<i>Working Above the Staff</i>	18
<i>Working Below the Staff</i>	18
<i>It's Time to Play!</i>	19
<i>It's Time to Play</i>	19
<i>First Notes</i>	19
<i>Key Signatures</i>	20
<i>Thumb Keys</i>	21
<i>Half Hole</i>	21
<i>More Notes</i>	22
<i>Fun Playing Exercises</i>	23
<i>Methods for Continued Study</i>	23

TABLE OF CONTENTS (Cont.)

<i>Care and Maintenance</i>	24
<i>Care and Maintenance</i>	24
<i>Daily Care</i>	24
<i>Long Term Care</i>	25
<i>Fingering Chart</i>	26
<i>Bibliography</i>	28





BASSOON!

Why This Book?

I, and most band directors, have often wished we had more bassoon players, or in some cases at least one bassoon player, in the band. Therefore, I wanted to create a startup book I could give to any of my band students who express an interest in switching to the bassoon. After all, the bassoon is one of the most important instrument to have in the band but it is often overlooked. Without a bassoon player, the band will miss a vital and unique tone quality/voicing and this could lead to all sorts of blend/balance issues. This book will also aid in the study of the bassoon for both students and band directors alike.

Overview

This book will cover all the basics you need to get started on the bassoon. In case you haven't completely made up your mind to switch to the bassoon I have included a section explaining all the benefits of playing the bassoon and answers to common questions. Because the bassoon takes a large amount of air support to make a good sound, I have also included a section on breathing to help you be very successful on the bassoon. The book covers how to correctly assemble and hold the instrument plus good posture/playing techniques. The reed is where the bassoon produces its sound so make sure you follow the instructions in the embouchure forming section very closely. If you get your embouchure setup correctly and you get a good sound on your reed, you have just set yourself up for success as the instrument is an amplifier of the reed and many problems stem from there. Once you have a good "crow" going on the reed, the book will move you onto playing the instrument. However, before you move on, remember, the instrument is just an amplifier of the reed vibrating, so this is a crucial area of study. In case you are coming from a treble clef instrument the book will go into a section about how to read music in bass clef, the clef the bassoon uses. I have started you with some easy studies to get the feel of the bassoon and also some review on key signatures. The book then moves to some common scales and finally to a few playing examples. I have also included recommended methods for continued study beyond this book. At the end of the book you will find an easy to understand fingering chart for your reference.

Throughout the book you will find helpful references to other materials for your continued study and improvement beyond this book.

Now lets make you a bassoon player!



Bassoon Rules!



BASSOON!

Why the Bassoon?

You are obviously a smart person because you have chosen or are considering a switch to one of the most important instruments in the band. In addition to being a valuable member of the band, you can now take your musicianship to new heights and become an extremely valuable member of the musical community in your city, county and even across your state. With practice and hard work you can go as far as you want to on the bassoon.

Here are common questions about switching to bassoon.

How much does it cost?

This depends on each student's individual situation. More than likely your school owns an instrument that you can rent from them at little or no cost to you. Reeds are somewhat expensive at a price of about \$10 to \$20 per reed. However, if well cared for, a reed can last for a month or two before breaking down and not playing well.

The Bassoon is so big! I'm not sure I can hold it! How can I play this instrument?

The bassoon is a big instrument and a little awkward to hold at first but its size will become second nature to you. Once you get setup by your band director or this book, the bassoon will feel like it is part of you in no time. Plus, if you're struggling to hold on to it there are devices such as neck straps that can help you. Also, your band director might be able to give you an instrument to take home and leave at home for practice so you won't need to haul an instrument home with you every night like the other band students. If they don't have an extra practice instrument, the bassoon breaks down into a very small case so it is really easy to transport.

I've never played an instrument using the bass clef! Does it take a long time to learn?

With any new thing, you will need to study the bass clef to learn it. However, this book makes it easy to learn and it won't take you very long to understand the bass clef or the notes. With a little practice, you will be playing in the band before you know it!

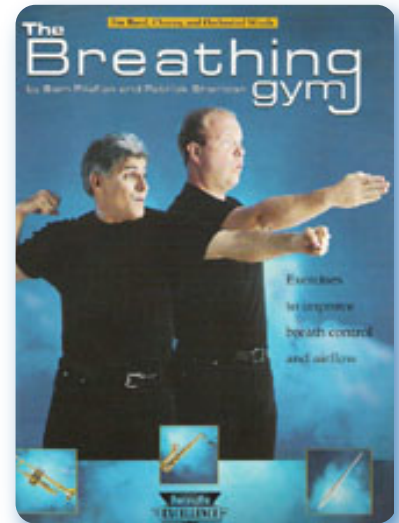
How can I make a sound with the bassoon reed?

I have found this is often the scariest area for a potential switcher because double reed instruments are often rare in a band program. However, it is really easy to make a good sound on the bassoon reed and once that is mastered, the bassoon will sound amazing. Besides, the band will be so thankful that you have chosen to play the bassoon that they will want to see you with the bassoon in your hands at all times!!!!!!

BASSOON!

The Breathing Gym

The Bassoon is a very large instrument and it requires a large amount of air support to make as great sound. The Breathing Gym is a method designed not only to help you practice your breathing, but it will also develop your breathing to very high levels of efficiency and capability. This method is a book and two DVD set that covers stretches, flow studies, therapies, strength and flexibility and breathing for the brain exercises/studies designed to give musicians control and efficiency of breath. I highly recommended this method and its use on a daily basis to ensure your success. Below I have included a few hints and exercises to get you going until you or your band director can obtain the method book and DVDs.



Helpful Hints on Breathing Form, Taken Directly from The Breathing Gym

- ✓The shape of the mouth should be “Oh” or “Whoa”
- ✓Effort should be made to breathe evenly over the entire count
- ✓Air should be moving at all times (in or out - never holding)
- ✓Change of direction should be as smooth as possible (from in to out (articulations) and from out to in(releases))
- ✓Make it easy and relaxed as possible

Flow Studies, Taken Directly from The Breathing Gym

These exercises simulate breathing patterns used in singing and playing wind instruments. The goal is to move air without resistance or tension, sometimes quickly and sometimes over longer periods of time.

