

Brighton Band Clarinet Guide

Assembly and Instrument Basics

- Be alert when opening and closing the instrument case. It is recommended to put an arrow on your case to show which side should face down. Always open your instrument case on a flat surface.
- Place the thin portion of the reed in your mouth and let it soak while you assemble your clarinet. Avoid touching the tip of the reed.
- Do not grip the clarinet too strong during assembly because you can bend keys
- If there is difficulty assembling the instrument, place a little bit of cork grease on the corks before assembly.
- Take the upper section out of your case with your left hand and press down the second key. This will raise the bridge key. Take the lower section out with your right hand and carefully twist the sections together. Do not press down any of the lower section keys. Look at both sections of the bridge keys until the alignment is complete.
- Take the bell in your left hand and carefully twist it on. The manufacturer's name (if present) will align with the tone holes on the front of the clarinet.
- Gently twist the mouthpiece onto the barrel. Slide the ligature onto the mouthpiece. The screws on most beginning ligatures will face the player when it is being played.
- If you place the ligature too high, it will stop needed vibrations. If you look at the side of the mouthpiece that faces out from the player, the ligature will rest just a few millimeters below the U-angle of the mouthpiece. Do not tighten it too tight, just enough to hold in place.
- Play on a reed that feels comfortable and is undamaged. There should be not cracks, chips, bends, etc.
- Place the ligature and reed strait and even on the mouthpiece.
- It is recommended to always have three playable reeds and rotate between them using a different one each time you play. This ensures that you always have a good, usable reed and that each reed is allowed to dry fully before it is used again. Reed cases are recommended.
- When you are finished playing, wipe the moisture off the reed before you store it in your case. Be gentle.
- Use a cloth to wipe down the mouthpiece instead of passing a swab through it. Be careful not to damage it.
- When placing the mouthpiece in the case, attach an unwanted reed and the ligature to the mouthpiece and cover all of it with a mouthpiece cover. This protects the ligature and mouthpiece.
- You should swab your clarinet after playing it every time. If you are playing for a while, it is a good idea to swab it frequently. If the swab gets rough or dirty, get a new one. Insert the swab into the larger end of the body and bring it to the narrow end.
- Water and dirt can be removed from pads by using cleaning paper. This is needed if keys begin sticking. Be gentle.
- It is recommended to frequently wipe your clarinet clean with an instrument cloth. Handle with care and make sure you get the keys.
- When holding the clarinet while walking, support it at the bottom joint.
- If you set your instrument down, separate it at the lower and upper joint, cover it with a mouthpiece cap, and make sure you set it keys up. If you have a clarinet stand, use that instead.
- If you notice any pads are torn, the keys do not line up, or the keys are not at an even height, the instrument needs to go to the repair shop. Do not try to fix it yourself.
- It is recommended that you take your instrument in for general maintenance every six months. It is best to do this at a time when you are not actively performing it (during a break). With this being said, you should still practice during breaks.

Singing

- All instruments produce sound that imitates the human voice. Singing is an important tool for developing great ensemble tone quality and intonation. It is important that you take a serious approach to singing. The resonance and breath support necessary for singing are quite similar to proper playing.
- The key when singing is projection.
- Singing is the first standard on the national standard for instrumental music education. Playing an instrument is the second standard.
- The throat should be open.
- The face should be relaxed.
- The mouth shape should be oval like – the longer part of the oval from nose to chin.
- The same approach to breathing, air support, and direction of air with your wind instrument, applies to singing.
- Everyone should always be listening to match the pitch (ensemble setting)
- We will use different vowel sounds, including humming
- We believe in using audiation - check the pitch before, during, and after singing
- Whenever you have a hard time playing a section, it is a good idea to sing the part to get it imbedded into your head.

Tuning

- To tune, you need to adjust the barrel, the middle joint, and the bell.
- If the barrel, the middle joint, and the bell is pushed in, it will raise in pitch. If the barrel, the middle joint, and the bell is pulled out, it will lower the pitch.
- Warm up thoroughly before tuning
- Tune at a mezzo-forte dynamic level and do not use vibrato
- Play the tuning note strait (no vibrato).
- Use a trustworthy electronic tuner to tune
- For tuning the barrel, play the C below the staff and work up the scale to the G. Tune the G after holding the pitch for a few seconds. For the middle joint, play the F at the bottom of the staff, work down the scale to the C below the staff, and press down the register key to play the G above the staff; like before, tune the G after a few seconds. For the bell, start at the F at the top of the staff, work down the scale to C, and tune the C after holding it for a few seconds.

Posture

- Sit-up – put both feet on the floor, keep your back strait, and sit on the edge of your chair
- Sitting tall will allow your body to take full breathes and move naturally.
- Put your elbows alongside you body naturally. Relax your shoulders.
- Do not lean backwards and do not bend forward. It creates tension in the body that inhibits proper breathing. Your back should never touch the back of your chair.
- Keep your head strait
- Hold your instrument up with your right thumb.
- Adjust the instrument to you. Do not adjust yourself to the instrument.

