Intermediate Series
Flute
Presented by
Sharon Kalisek
York Junior High

Beginning Concepts Reviewed

- **Preferable Facial Characteristics When Choosing Your Beginning Flutists**
- **How to Place the Headjoint for Beginners**
- **Basic Embouchure Formation**
- **Basic Sound Production**
- **Headjoint Flexibility**
- **Flute Assembly and Care Guidelines**
- **Hand Position and Finger Placement**
- **Articulation**

Flute Seating in the Ensemble/ Posture

- **Right or Left Side of the Ensemble**
- **Spacing of Chairs**
- **How to Sit in Order to Obtain the Best Possible Sound**

Equipment options for the beginner and Intermediate Flutists

- **Curved Headjoint or Straight Headjoint**
- **Nickel, Silver Plated or Silver Flutes**
- **Displaced G vs. Inline G**
- **B foot or C Foot Joint**
- **High C Facilitator or Gizmo**

Intermediate Flute Skill Enhancement

- **Tone Enhancement Exercises**
- **Flexibility Exercises**
- **Vibrato**
- **Technique Exercises**
- **Double/Triple Tonguing**

Diagnosing and Fixing Problems in Your Flute Section

- **Students are Airy**
- **Students are Playing Flat**
- **Students Start Out in Tune and End Up Flat**

How to pick a piccolo player for your ensemble

- **Flexibility**
- **Intonation and pitch matching**

Preferable Physical Characteristics for Flute Players

1. **Medium, but full lips (especially bottom lip)**
2. **Avoid the tear drop or "Betty Boo" Lips**
3. **Look for students that have a natural, centered aperture**
4. **Avoid placing kids on Flute that have an extreme overbite or underbite.**

*** Note- There are many outstanding flute players that play to the side, but unless you are experienced at teaching this type of flute embouchure, I would avoid putting kids on flute if they have an extreme tear drop or "crooked embouchure" and must play to the side. It is very time consuming, and could be very frustrating at first for the student and teacher. Many times, it can take days or even weeks to produce acceptable first flute sounds.**

Placing the Headjoint

1. **The teacher should place the headjoint at the beginning. Have your students get a mirror to keep on their stand to look at the embouchure.**
2. **The lower lip rests on the embouchure plate. The embouchure plate rests in the natural valley between the bottom lip and the chin.**
3. **The edge of the embouchure hole should be to the edge of the lower lip where the red meets the skin. DO NOT teach kids to roll in the headjoint to feel the edge, and then roll out.**
4. **The headjoint is parallel to the lower lip.**
5. **The lower lip should cover approximately one third of the embouchure hole.**
6. **If the student has a thicker bottom lip, the headjoint will have to be raised a little higher. If the student has a thinner bottom lip, it may be a bit lower.**
7. **Have students keep as much space between the back teeth as possible. Some people have used pencil erasers, M&M's and cut up straws to get their students to keep their teeth apart.**

Basic Embouchure Formation

1. **Students should sit on the edge of their chair, with their feet flat on the floor. Gently push the back in towards the stomach, in order to make the student sit up nice and tall. Their head should feel like it is floating.**
2. **Have the student take their right index finger and place it on their bottom lip. The index finger should be parallel to the bottom lip.**

3. **Make sure that the students are not pressing their index finger into their bottom lip. This is something your students will do as they play, especially when they get nervous. Try to prevent the pressure from the beginning.**
4. **Flute embouchure is very natural. It is what I call "the TV face." The face is relaxed as if you are watching a drama on TV.**
5. **The bottom lip rests very "tubby" and relaxed on the embouchure plate.**
6. **Breathe in as if you are yawning. Breathing through the corners only will not be enough to get sufficient air and will air cause tightness in the embouchure.**
7. **Teeth should be apart in order to get the maximum amount of air into the instrument. The throat should be completely relaxed.**
8. **While thinking a "pooh" syllable, blow the air across the headjoint and slightly down. We want the air to go across the headjoint and into the flute and hit the back wall inside the headjoint. Using a "pooh" syllable, will automatically form an aperture of the appropriate size.**
9. **Students should have a slight amount of air in the cheeks to produce a relaxed, vibrant sound.**

Tone Production and Flexibility

Air direction or placement of air, is extremely important in producing the most vibrant, resonant tone in every register of the flute. Just as brass players have to know what it feels like to vibrate the right pitch every time, flute players must know where to place the air on the back wall of the flute.