First Flow Study

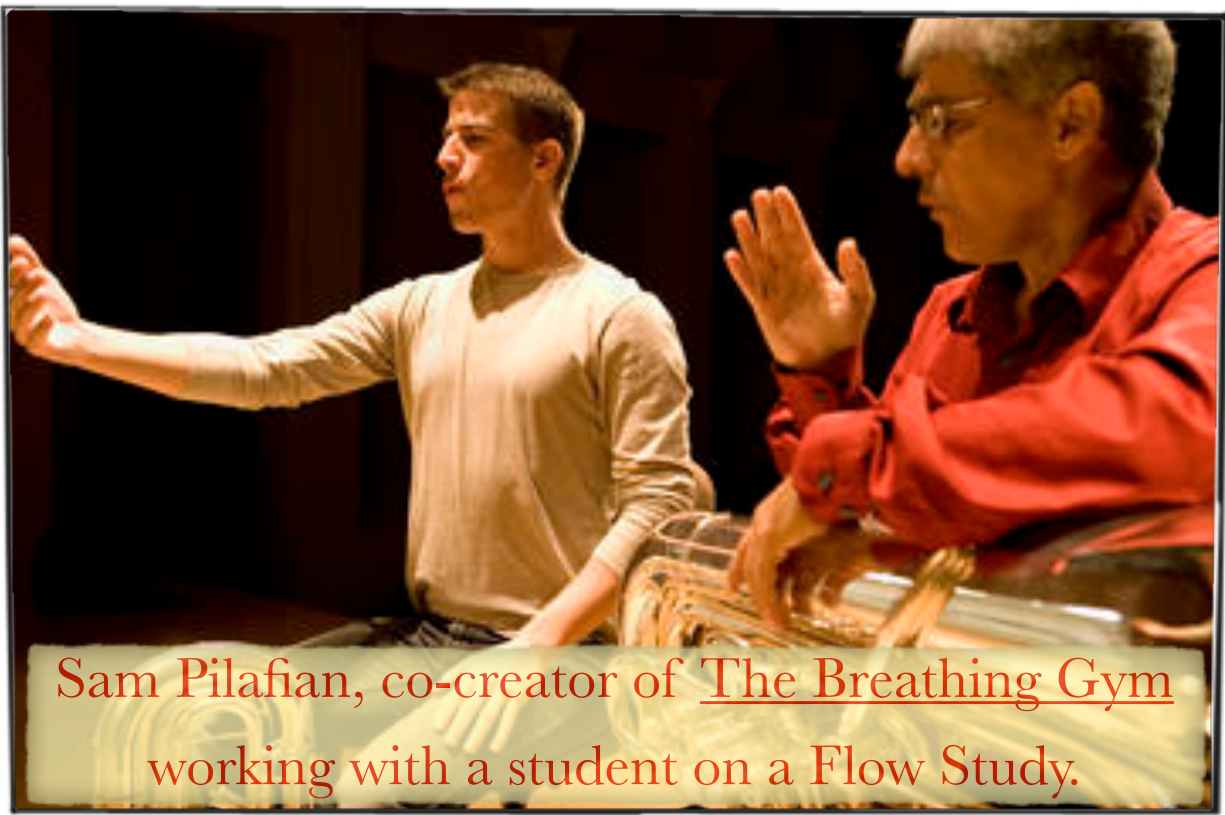
Breathe in smoothly and evenly for 6 counts and out for 6 counts. Without stopping, repeat using 7 counts. Keep repeating 8, 9 and then 10. Your breathing will need to slow as the count gets larger. As you improve at this, increase to even larger counts to improve your lung capacity. Make sure you completely fill up your lungs and completely empty your lungs but do not do so before you reach the desired count. This exercise should be done at quarter note = 72. Remember to always follow the Helpful Hints on Breathing Form. It is also a good idea to place your hand at arms length with your palm facing you during exhalation to ensure a smooth and even exhalation is happening.

BASSOON!

Shorten the Inhalation

This exercise is very similar to the first flow study but this time instead of inhaling and exhaling for the same amount of counts, you are now going to shorten the inhalation time and keep the exhalation of air consistent. Breathe in for 4 counts and out for 4 counts. You will do this 2 times. Then, without stopping, breathe in for 3 counts and out for 4 counts. You will also do this 2 times. Then breathe in for 2 counts and out for 4 counts, 2 times. Finally, breathe in for 1 count and out for 4 counts. Try to do this for 1 minute or until you experience dizziness or discomfort. Keep adding at least 1 rep of the in for 1, out for 4 until you can do it for 1 minute without feeling dizziness or discomfort. Remember to completely fill up your lungs on the inhale and completely empty your lungs on the exhale in an even and smooth manner. In addition, always follow the Helpful Hints on Breathing Form.

These two exercises can be very helpful if done everyday and will give you a good start until you or your band director can obtain [The Breathing Gym](#).



Sam Pilafian, co-creator of [The Breathing Gym](#) working with a student on a Flow Study.

BASSOON!

Reed Selection

Reed selection can be a scary and difficult task for the beginning bassoonist. However, the task of picking out good reeds can be very easy if you know what to look for. This section will give you all of the necessary tools to find and fine tune your reeds.

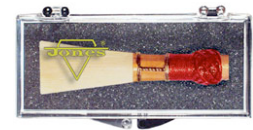
The first thing to consider when buying a reed is whether to buy brand name reeds or hand made reeds. While hand made reeds are usually better, they are very player specific and not always the best option for the beginning to intermediate bassoon player. Plus, they might be hard to find and very expensive when you do find them. Therefore, many bassoonist recommend students to buy brand name reeds due to their consistency and price. Good reeds that most music stores and online retailers carry include: Emerald, Fox Renard, Jones, and Selmer. I have included pictures of the first three on this page so you know what they look like when you are at your local music store. There are other reed makers and brands available and they might work for you. However, the only way to know for sure is to buy one and try it out.

The second thing to consider when buying a reed is what does it look like when you take it out of its case. The quality of the reed on the visual inspection is more important than the brand or maker of the reed. If you are buying from the local music store you can inspect the reeds before you buy them. If you bought your reeds from a mail order/online company, do a visual inspection before playing the reed and if it doesn't look like a good quality reed, send it back for a refund or exchange. Here are six things to consider when buying a reed.

#1 Tip Opening: The reed tip should look just like the picture to the right. If the reed you are inspecting doesn't look like this it is likely that you will want to pass on the reed. However, just because the tip might not look like this doesn't mean the reed will be a bad reed. If the cane is shaped like this reed but it is too open or closed, the reed can be adjusted to make the opening correct. If the blades are uneven or oddly shaped, pass on the reed as that is hard to fix, if possible.



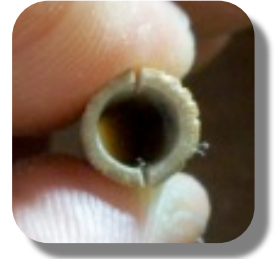
#2 The Wires: There are two exposed wires on the bassoon reed as shown to the left. Each reed can be adjusted by changing tightening or loosening the wires with a small pair of pliers. Both wires need to be properly positioned, the first wire should be 1/8" below the scraped cane and the second wire should be 2/8" below the first wire. These wires should be tight to the cane and look like they do in the picture to the left. If they are not properly done, pass on the reed as it will make reed adjustments extremely difficult.



