

THE HORN



**THIS IS NOT A
MUSICAL INSTRUMENT**

**IT IS AN INSTRUMENT OF MENTAL
TORTURE DESIGNED TO EMBARRASS
THE USER AS MUCH AS POSSIBLE WHILE
COLLECTING AS MUCH SPIT AS POSSIBLE**

Who should play a horn

The only real requirement is that they have a great ear and can comfortably sing.



Anything can be achieved otherwise



Felix Klieser



How to hold a horn

CORRECT



INCORRECT



- Sit comfortably on the chair with your legs at roughly a 60 degree angle.
- Make sure that your spine is straight but relaxed.
- The left arm should be over the left knee
- The right arm should be roughly over the right knee
- Leadpipe should be at a downward angle.

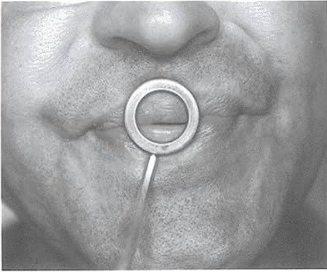
Source: *Recipe for Success, Chapter 2, pages 13-17* by Karen Houghton and Janey Nye.



Embouchure

Generally speaking the embouchure should be $\frac{2}{3}$ upper lip and $\frac{1}{3}$ lower lip.

HOWEVER there are always exceptions!

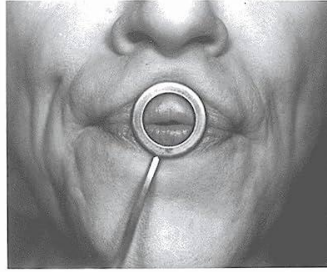


13

Age: 48 Sex: M Height: 5'7" Weight: 164
Lips-Upper: medium Lower: medium

Performing status: **teacher-performer**
Type of ensemble: **chamber music, symphony, solo**
Position: **professor of music, major state college**

General facility: **superior**
Tone: **moderately dark, ringing**
High Register: **excellent**
Middle register: **superior**
Low register: **excellent**
Legato & slurs: **superior**
Tonguing speed: **moderately fast**
Dynamics-Loud: **superior** Soft: **excellent**
Horn: **Geyer double** Mouthpiece: **King P2**

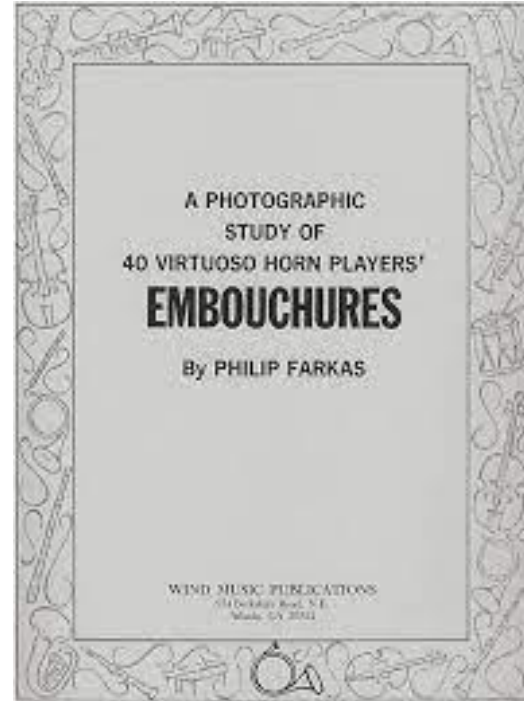


14

Age: 40 Sex: F Height: 5'8" Weight: 150
Lips-Upper: medium Lower: medium

Performing status: **professional**
Type of ensemble: **major U.S. symphony orchestra**
Position: **asst. 1st horn - leading free lance artist**

General facility: **excellent**
Tone: **medium dark, ringing**
High Register: **excellent**
Middle register: **superior**
Low register: **excellent**
Legato & slurs: **excellent**
Tonguing speed: **very fast**
Dynamics-Loud: **excellent** Soft: **superior**
Horn: **Holton H-178 double** Mouthpiece: **Geyer custom #16**



How to set up an embouchure

- Keep the lips relaxed without any expression or muscular tension.
- Slide the mouthpiece until the lower mouthpiece rim “locks” onto the ledge of lower lip, where the lip meets the upper chin.
- Swing the mouthpiece over the cupid’s bow.



To Buzz or not to Buzz

This is a very controversial topic.

Let the students blow into the horn and “find” the note.

The airspeed and volume will excite the air particles inside the horn, creating a change in pressure between the instrument and the embouchure

The buzz should happen automatically without them really “thinking” about buzzing.

There are exceptions.