Things to remember:

1. **Always keep the teeth apart and the throat very soft and relaxed. Think an "o" syllable. Tell your students to make their mouth tall inside.**
2. **It is preferred and necessary to have air in the cheeks. Cheeks should not be blown away from the face and should not have air pockets above or below the lips. A little air in the cheeks is good while playing and will allow for more vibrancy of sound.**
3. **Tightness in or around the embouchure will cause a thin, sharp sound. The bottom lip should be "tubby" and relaxed resting on the lip plate, while only covering approximately one third of the embouchure hole.**

Basic Sound Production and Headjoint Flexibility

1. **Start by having students play straight tones on the headjoint only**

2. **Be careful students are blowing air across the headjoint. Do not allow them to drop their head down.**
3. **Once you can make basic sounds, have students cover the end and create a little resistance. This will produce a lower tone with the end covered.**
4. **Demonstate how to change the sound of the headjoint from low to high, by pushing the jaw forward and speeding up the air slightly. Talk mostly about the air being directed higher on the back wall, and only a little about speeding up the air to make the high sound.**
5. **Teacher demonstrates flexibility from low sounds to high sounds. Have students try together as a class and then individually.**
6. **Make sure the student is using the embouchure to make the change, rather than blowing an enormous amount of unfocused air.**
7. **When I transfer to the entire flute, I start on third line B, and go down the flute adding a finger to second space A and then G and so on until I reach low D. I try to achieve a resonant low register first, and then I start immediately into octave exercises. I have students think an "O" syllable for low notes and an "E" syllable for higher notes. This will help make them direct the air properly.**
8. **A great tool to use to give your students a visual on directing the air accurately, is the Pneumopro. This device is available through Carolyn Nussbaum, and Brasswind Woodwind for about $60.00.**

Air Direction For Each Register

<u>Low Register</u>- Move the jaw back while using the top lip to point the air down into the flute towards the bottom of the back wall of the flute. Do not allow your flute players to dip their head down in order to try to get that "edginess" in their sound. This will create intonation problems. Keep throat open and relaxed. The airstream is not quite as fast in this register, but it is steady and constant. The aperture is a little more elliptical in this register, but do not allow your students to use tension and stretch the lips back in order to get a good low register sound.

<u>Middle register</u>- direct the air across the embouchure hole and slightly down on the back wall. Use the top lip to direct slightly downward, while moving the jaw back very slightly.

<u>Upper register</u>- push the jaw forward and direct the air more across the headjoint, where the air is hitting up towards the top of the back wall. Air speed will increase.

Flute Assembly

1. **Remove the body of the flute from the case always holding it by the neck of the instrument.**

2. **Then remove the footjoint and hold it in the palm of your hand where there are no keys. Line up and twist and push it together. The post on the footjoint is in the middle of the F# key.**
3. **Pick up the headjoint and while holding the flute by the neck, line up the headjoint and then twist and push it together.**
4. **Do not push the headjoint all the way in, leave about an eighth to a quarter inch out.**
5. **Take your finger and run it down the flute and make sure the embouchure hole is lined up with the 1st key on the body.**

Note- when the headjoint is not lined up properly, it can cause sound and pitch problems. If students are turned in too far, they will play flat and stuffy. If they are turned out too far, they will play sharp, airy and very unfocused.

Flute Care

Students should swab the flute with a silk flute swab or soft cloth after each practice/playing session. I like the silk swabs, but if money is an issue, have your students cut a strip of soft cotton or flannel cloth and use as a swab.