BASSOON!

Reed Selection (Continued)

#3 Butt End Opening: It is extremely important for the butt end opening of the reed to be completely rounded. If this is in any other shape the reed will not have a tight seal with the bocal and it will cause air leaks. Pass on any reed that does not look like the picture to the right.



#4 Reed Strength: Bassoon reeds are marked with a hardness level. The level of hardness per marking varies greatly across brands and even in the same brand. To start, buy reeds marked “medium” or “medium hard.” “Hard” reeds can be very tricky to adjust and “medium soft” and “soft” reeds often do not have enough cane to make adjustments.

#5 Chips and Cracks: It is not always easy to see chips and cracks in the reed when you first look at it. Make sure you hold the reed up to the light and look at it on both sides. If a chip or crack is present in the reed you can see it at this time. Do Not buy a reed if it has a chip or crack. There is no way to fix this issue.

#6 Well Built: In the end it is your job to check the reed over and make sure it looks like it is in good shape. If you have any doubts about the quality of the reed, pass on it and check out another reed. The people at the music store don't always know the characteristics of a well built reed, so don't be afraid to ask your band director or a bassoonist in your area for some help with reeds. After all, the instrument is only an amplifier of the reed so spend the time to get a good reed.

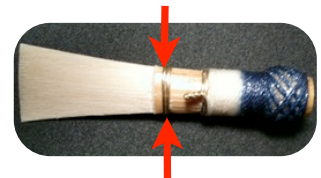
Reed Adjustment

Adjusting reeds is a very complex skill and there are a variety of ways to adjust the reed for almost every playing issue. For the purposes of this book we are only going to focus on opening and closing the reed tip as this is fairly easy. To further adjust the reed I recommend discussing this with a private teacher as you advance.



#1 Reed Tip Too Open: If the reed tip is too open, use a pair of small needle nosed pliers and squeeze, in small increments, on the first wire on the top and bottom to close the tip. This is shown in the picture to the left.

#2 Reed Tip Too Closed: If the reed tip is too closed, use a pair of small needle nosed pliers and squeeze, in small increments, on the first wire on the sides to open the tip. This is shown in the picture to the right.



BASSOON!

Putting the Bassoon Together

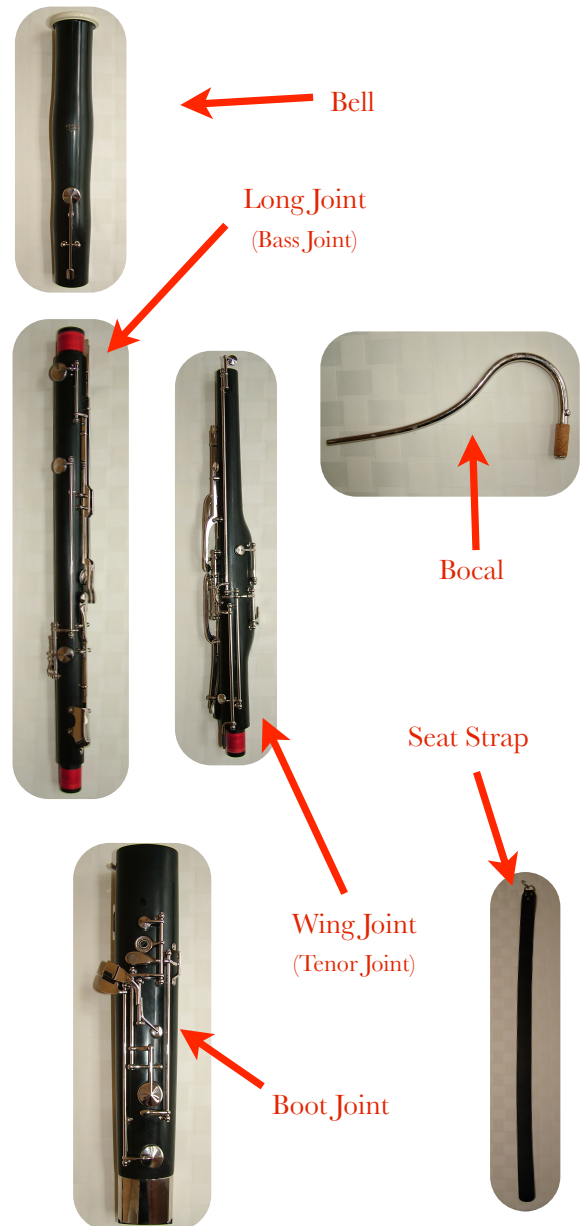
Before putting the bassoon together, always start soaking your reed in water. A small pill bottle works great as it is the right size and often spill proof.

The bassoon is a very large instrument when assembled and it is also very fragile. Whether your bassoon is made out of wood or plastic, the body and the keys can be easily damaged by accidentally hitting them against something, forcing parts together, putting pressure on the keys or the bocal or even setting joints down incorrectly. Make sure when you are putting it together and taking it apart you are being extremely careful and patient.

Below you will find pictures of the bassoon in its case correctly positioned and a diagram of the bassoon joints. Make sure you remember what each piece is called and what it looks like. We will use these terms throughout the remainder of the book. Also, pay attention to how the bassoon looks in the case before taking it out so you can return each piece to the correct location and avoid damaging the bassoon in the case. Remember, each case is usually a little different so look at the bassoon in your case closely before removing it!



Remember, each case is usually a little different so look at the bassoon in your case closely before removing it!



BASSOON!

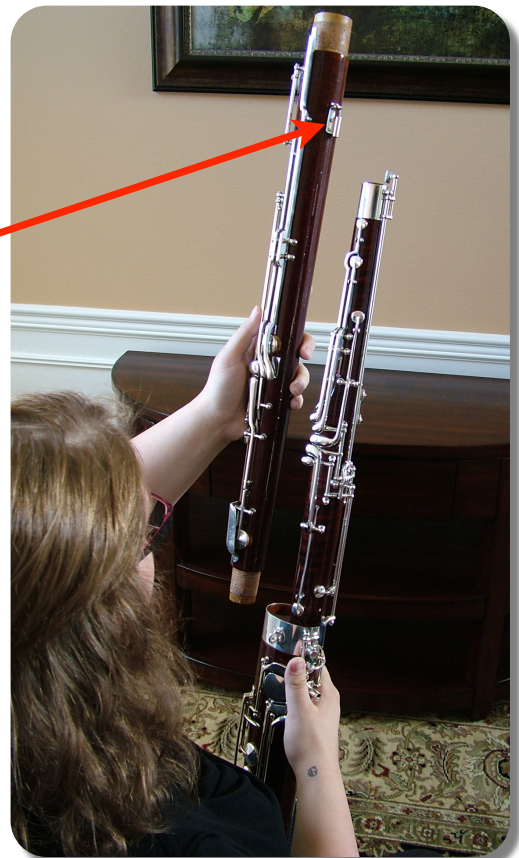
Putting the Bassoon Together (Continued)

Now that you have learned what each part looks like and is called, and where each part goes in the case, it is time to assemble the instrument. When putting the instrument together, remember to take your time and don't force any parts together. The parts should fit together with little effort. If a part isn't going on or is too loose, ask your band director or private teacher to look at your instrument. With all of the joints, make sure you are gripping the instrument by the wood/plastic and not by the keys. Gripping keys can cause them to bend which will damage the instrument and cause it to have playing issues.