Breathing

- The correct breathing technique is known as abdominal breathing. This is not the shallow breathing that moves the shoulders and upper chest.
- When you lay down on your back, your body naturally abdominal breathes. I recommend this as a starting point to find the proper way to breathe with your instrument.
- To properly abdominal breathe, imagine you are inhaling into the bottom of your back. Open your ribs. When exhaling, keep your diaphragm low and abdomen supported. Do not expand or contract the abdomen and keep the abdomen firm. Do not exhale all of your air at once. Make your airstream while feeling pressure from the abdomen.
- If you expand your lungs fully, your lungs will push out on the diaphragm. This will cause expansion of the ribcage and some from the abdomen.
- Take a full breathe and blow with speed for a rich sound– a shallow breathe will not produce a good tone.
- While playing, you need to learn to take quick, deep breaths that are in time with the music. Breathing gym can help with this.
- A good exercise when working on passages is to perform the articulations and fingerings as you normally would, but only with air (creating no sound). This allows you to work on nothing but air control.
- Do not hold the air as you are breathing. We believe in a concept known as “one air motion.” The air is either moving into the body or moving out of the body. This helps with musical phrasing. Think of the breath as being part of the music.
- It is recommended to learn how to breathe on all counts of the music. Learn to not take breaths on longer notes, in the middle of phrases, or on beat four of common time.

Angle

- The angle of the instrument is determined by the position of the reed, the mouthpiece, and your teeth.
- If you are unsure about the angle, maneuver the instrument up and down until you find the ideal tone.
- The bell will be past the knees when sitting and will be close to a 45 degree angle

Embouchure

- To hold air pressure and avoid leaks, the lips should be formed around the center.
- The upper teeth will be directly on the mouthpiece.
- Roll your lower lip inward slightly over your bottom teeth; it functions as a cushion. The reed will rest on the bottom lip.
- The embouchure will vary do to the various sizes and shapes of people’s mouths and teeth.
- If your embouchure is too loose, your tones will come out too low. Pull the corners of your mouth back.
- You want to roll the bottom lip in enough to flatten the chin. Too much will round out the chin. Too little will cause wrinkles and a weak embouchure.
- Do not puff your cheeks. You will lose control and never get a good sound.
- If you are unsure how much mouthpiece should be in your mouth, take a sheet of paper and slip it between the reed and the mouthpiece. Use a pencil to mark a line on the front surface of the reed to indicate the amount that should be in your mouth. Using your thumb on the line, insert the mouthpiece into your mouth and stop when your thumb touches your bottom lip. This is the proper amount that should be in your mouth.

Finger Technique

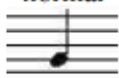
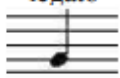
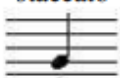
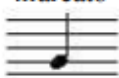
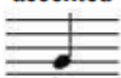
- The clarinet has open holes, which means in order to get a good sound, the pads of the fingers have to cover the entire tone hole.
- Left hand will be on top and right hand will be on bottom.
- Keep your fingers just above the keys at all times. This allows for accuracy and speed.
- Press the keys with the pads of your fingers. Your hands should make a curved, C shape with your hand. The fingers should not be straight.
- When playing the chromatic scale, check your fingerings. Some alternate fingerings can allow you to play the scale smoother.
- When playing an A (teardrop key), make sure that you keep the index finger curved for a quick transition to the rest of the clarinet. It is a very small transition.
- When playing the Bb in the center of the staff, there is an alternate fingering that can create more resonance of sound and better tone. Press the register key, the A Key, 1, 2, 3, 5, and 6
- When performing difficult trills, seek out a trill chart for an easier fingering.
- The fingers always should transition quick and crisp no matter the tempo.

Fixing Unstable Sounds

- If the reed is too thin, it makes it difficult to control pressure. Because of that, the firmness of the corners will become unstable and will be hard to support.
- Air Support – without good air, the sound will be unstable

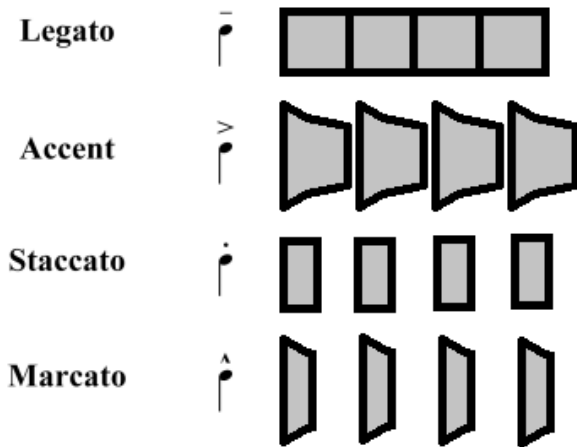
Tonguing and Articulation

- Air creates the tone, but tonguing helps articulation to be more accurate.
- By using the tip of your tongue, touch the tip of the reed lightly. Try not to push or press.
- Do not press into the reed or else you will create a harsh sound.
- Make sure you keep the embouchure stable as you tongue
- When performing staccato notes, think of it as a water faucet. When you shut the faucet off, the water pressure is still there ready to go. Your air stops when the tip of your tongue touches the reed, but air pressure is still ready to come out. When there is space, the tongue is waiting on the reed unless you are taking a breath.
- When articulating, please follow the chart below:

Articulation	normal	legato	staccato	marcato	accented
					
Syllable	dah	doo	dah	Dah	Dah
Difference from the normal enunciation	N/A	Smoother beginning and more connected	Same beginning as normal with half the length	Slightly more emphasis at the beginning with half the length	Slightly more emphasis at the beginning of the note, a slight decay

- When slurring, do not use the tongue except a legato tongue at on the first note. Make sure you create good air flow that relates to phrasing.
- When playing staccato, be careful to not put too much attack on the note

- Think about slightly faster air at the beginning of accented and marcato notes.
- The following chart is a visual representation of what different types of articulation sound like. It is known as the Articulation Visualization Key:



Bopping

- Bopping is a technique that is used to improve timing, uniformity of articulation and tonal resonance upon the initiation of sound. It is normally applied by marching ensembles, but can be used in concert ensembles as well.
- Bopping is executed by reducing every articulated note to a “round” staccato eighth note.
- Slurred passages are played full duration to the end of the slur.
- Tied notes are not sustained.
- Make sure that the throat remains open and relaxed. Keep notes open ended (no “dit” articulations, only “dah”).

Dynamics

- Dynamics are controlled by air speed, not the amount of air
- Tempo and dynamics have no correlation.
- When playing loud or soft, you need to listen to yourself and control your sound. Tone is the most important factor. When practicing at home, it is okay to experiment with dynamics to gain more control, but do not do so in a rehearsal setting. Control your sound.
- Some groups define their dynamics by expelling all of their air evenly over the assigned count structure for that dynamic. This can be a good exercise to memorize what each dynamic feels like. You should never fully “empty the tank” as this effects tone. The following is recommended to be performed at 108 beats per minute:

4 beats	6 beats	8 beats	12 beats	16 beats	20 beats	24 beats	28 beats
fff	ff	f	mf	mp	p	pp	ppp

This exercise can also be performed on a balloon to practice with resistance. As a young musician, it is recommended to start on one of the middle dynamics and work out from there. Focus on tone (quality of sound).

Performing Long Tones

- Take a big breath and focus on tone. Blow out with abdominal support. Be careful not to accent the beginning of the note.
- Start the note with the tongue. Release the tongue from the reed at the same time you start playing.
- Start with warm air and release with a breathe
- Keep a consistent airstream and sound
- Perform numerous long tones (at least 5 for the duration of a full breathe exhale)
- Long tones are meant to be exactly that, long. If you are by yourself, take a deep breath and use the full extent of your air on one tone. If the tone is not long enough, take a deeper breathe.

The Register Key

- The register key makes it possible to play a tone a 12th higher on the instrument
- When playing with the register key down, you want to make sure you have a stable sound and a consistent long tone
- When playing with the register key down, it will be hard to hold the instrument if it is vertically up. If you place your thumb at a 45 degree angle on the F key, you can also push down the register key with ease.

Scales

- Learning scales is very important since most literature is based on scales. They are the fundamentals of all playing.
- One you learn a scale, play it every day.
- Playing scales in different articulation styles will help you to play varying musical styles
- Arpeggios can also help you to develop better control across the instrument; play them with various styles of articulation.

Solutions to Common Problems

- If you have difficulty performing high or low notes and it is not caused by instrument quality, the problem could be the reed. Because there is much more resistance in the lower range, more air pressure is required to play lower notes. Playing soft is not easy in the low register, therefore using a hard reed makes playing low notes even more difficult.
- When higher notes are flat or have a thin sound, the reed may be too thin. You need a faster air stream to play higher notes as well. Without enough air speed, your sound becomes unstable; this brings tension to the embouchure, which creates difficulties in playing.
- If you hear a noise while you are playing other than the tone of the clarinet, it could be water noise. It is caused by moisture on the back side of the reed. It often happens when you are using an old reed or playing somewhere cold. Remove the reed and while it off. If it happens while there is a performance; suck the mouthpiece to get the moisture off.
- When needing to tongue fast, you need to patiently practice. It is crucial that you have the correct tonguing method. Practice slow. Since air stream created the sound, you need air pressure and speed. We use tonguing to have more accurate articulations. Your tongue should have minimum motion and be relaxed. That makes your tongue move fast. When your tongue gets tense or moves too much, try with an even slower tempo and little by little make the tempo faster.

- When you transition across the break, do not tighten your embouchure too much. Use relaxed air.
- When playing the high F above the staff, if there are difficulties, increase mouth pressure or change the instrument angle to achieve the desired tone. If difficulty still arises, look for an alternate fingering.
- When descending from the higher register (above the staff), if you lose control and cannot smooth the transition out, adjust the instrument angle or mouth pressure as the overtone changes. Pay attention to where the tongue is located. You do not have to move the instrument much and the more you do it, the more natural it will feel. Remember that your tongue can move.