1. **Thread the cloth through the eye on the tuning/cleaning rod.**
2. **Wrap a little of the cloth around the top of the cleaning rod, so that when you put the cleaning rod into the headjoint, it will reach the moisture out of the area above the embouchure hole.**
3. **Clean the headjoint first, then run the swab completely through the body of the flute holding it by the neck. This is to ensure that you will not bend keys or rods.**
4. **Run the swab through the footjoint.**

From time to time, it is OK to run warm sudsy water through the headjoint. Drain the water from the headjoint, and then run the swab through it again to dry. This will not hurt the cork, in fact when the cork swells, it will help hold it firmly in place. Do not under any circumstances run water through the body and footjoint of the flute. This will ruin the pads, which are costly on an intermediate or advanced level flute.

Flute Care Reminders:

1. **Never allow your flute students to use those "shove it" swabs. The idea is to keep the moisture away from the pads, not to put it back into the instrument and store.**
2. **Key oil should only be used approximately once a year. Do not allow your students to oil their own flutes. I would either have the director do it, or have it done when it is taken into the repair shop.**

It is a good idea to have the instrument checked for leaks and needed adjustments from time to time.

3. **If your students must leave their flutes assembled on a chair, have them take the headjoint off. This will shorten the length of the instrument, thus reducing the risk of rolling or being knocked off a chair.**
4. **Set down the instrument with keys up. This will keep the keys from bending.**
5. **Remind students to avoid playing with the crown at the top of the flute. This will change the placement of the cork in the headjoint and will effect the intonation.**

Hand Position and Finger Placement

Right hand

1. **Have students start with their right hand down by their side in a natural position.**
2. **bend the arm at the elbow and raise the arm up. Elbow should be pointed to the base boards.**
3. **Fingers should form a flattened "C".**
4. **The hand should be an extension of the wrist. Do not let your do what I call "waitress hand". This will create tension and horrible hand position.**
5. **Index and thumb of the right hand would touch if the flute wasn't between it. Think "OK".**
6. **Right thumb should be on its right side. Thumb should not be sticking out from under the flute.**
7. **Pads of the fingers should cover the holes.**
8. **Lift from the big knuckles.**
9. **Keep fingers as close to the keys as possible and lift only as high as needed to open the key.**

Left Hand

1. **Left hand rests where the index finger meets the top of the palm.**
2. **index finger curls down onto the C key.**
3. **Thumb points upward.**
4. **Wrist is underneath the flute and slightly bent so that the flute rests on the hand.**
5. **Keep pinky above or touching the G# key. This is "home base" for the left pinky.**
6. **Pads of the fingers cover the holes.**
7. **Lift from the big knuckles.**
8. **Keep fingers as close to the keys as possible, and lift only as high as needed to open up the key.**

Articulation

1. **Tip of the tongue moves in an up and down motion.**
2. **Tongue touches at the top of the two front teeth where they meet the gums.**
3. **Use a "too" syllable.**
4. **Tongue interrupts the air stream, but does not stop it.**
5. **Start the note with no tongue start and get a clear tone, then add the tongue.**
6. **Shouldn't have a lot of motion under the chin.**

Seating in the Ensemble/ Posture

It is my belief that the flute players in an ensemble should sit on the left side of the ensemble. This is because the sound travels outward from mainly two places on the flute; the embouchure hole and the end of the flute. The flute sound will not be heard near as well if the end of the flute is pointing into the ensemble. There is only one reason they should be seated on the right side of the group, which is for balance reasons. If you have too many flutists and not enough of some of the other sections, this could cause some balance issues. Rather than make your flutes hold back and play softly (this will make them play flat), move them to the right side of the ensemble.

In order to make your flute players look and sound their best, have them sit with their knees and shoulders facing the right and turn their upper body slightly to the left. This will get the flute slightly out in front of the body. Make sure when setting up your chairs for rehearsal, that you space the flute chairs a bit farther apart than the clarinet chairs. This will allow your flute players to sit correctly. Flute is the only instrument in the band that is held out to the side of the body.

Equipment Options for Beginner and Intermediate Flutists

There are many good intermediate flutes available such as the Trevor James flutes, Yamaha 421 0r 521 models, Miazawa, and Miramatsu flutes.