Step 1: Take the boot joint out of the case and hold it with your left hand. Take the wing joint out with your right hand. Place the wing joint into the smaller hole of the boot joint. On most bassoons there will be an index mark on the back side of the instrument to line up the wing joint to the boot joint. If this line is not present on your bassoon, line the inside curve of the wing joint up with the long joint hole.

Locking Pin



Step 2: Hold the boot joint with the right hand and take the long joint out of the case with your left hand. Place the long joint in the boot joint so the thumb keys are facing toward you. There is a locking pin on the top of the long joint that fits into a hole on the wing joint. Make sure this is lined up and put the pin in place.

BASSOON!

Putting the Bassoon Together (Continued)



Step 3: Hold the instrument with your left hand and take the bell joint out with your right hand. Depress the low Bb pad on the bell joint with your thumb and carefully push the bell joint onto the long joint making sure the connecting bars line up on the two joints.

Step 4: Place the seat strap at the front of your chair, so it will be under your thighs, with the hook on the right side and connect it to the bassoon. There are many different varieties of connectors but the hook is the most common.



Step 5: Insert the bocal into the bocal hole at the top of the wing joint. Grip the bocal above the cork where the bocal starts to bend. Gently work the bocal back and forth until it is completely into the hole. While doing this, make sure the whisper key is up and line the whisper key pad and the vent hole on the bocal up, so when the pad closes, it closes the vent hole.

BASSOON!

Holding the Bassoon

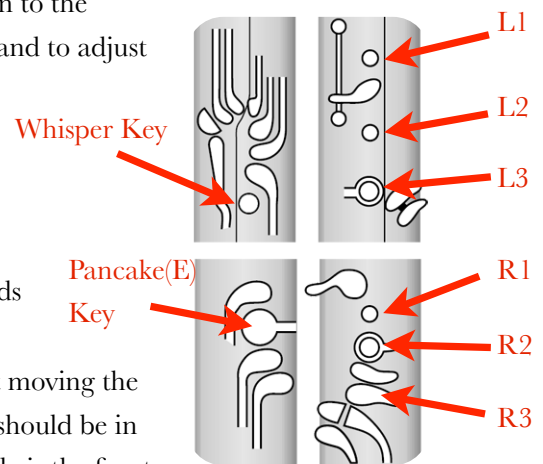
Because the bassoon is large and awkward, holding the bassoon can be very challenging for beginners. By following these tips, the bassoon should feel very comfortable to you in no time. Just like on your previous instrument, it is extremely important for you to have good posture and then bring the instrument to you. You should sit forward in your chair so your back is not touching the back of the chair with your feet flat on the floor and your back should be straight.



Positioning the Seat Strap: As stated before, place the seat strap towards the front of the chair so it will be under your thighs when sitting, with the hook on the right side. The entire weight of the bassoon should be supported by the seat strap. While using good posture, the seat strap should be in a position that allows you to bring the instrument to the correct playing position while supporting the entire weight of the bassoon. The bocal and reed should line up with the embouchure when pulled toward the mouth. If the seat strap needs to be adjusted, you should hold on to the bassoon with your right hand and pull the seat strap with your left hand to adjust the height upward or hold the strap while letting the strap slip under the thighs to lower the bassoon.

Hand Positions

The first thing to think about when it comes to putting your hands on the instrument is being relaxed. If you shake your hands out at your sides and then bring them up to a hand shake position, without moving the muscles in your hand, this is the correct hand position. Your hands should be in a natural curve like a “C.” On the diagram to the right, the right side is the front



of the instrument and the left side is the back of the instrument. The left hand fingers 1, 2 and 3 will cover or go just above L1, L2 and L3 on the diagram. The left hand thumb will cover or go just above the whisper key. The right hand fingers 1, 2 and 3 will cover or go just above R1, R2 and R3 on the diagram. The right hand thumb will cover or go just above the pancake (E) key. Your pinky fingers should remain above the side keys on both hands. Remember to keep your wrists straight and your fingers curved in a natural position. If you find that your left hand is supporting the weight of the instrument, adjust your seat strap forward and reposition the instrument to your embouchure again.

BASSOON!

Forming the Embouchure

The embouchure is the way you arrange your lips and muscles in your face to make a sound on any instrument. For the bassoon, the embouchure is a soft lip supported embouchure with a slight overbite. To get a good embouchure formation and sound follow the three steps below. Remember, the buzzing of the reed and proper air support will help you get a good sound on the reed, which is amplified in the instrument, so it is crucial you follow these steps exactly. It is also a good idea to practice the following steps using your little finger to get the feeling of rolling the lips in and using very little pressure. The following is taken directly from the Embou-Sure Method Book published by WIBC Publishing. Copyright 1987.

Step 1: Place the tip of the reed on your lower lip.



Step 2

Step 2: Draw the reed into your mouth taking the lower lip with it. Do not let the reed slide or move on the lip. When done correctly the reed will stay in place on the lip and the lip will roll in over the teeth.



Step 1

Step 3: Bring the top lip down slightly over the top teeth and place it on the top of the reed. When the reed is in your mouth, the top lip should be almost up to the first wire with the bottom lip slightly behind it.



Step 3

It is important to remember that the bassoon embouchure is a soft, lip supported embouchure with a very small amount of pressure. Also, think of the lips supporting the reed with a round embouchure. The small amount of pressure used on the reed needs to come in from all directions in an equal way. Think of your embouchure being a lightly wrapped rubber band around the reed.

Making a Crow

After forming the embouchure correctly blow on the reed without using the tongue. The sound you here is called a crow. It should have a variety of high and low pitches. If it doesn't, that is okay, there is a section about how to fix this on the next page. Now, put the reed on the bocal and try it again. With a Fox #2 bocal the pitch made should be a C. If it is too high or low, refer to the Problem, Causes and Remedies section on the next page. If the pitch is significantly above a C that is equal to a high pitch crow and if it is significantly below the C that is equal to a low pitched crow. If the pitch you are producing is close to a C, don't worry too much about changing your embouchure. With practice you will center the sound and get more comfortable making a good embouchure.

