

**American Band College 2010**  
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"Bassoon: Must Know"

Bassoon "Stuff"

1. Free blowing reed
2. Good Bocal
3. Seat Strap
4. Crutch

Body and Bassoon Position

1. **Bring bassoon to you.** Never go to bassoon.
2. Incline bassoon slightly to the left. Read over the bassoon.

**Air/Embouchure Balance;** determines pitch, tone quality, dynamics

Reed on bocal, bocal not on bassoon, should produce a flattened C  
If pitch higher than a C, embouchure is too tight.

**Tonguing;** Ask student if touching the Reed with Tongue

Fingerings

1. Overblows the octave
2. F Fingering system; same as clarinet low register
3. Break between F2 and F#2

Usually only **three reasons** why notes do not respond for beginning bassoon students, especially in the low register.

1. Fingers; incorrect fingering or not covering the holes.  
There is a wide spread between the 2nd and 3rd fingers of both hands.
2. Embouchure; usually too tight.
3. Reed Tip Opening; usually too close, open with pliers on sides of reed at 1st wire (wire closest to tip)

**"The Five idiosyncrasies of the bassoon"**

1. Whisper key
  - a. Opposite of an octave key, used in low register
  - b. Used from low F to Middle G#
2. Half-hole technique; **Always think Half-hole and Whisper Key together**
  - a. Tone hole under first finger of left hand is partially closed
  - b. Used on all notes in middle octave beginning with letter G (G, Gb, G#). Always close whisper key when half-hole used, because the half-hole is another octave vent.
3. Flicking or venting
  - a. To help the response of slurred leaps.
  - b. For the following middle range notes: A, Bb, B, C, D
4. Right thumb is not a balance point.

5. Extension Fingerings; use of Low Eb key on high notes
  - a. The opening or closing of keys on the extension far from the first open tone hole.
  - b. These keys are essential to the tone color and intonation of many notes. For example, the addition of the Low D key to the C#2 fingering.

Reeds; "Look to the Wires"

- a. Determines tip opening; flatten 1st wire if tip too open
- b. Look for 1st wire slipping toward 2nd wire
- c. If E natural falls (3rd space E) tighten wires.

## **Bassoon vs. Oboe**

### **Similarities**

1. Both non-transposing instruments
2. Reed plus staple (or bocal for the bassoon) should play a C
3. Embouchure and reed tuning, not with the instruments
4. Practice with reed plus bocal/staple alone important at the beginning
5. Embouchure; slight overbite, drop lower jaw, or open mouth feeling corners toward center, supporting reed with muscles of lip not teeth
5. Air vs. Embouchure Balance; affects tone quality, intonation, and dynamics
6. Use of half-hole; G for bassoon, D for oboe
7. Posture important; affects playing characteristics; head straight, especially on oboe

### **Differences**

1. Need to cover oboe reed, let bassoon reed vibrate
2. Fingering system; bassoon, seven finger note F, Oboe seven finger note C
3. Amount of reed in mouth; Bassoon up to first wire, Oboe very little
4. Much air pressure on oboe, much air volume on bassoon.
5. Angle that reed leaves mouth; see #7 above
6. Balance Points: oboe right thumb is a balance point, not on bassoon
7. Amount of reed soaked in water: Bassoon entire reed, Oboe only scrape

## Repair Problems

-Bassoon is really a simple key system

-If there is a problem, find how far down the scale it will play

**-Look to the keys that stand closed**

Possible problems in order of frequency:

1. Whisper key mech; Whisper key should close when low E is pressed
2. Ab leaking; Can be seat strap ring holding the pad open
3. U-Tube; Loose screws or leaking cork, ➡ coat cork with cork grease.
4. G vent; Key between VI and V of RH (Right Hand)
5. Bocal problems; leaking or bent, should hold vacuum.
6. Low C to D mech; Low D should close when Low C is pressed

## Phrasing

1. Defining the end of Phrase

2. Going toward the Turning Point of phrase

How to determine the Apex of the phrase

a. Highest note in phrase, less frequently the lowest note

b. Longest note in phrase

c. Note that is dissonant, alien to key or appoggiatura

**3. Slur Markings are Phrasing Markings**