<u>Curved Headjoints vs. straight headjoints</u>- While the curved headjoint is a wonderful tool to use to start very small children on flute, I do not recommend starting all of your students on them if they can hold a flute with a straight headjoint correctly. Use these only for your students that have trouble reaching. If you get a curved headjoint, make sure you also get the straight headjoint. As the child grows, make the switch to the straight headjoint.

<u>Nickel, Silver Plated, or Silver Flutes</u>- The more silver in the instrument, the more vibrant the tone. The thinner the walls of the flute, the more vibrant the sound will

be. For this reason, the nickel plated instruments do not have as vibrant of a tone, and you just seem to have to work harder to produce a nice tone. Plated instruments will also begin to wear away the plating depending on how acidic the fingers are. Silver instruments may tarnish, but won't corrode. If you have a student that can't afford a solid silver flute, then encourage them to at least buy the silver headjoint.

Displaced G or Inline Keys- This is a matter of preference. Today, due to many hand injuries, and the fact the displaced G is more natural to the hands, many people who have played an inline G are switching to the displaced G.

B Foot or C Foot Joint- There is not a lot of literature out there that is written with a B below the staff, however, it is good to have the extra key when needed. Having a low B foot is more of a status symbol.

High C Facilitator or "Gizmo"- The gizmo key is nice to have, but not necessary. When this key is used, it helps clear up the sound of the high C. This can also be done with the low C roller key.

Custom Headjoints- As your intermediate flute player continues to improve, they may wish to continue to improve tone quality, but may not be able to afford a top of the line flute such as a Powell or Haynes. A custom headjoint is a great alternative to the high dollar new instrument. I recommend the Sandy Drelinger or David Williams Headjoints.

Intermediate Flute Skill Enhancement

Vibrato

Vibrato is a fluctuation in the flute tone, which is done by increasing and decreasing the amount of air going through the flute. The air is never stopped completely. There is a rise and fall of pitch and volume. Because of the rise and fall of pitch while using vibrato, you should tune your students without vibrato to obtain a more acute reading of intonation.

Begin teaching vibrato after all of your flute students can produce a clear, straight tone. This is usually in the second semester of the beginner year.

How to teach vibrato

1. **Begin by telling the students that vibrato is the fluctuating of air speed/air pressure with the diaphragm. The larynx is also used, but this happens automatically.**
2. **Have students pretend it is their Birthday. Tell them to take in a nice, deep breath and blow out one candle on their cake.**
3. **Then have them blow out 2, 3 and 4 candles.**

4. **Remind them to not stop the air completely, because in vibrato, the air may differ in speed, but it will not stop completely.**
5. **Once they can do this, have them finger a G in the left hand, while placing the right hand on the diaphragm. Have them do four quarter note pulses at quarter equals 60 on the metronome. Make sure they can feel the pulses of air pushing their diaphragm against their hand. Repeat this exercise as needed.**
6. **Once they have mastered the quarter note pulses, have them proceed to eighth pulses, triplet pulses and sixteenth note pulses at 60 on the metronome.**
7. **Be careful not to allow your flutes to bounce the instrument or tense the throat in order to produce vibrato.**

Vibrato will not occur on a regular basis unless you expect and demand that your students use vibrato at all times. Have them add impulses into the Remington Exercise, F descending, long tones, flow studies and scales during your warm-up. Have your students play off assignments with vibrato making sure they know they will be graded on whether or not they are using vibrato.

Long Tone Exercises such as those found in <u>De La Sonorite</u> by Marcel Moyse, are great for working on tone and teaching students to direct their air to get their best, in tune sound. Some more great long tone exercises can be found in the <u>Trevor Wye</u> flute books. Book One deals with just tone.

Flexibility Exercises- I recommend doing Harmonic and Octave exercises. Just like it is important for brass players to practice lip slurs for flexibility, it is important that flute players practice harmonics and octave exercises in order to make their embouchure and air work appropriately to achieve flexibility.