BASSOON!

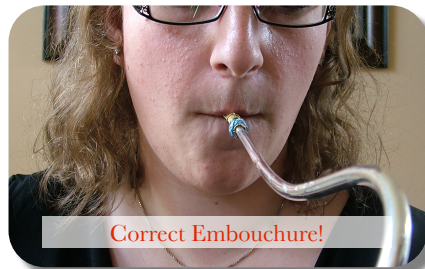
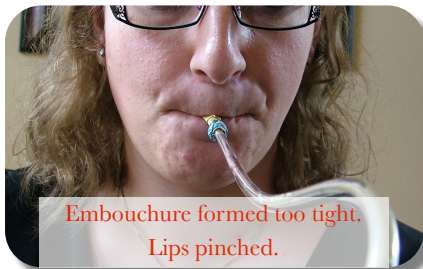
Tongue Position for Good Articulation

Depending on which instrument you played before the bassoon, there might be some big differences in tonguing. The first thing to remember is that the tip of the tongue articulates at the tip of the bottom reed. Also, remember it isn't the tip of the tongue hitting the reed that makes the articulation, it is the tongue leaving the reed so it can vibrate again that makes the articulation. Therefore, it is important to remember that the tongue does not need to touch the tip of the reed very hard but just enough to slightly interrupt the air flow. Keep the back of your tongue down so the air can move freely and move the tongue up to articulate.

First Sound - Problems, Causes and Remedies

Now that you have the basics of the embouchure and the tonguing, you can now diagnose any problems you might be having. The following problems, causes and remedies were taken directly from the Embou-Sure Method Book published by WIBC Publishing. Copyright 1987.

Problem	Causes	Remedy
High Pitched Crow	Embouchure is too tight, pinched. Reed is too stiff, closed off.	Decrease the pressure in your embouchure. Relax embouchure more. Check thickness of reed and balance in the cane. Change reed or adjust reed as needed.
Low Pitched Crow	Lack of support. Reed too long and/or too wide.	Use more support in embouchure to dampen the reed. Change the length and/or width of the reed.
Unsupported Sound on Low F	Lack of support from lower jaw. Lack of air column support from diaphragm.	Slightly increase your lower jaw support. Use a faster airstream. More support from your diaphragm.



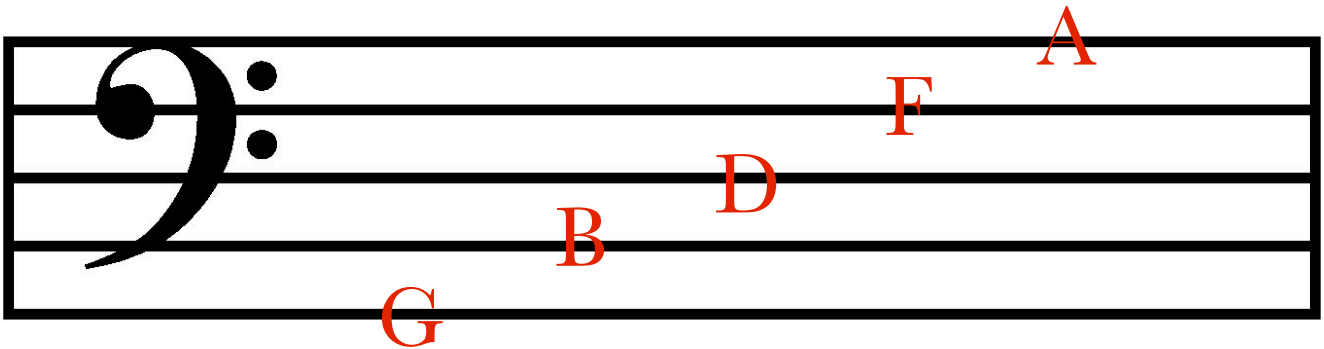
BASSOON!

Reading Bass Clef

Unless you are coming from a bass clef instrument, the concept of having to learn a new clef to play the bassoon might be a little scary to you. Don't worry! The bass clef is just as easy to learn as the treble clef. The notes will fall into different places on the staff but you will use the same type of mnemonic devices you used to learn the treble clef so it will be easy to remember and learn.

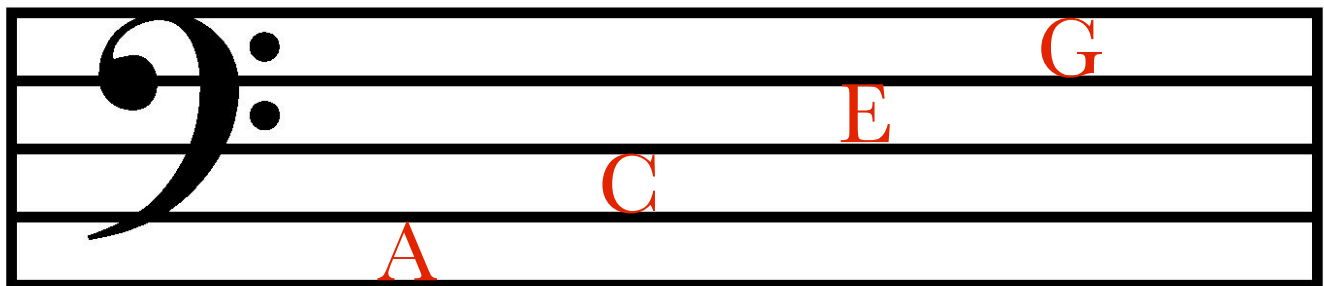
Memorizing the Lines

The lines on the bass clef from the bottom up are; G, B, D, F, A. One way to remember this is, Good Boys Deserve Fudge Always. Another might be, Guitar Bands Drive Fans Away. You can come up with any sentence that helps you remember. Here is a staff with the letters marked on the lines.



Memorizing the Spaces

The spaces on the bass clef from the bottom up are; A, C, E, G. One way to remember this is, All Cows Eat Grass. Another might be, All Cars Enter Garages. You can come up with any sentence that helps you remember. Here is a staff with the letters marked on the spaces.