-no animals or pets were harmed at the end of this discussion.



The dreaded hand position!

The hand needs to be quite flat, like a karate chop.

The position depends on the size of the hand and whether the student will play on or off the leg.

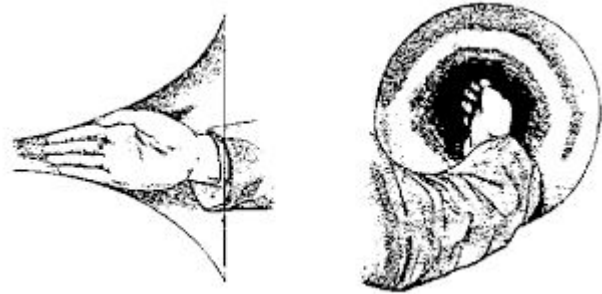
There are a lot of variations depending on the player.



Where should the hand go?

Typically the hand should fit in between the one o'clock to the five o'clock position.

You can put a piece of tape on the bell to remind the student where to put the hand.



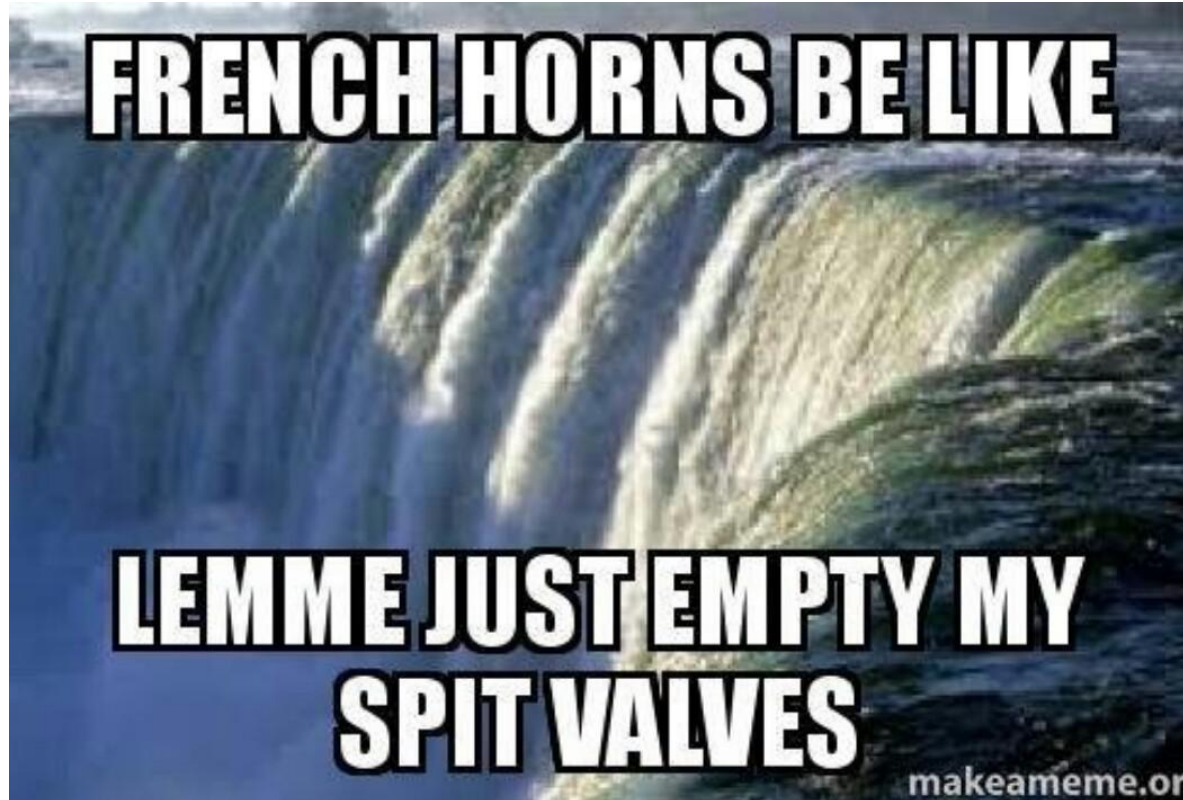
*Source: Recipe for Success, Chapter 2, pages 13-17
by Karen Houghton and Janey Nye.*

Engelbert Schmid, hand position video

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=k6eDD_nz3xo



Truth



Beginner range

The best range for a beginner horn player is between a middle C and a 2nd line G. The third space C is doable but especially for beginners it is critical that they achieve it with the air and not pressure.