Technique exercises- Teaching all twelve major scales full range is great. Extended scales and thirds in all keys are strongly encouraged. Start slow and speed up working for evenness and accuracy of sound and technique. Etudes are also stressed to increase technique.

Double and Triple Tonguing

1. **Use a "Tu" and "Ku" syllable.**
2. **Have students start by working on groups of the "ku" syllable first. This is the most difficult part. Once they can master this syllable, the rest is easy. Remind them to keep a constant, steady air stream. This is a must for keeping double tonguing even on both syllables.**
3. **Have the student alternate tu and ku syllables in eighth note patterns, using your favorite major scale. Then do the same thing on sixteenths.**

4. **Once your students have mastered the tu and ku, have them begin working on du and gu syllables. This will allow your students to double tongue faster and smoother.**
5. **For triple tonguing, use T K T - T K T , or D G D - D G D, you may also use T K T –K T K, or D G D- G D G. Practice triple tonguing on triplet scale exercises.**

Possible Reason Why My Flutes are Playing Flat and Stuffy

1. **Student is rolling in the headjoint towards the body.**
2. **Headjoint is not lined up correctly.**
3. **If the head is down, the student will cover too much of the embouchure hole and will play flat**
4. **Pressing the lip plate into the bottom lip. Remember the less pressure, the better.**
5. **Slow air stream**
6. **Directing the air too far down the back wall of the flute.**

Possible Reasons Why My Flutes Are Playing Sharp And Thin

1. **Rolling flute out with either the hands, or the headjoint is lined up too far out.**
2. **Teeth too close together. Put more space between the teeth to lower the pitch and get a more vibrant, resonant sound.**
3. **Direction of air is too far up the back wall of the flute.**
4. **Unfocused/Undirected air stream. Work to focus the air column.**
5. **Embouchure plate is too high on the bottom lip.**

Possible reasons your flutes are playing flat in the performance when they were just tuned

1. **Rolling in**
2. **Pressing the headjoint into the bottom lip.**
3. **Not directing the air appropriately for each register.**

<u>Do not ever use the roll in- roll out method to get your flutes to play in tune!!! This is unacceptable. They will never develop a pitch center because they are always moving the instrument to try to tune. Tuning adjustments should be made by placing the air higher or lower on the back wall of the headjoint, and not by moving the instrument.</u>

How To Choose A Piccolo Player

1. **Choose someone who is an aggressive, fearless kind of player. Choose someone who is confident, and who will not be afraid to be heard. Piccolo is a color instrument and should be heard.**
2. **Don't choose your very best flute player, but maybe choose your second or third best flute player. Choose someone who has good fundamentals and good pitch discrimination. Understanding how to use the embouchure and air properly is a must.**
3. **Have your students who are interested in piccolo do a try out. Give each student a few days to practice on the instrument, and then have them play things such as octave exercises, scales that start at the bottom of the piccolo range and others that go to the top of the range. Listen for clarity and vibrancy of tone, intonation (are they adjusting pitch on the octaves), and ease of producing upper register notes without "buzzing" or pressing the lips together.**

*** Make sure your newly selected piccolo player spends an equal amount of time on their flute and piccolo. I recommend starting a practice session on flute, then going to piccolo, and then back to flute at the end of the session. This will help keep the embouchure relaxed on both flute and piccolo. I find that when a young player practices only the piccolo, they sometimes have difficulty producing a sound on their flute much less doubling.**

Wonderful Flute Books to Have in Your School/Personal Library

De La Sonorite by Marcel Moyse
Leduc Publications

The Flutists Companion by Mizzy McCaskill and Dona Gilliam
Mel Bay Publications

Mel Bay's Flute Handbook by Mizzy McCaskill and Dona Gilliam
Mel Bay Publications

Trevor Wye Practice Books for the Flute Books 1-5
Novello Publishing

17 Grand Exercises Journaliers de Mecanisme by P. taffanel and Ph. Gaubert
Leduc Publications

Flute Fundamentals by Mary Karen Clardy
Hal Leonard Publications