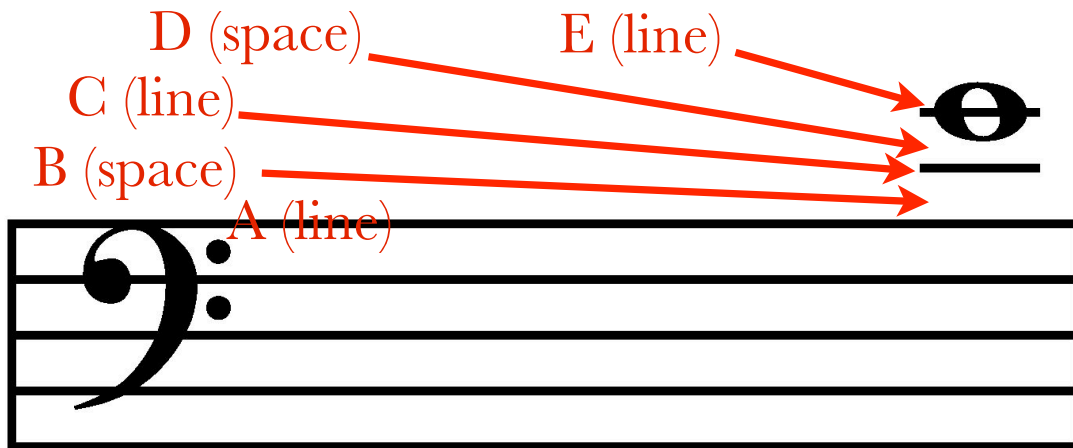
BASSOON!

The Ledger Lines and Spaces

The ledger lines and spaces work exactly like they do in the treble clef but the notes will be in different places. The easiest way to start remembering which notes are which, is to start with the last note on that side of the clef and count forward or backward in the alphabet to find the note. Here are some examples.

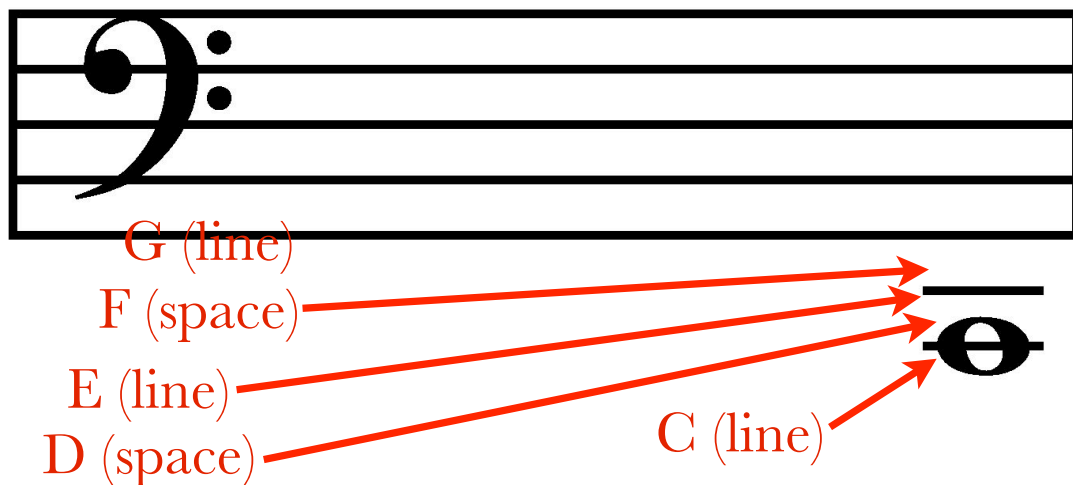
Working Above the Staff

This note is above the staff so you will count forward in the alphabet from the last line on the top of the staff to find the note. Don't forget to account for the lines and the spaces.



Working Below the Staff

This note is below the staff so you will count backward in the alphabet from the last line on the bottom of the staff to find the note. Don't forget to account for the lines and the spaces.



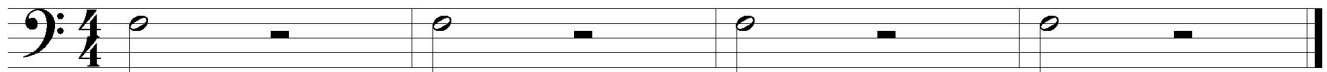
BASSOON!

It's Time to Play

You now have all the basic tools to become a great bassoon player. When you played on the reed and bocal before, you more than likely created C if your embouchure was correct and your reed was properly adjusted. As you know from your instrument, muscle memory is key to forming an embouchure that makes you sound good all the time. On the bassoon, the embouchure needs to be changed slightly to obtain different notes. As you go lower your embouchure will be more relaxed and your lower jaw will need to move farther back into a more exaggerated overbite. To play higher notes the embouchure will need to be slightly more supported. Try to make the least amount of adjustment as possible. Over exaggerating the above can lead to bad habits and cause problems later on in your playing. In this section, I have included lots of playing exercises to get your bassoon playing off to a good start. I have included fingerings to start. Later, refer to the fingering chart on page 26.

First Notes

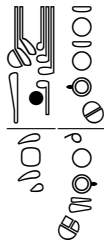
We will start with an F which only involves one key, the whisper key.



Note: F
Fingering:



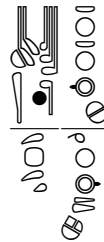
F



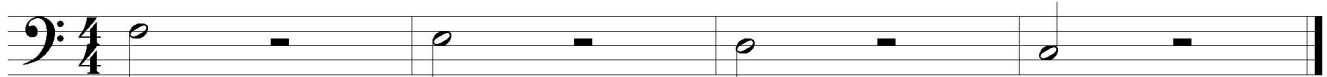
F



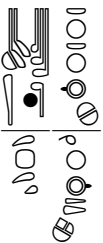
F



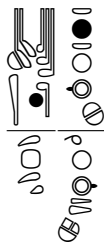
Now lets add some left hand fingers. Make sure to complete cover the hole on each finger.



Note: F
Fingering:



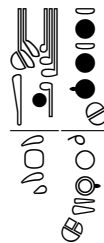
E



D



C



Make sure you can play the above exercises before you move on. Now onto some harder exercises.

BASSOON!

First Notes (Continued)

Now lets add the right hand. Notice when the first finger is pressed it produces a B and not a Bb like the clarinet. This is because the bassoon does not have the same engineering as a clarinet, flute or saxophone. Also be aware that you will add your pinky on the F.

The image shows a musical staff in bass clef with a 4/4 time signature. The notes are B, A, G, and F. Below the staff, the notes are labeled: Note: B, A, G, F. Underneath each note is a fingering diagram for the bassoon, showing the positions of the fingers on the keys.

Before we move on to more notes, please review your key signatures and use the next section to help you with the change from treble clef to bass clef.