Single F Horn



The image shows a musical staff for a Single F Horn. The staff is divided into two parts: a bass clef section and a treble clef section. The notes are as follows: C2 (bass), C3 (bass), C4 (bass), G3 (bass), F3 (bass), E3 (bass), D3 (bass), C3 (bass), C4 (treble), D4 (treble), E4 (treble), F4 (treble), G4 (treble), A4 (treble), B4 (treble), C5 (treble). A bracket labeled 'Beginning Range' spans from the first C4 to the first G4. A bracket labeled 'Intermediate Range' spans from the first C4 to the first C5.

Beginning Range

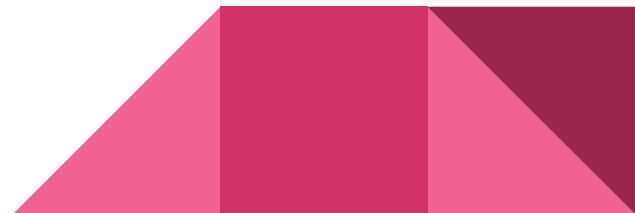
Intermediate Range

Single vs double horn

The number of sliding valves per rotor is the main difference between **Single and Double French Horns**. In other words, the single horn has only one slide valve per rotor, while the dual horn has two valves.

In terms of weight, the single horn is lighter in weight and less complex than the double horn. Therefore, it is very suitable for beginners to play the horn. The single horn has a warm deep tone and great versatility. It helps beginners to nurture their passion, satisfy their interests and develop in this instrument. With the single horn, they deliver a world of vibrant, expressive sound.

In terms of functionality, a single French horn exists in two forms: F or Bb, while a double French horn is a combination of both F and Bb. When playing the double horn, the instrument player can choose the right moment to play at Bb or F. For solo players, older people or complex ensemble players, the double horn is truly a companion.





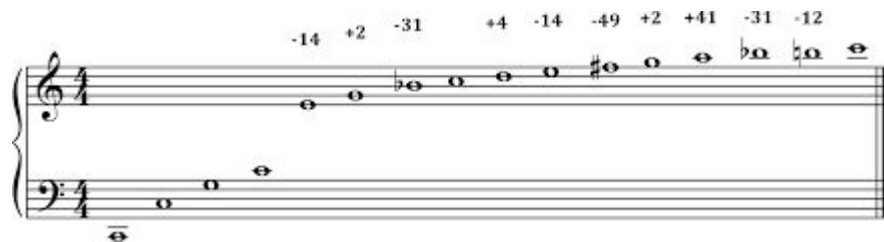
Single bflat horn



Double horn

Harmonic Series

F-horn

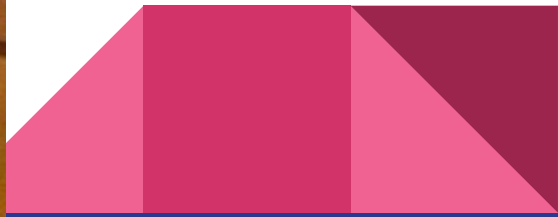


Bflat horn





**HOW ITALIANS PLAY THE
FRENCH HORN**



Beginner Mouthpieces

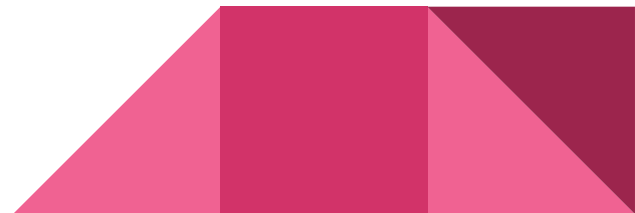
Mouthpieces are a very important yet very personal aspect of playing. Because everyone is different, different mouthpieces fit different individual.

As a rule of thumb good all around beginner Mouthpieces are:

Holton Farkas MC (medium cup)

Laskey 80G or 75G

Schilke 29 or 30



Great resources

- Recipe for Success: A balanced curriculum for young horn players by Karen Houghton and Janet Nye
- Introducing the Horn: essentials for new hornists and their teachers by John Ericson
- A practical guide to french horn playing by Milan Yancich
- Thoughts on playing the horn well by Froydis Ree Wekre
- Brass Gym by Sam Pilfian and Pat Sheridan
- Collected thoughts on teaching and learning, creativity and horn performance by Douglas Hill



A Devil to Play

Actually you never eyeball a horn player. That's one of the real rules. You just don't. They're stuntmen. You don't eyeball stuntmen just before they're about to dice with death. That's really true. You also never tell a horn player you played beautifully last time just before a concert. You see that look. They look at you and they're always thinking, I could die now. And you know there's something else behind the eyes. That's really a truth. And so you have to let them do their very difficult thing without too much disturbing.

— Sir Simon Rattle, Berlin Philharmoniker Conductor Emeritus