Key Signatures

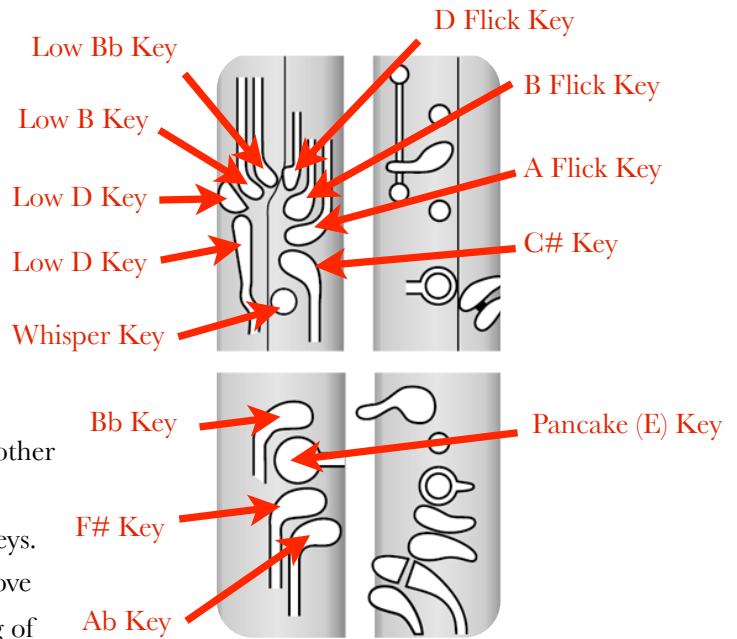
As you have already learned on your instrument, the composer often doesn't want to write out a bunch of sharp, flat and natural signs throughout the piece. In addition, seeing extra accidentals on the page can be confusing for the performer. If you are coming from a bass clef instrument, nothing has changed for you. If you are coming from a treble clef instrument, nothing has changed except the location of the sharps and flats in the key signature. This is due to the bass clef notes being one line or one space lower than they were on the treble clef. Below I have given you both the treble clef and bass clef versions of Cb Major and C# Major so you can see the differences.

The image shows two boxes, one for Cb Major and one for C# Major. Each box contains two staves: the top staff is in bass clef and the bottom staff is in treble clef. The Cb Major key signature is shown with two flats (Bb and Eb) in both clefs. The C# Major key signature is shown with two sharps (F# and C#) in both clefs.

BASSOON!

Thumb Keys

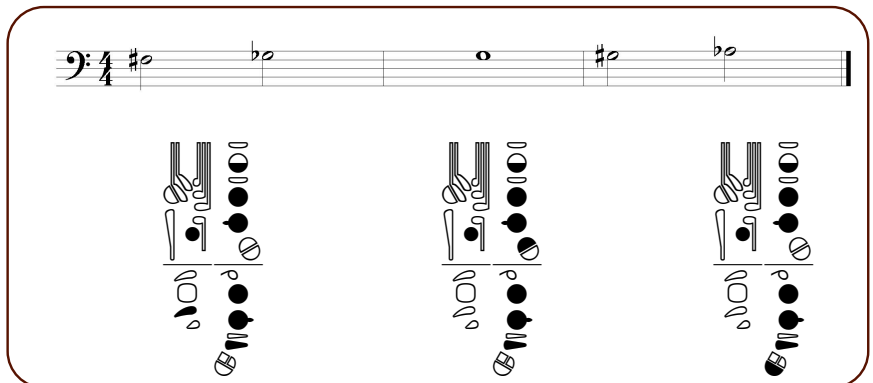
The bassoon has 13 thumb keys, which is almost as many keys as the flute has on the entire instrument. That can seem a little scary when you first start playing. Don't worry. The thumb keys make playing the bassoon much easier. The two keys you will use the most are the whisper key and the pancake (E) key. The whisper key is used for all notes from F below the staff to G# at the top of the staff. The pancake key is used on all notes from E below the staff and lower. All the other thumb keys mostly change the pitch of the note. However, there are three keys that are called flick keys. These keys are used on A, Bb, B, C and D right above the staff. These keys can be added to the beginning of the note and once the note speaks, released to make the note sound with more ease. Lastly, because the thumb keys are named as note names it makes it really easy to figure out which thumb key(s) to use on a given note. Look at the diagram to study the thumb key names.



Half Hole

Because the bassoon doesn't have a register/octave key, to obtain higher notes we have to use "vents" on the bassoon. Venting is a way to open up an air leak on the instrument to produce an overtone. The whisper key is a vent when it is released. Using a half hole on the first

finger is also a vent to produce another set of notes. I like to think of this set of notes as the "three G's." The F#/Gb, G and G#/Ab at the top of the staff are fingered almost like the the lower octave, but to produce the higher notes the first finger only covers half of the first finger hole. To make the half hole, roll your first knuckle towards your second finger. This will allow the pad of your finger to expose part of the hole. Always make the half hole by rolling the finger, never slide your finger down the instrument or completely lift it off. Doing so will cause issues with later technique.



BASSOON!

More Notes

Now that you have played a few notes, reviewed your key signatures, learned about the thumb keys and the half hole technique, we can play some more notes. Below I have given you a variety of exercises to learn more fingerings and help with your continued improvement as a bassoon player. Take these exercises slow and focus on good posture, air, embouchure and fingerings. I have included the fingerings under some exercises. It is important for you to remember your fingerings as quickly as possible. Refer to the Bassoon Fingering Chart in the back of the book if you need assistance with a note/fingering.

Remember to always check the key signature!

Note: F G A Bb C D E F G F E D C Bb A G F

Fingering:

Going lower! Remember to follow the tips from the embouchure section about going lower. Here you will remove the whisper key on the E and add the pancake (E) key for the remainder of the notes.

Note: F E Eb D Db C B Bb

Fingering:

Working on the half hole. Remember to rock your first knuckle towards your second finger to open the half hole. Notice I have removed the note names. Review the note names before playing the exercise.

Fingering:

BASSOON!

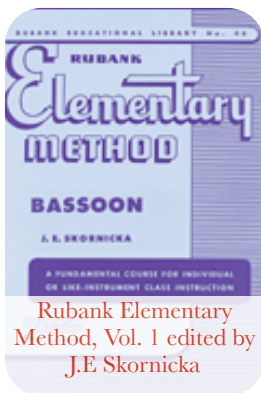


Fun Playing Exercises

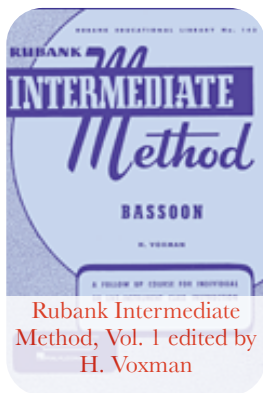
You have gone over all of the basics and now it is time to put your new skills to the test. The following exercises are variations on common tunes. I'm sure you will be able to guess the name of the tune after you play it. Have fun playing them and soon you will be the rockstar bassoon player in your group.



I am sure you can find more songs like this in your school's music library or at the local music store. I have included some books below that you might want to use for your continued study. Most of all, have fun playing the bassoon and adding a great sound to your band.



Rubank Elementary Method, Vol. 1 edited by J.E. Skornicka



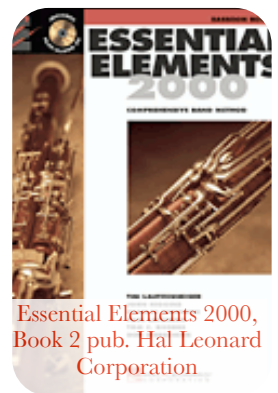
Rubank Intermediate Method, Vol. 1 edited by H. Voxman



The New Weissenborn Method for Bassoon by Douglas Spain



Essential Technique 2000 pub. Hal Leonard Corporation



Essential Elements 2000, Book 2 pub. Hal Leonard Corporation

BASSOON!

Care and Maintenance

Now that you have finished playing it is time to disassemble and perform daily care on your instrument. Caring for your instrument is essential to guaranteeing it stays in great playing condition and that it has a long life span. In this section I have provided daily and long term care for your instrument.

Daily Care

You must clean the moisture out of your instrument at the end of every use! Water condensation is the #1 cause of damage to a bassoon. To clean out the bassoon you will need two cloth swabs. A larger one for the boot, long and bell joints and a smaller one for the wing joint. It is preferable to have swabs with two string ends. One with a weight or small chain on it, this is the side you insert into the instrument first, and one without a weight. The side without the weight can be used to pull the swab out of the instrument if it gets stuck going forward. **Important: If the swab gets stuck while you are pulling it through, stop pulling. Pull the swab out in reverse. Continued pulling on the swab can cause it to get stuck and damage to the bassoon.**

Step 1: Remove the reed and put it in its case. This will prevent damage to your reed. Remove the bocal. Blow excess moisture. It is a good idea to shake it out by hand. Be careful not to hit the bocal on anything while doing this. Put the bocal back in the case.

Step 2: Take off the bell and return it to the case. Then take off the long joint and return it to the case. These joints do not usually get moisture in them while playing due to the distance from the reed. In the unlikely event that you notice condensation in the long joint, run a swab through the joint before returning it to the case.

Step 3: Remove the tenor joint from the boot joint. Place the wing joint on your lap and dump the condensation out of the boot joint through the small bore which is lined with rubber to protect it from moisture. Then place the boot joint in your lap with the wing joint.

Step 4: Swab out the wing joint by placing the weighted side of the swab in the larger end of the joint. Let the weight fall through the instrument and grab the weighted end. Swab this joint out at least 2 times to get all condensation. Place the wing joint back in the case.



Step 5: With your larger swab, swab out the boot joint in the same fashion as the wing joint by placing the swab into the larger bore first. You will need to rotate the boot so the weight goes through the small end of the joint. Also repeat this set at least 2 times to get all the condensation. Place the boot joint back in the case.

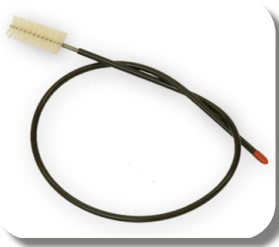


BASSOON!

Long Term Care

Besides daily swabbing, your instrument needs long term care just like your mom or dad's car. The car needs oil changes, tire rotations, filter replacements, etc. These things don't happen every day but are extremely important to keep the car running for many years. Your instrument isn't any different. It needs a little extra of your time every month to make sure it is running in top shape. Here is a list of things to check and care for at least once per month.

#1 Wipe the Instrument Down: The oils from your skin get all over the instrument every time you take it out of the case. With a polishing cloth, wipe down the keys and the wood to take this oil off. **DO NOT** use a polishing cloth with chemical treatments as these can hurt the wood or the keys because they are usually designed for one or the other.



#2 Clean the Bocal: This part of the bassoon gets the most amount of moisture and debris from your mouth but it is often neglected. Clean it out with a bocal brush being very careful not to damage the ends. Rinse the bocal with luke-warm water. Also use a toothpick to clean out the whisper key tone hole on the bocal as this can get clogged from cleaning the bocal with the bocal brush.

#3 Check the Tenons: The tenons are the part of the wing and long joints that are covered in string or cork. Most bassoons have string covered tenons but if your bassoon has cork, make sure the cork has a small amount of clean cork grease. Wipe off old cork grease and replace monthly. Make sure to wipe off all excess grease as this can get into the instrument causing problems. For string tenons, make sure the string is in good condition. If you notice the string starting to fray, take it to your band director or private teacher for inspection. Use canner's wax or paraffin wax on the string if needed. Wipe off all excess wax as this can get into the instrument causing problems. If the joint starts to get loose, ask your band director or private teacher to add string. **DO NOT** add or remove string on your own.



#4 Clean your Case: This is often overlooked but dirt and debris often end up in the case. If it is in your case it can end up in your instrument. Carefully vacuum out your case once a month to remove debris. Also, never store music, books or anything besides your instrument and instrument accessories in the case.



Bassoon Fingering Chart

The chart displays four rows of musical notation in bass clef, each containing four measures. Above each note is a fingering diagram showing the placement of fingers (1-5) on the keys. The notes and their fingerings are as follows:

- Row 1: G# (1, 2, 3, 4, 5), F# (1, 2, 3, 4, 5), F (1, 2, 3, 4, 5), E (1, 2, 3, 4, 5)
- Row 2: D (1, 2, 3, 4, 5), D# (1, 2, 3, 4, 5), C# (1, 2, 3, 4, 5), C (1, 2, 3, 4, 5)
- Row 3: B (1, 2, 3, 4, 5), B# (1, 2, 3, 4, 5), A# (1, 2, 3, 4, 5), A (1, 2, 3, 4, 5)
- Row 4: G# (1, 2, 3, 4, 5), G (1, 2, 3, 4, 5), F# (1, 2, 3, 4, 5), F (1, 2, 3, 4, 5)



BASSOON!

Bassoon Fingering Chart

Hand diagram showing fingerings for notes: C, D, E, F, G, A, B, C. The diagram shows the right hand on the upper joint and the left hand on the lower joint, with specific fingerings indicated by black dots on the keys.

C D E F G A B C

Hand diagram showing fingerings for notes: C, D, E, F, G, A, B, C. The diagram shows the right hand on the upper joint and the left hand on the lower joint, with specific fingerings indicated by black dots on the keys.

C D E F G A B C

Hand diagram showing fingerings for notes: C, D, E, F, G, A, B, C. The diagram shows the right hand on the upper joint and the left hand on the lower joint, with specific fingerings indicated by black dots on the keys.

C D E F G A B C

Hand diagram showing fingerings for notes: C, D, E, F, G, A, B, C. The diagram shows the right hand on the upper joint and the left hand on the lower joint, with specific fingerings indicated by black dots on the keys.

C D E F G A B C