



BECOMING AN AWESOME OBOE PLAYER AND MUSICIAN

If you want to get serious about studying the oboe, here are some ideas about how to get there:

- Get a private teacher ASAP
 - A private teacher helps you fix the specific oboe problems you encounter and is an expert in the repertoire you need to know for oboe!
- Start purchasing handmade reeds, ideally from your private teacher
 - Store bought reeds just can't compete with handmade reeds—you can improve instantaneously just by getting better reeds.
- Start thinking about purchasing your own instrument, if you don't own an oboe already
 - This is a good thing to ask your private teacher about
 - Wood or plastic?
 - Brands: Lorée, Fox, Howarth, Yamaha, Lauben, Marigaux—there are lots of options!
- Get into the habit of practicing regularly (and practice smartly!)
 - Use the warm-up I included to get you started.
- Listen to great oboe players (get some CDs or look them up online). Here are a few to get you started:
 - Linda Strommen
 - Elaine Douvas
 - Eugene Izotov
 - Roger Roe
 - Frank Rosenwein
 - Albrecht Mayer
- When you're listening, explore solo repertoire, chamber music and orchestral excerpts to be well-informed about what the oboe can do!
- Attend any events you can to learn more about your instrument including camps, recitals, double reed days, orchestral and band concerts—everything helps make you a better musician!
- Finally, LOVE MUSIC ladies and gentlemen!
 - This is easy to do, and it will take you far!

PRACTICING SUGGESTIONS:

- Sing your part!
- Clap, dance or conduct along with the music
- Practice “slow-mo-expresso”
 - Practice in slow motion, but with all the expression that you'd include if you were playing at your normal tempo
- Simplify the music—leave out any grace notes or “extra notes”—think big picture
- Simplify the rhythm
- Play along with recordings

- Always play to your ideal sound and musicality—this will help you actually achieve that in your playing!

REPERTOIRE and RESOURCE SUGGESTIONS

- Repertoire (*It's always a good idea to build up your musical library*)
 - Barret Etude Book
 - Ferling Etude Book
 - Solo Repertoire Suggestions:
 - Mozart Concerto
 - Cimarosa Oboe
 - Marcello Concerto
 - Nielsen Romance and Humoresque
 - Plus, anything else you hear and love!
- Go ahead and purchase a good reed case (at least have storage for 5-10 reeds)
 - This encourages you to have more good reeds on hand
 - This will protect your reeds better than the plastic reed “coffins”
- Make sure you have:
 - A tuner
 - A metronome
 - Good swab
- Book: Sound in Motion—the best book out there to inspire your playing!
- Recordings:
 - John Mack’s Oboe Excerpts CD
 - Linda Strommen’s Down a River of Time recording
- Double Reed Vendors Online:
 - Midwest Musical Imports
 - RDG Woodwinds
 - Forrests Music
 - Trev-Co Varner Music (sheet music resource)

Please feel free to contact me about anything oboe related:

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FUNDAMENTALS OF PLAYING THE OBOE

“Fundamentals” include all the most important physical elements of playing your instrument. If you are doing all the right things with your fundamentals, it is going to make everything else you do playing-wise feel like a breeze.

Why are fundamentals important?

- *Help you aim for EASE in your playing
- *Help you be able to do everything you want musically
- *Give you knowledge about how/why to do certain things on your instrument
- *They make your playing more successful and enjoyable!

Here are the key fundamentals for oboe:

Breathing

- Low, deep breaths
- Noiseless, but purposeful
- Let air out before breathing in
- Breathe early enough, plan your breathing

Posture

- Puppet on a string—lifted, not collapsed, head up
- Bring the oboe to you
- Play from a place of stability

Hand Position and Technical Facility

- Aim for no tension playing!
 - Avoid flat fingers and collapsed finger joints
 - Want curved fingers
- Oboe angle should be 45 degrees or less
- Light fingers that stay close to the keys—no slapping

Use of Air/Support

- “It’s about how firmly you hold the wind, not how hard you blow.” –John Mack
- Aim for using your air efficiently, not just blowing at the reed
- Use the “focus spot”
- Play from your core, not all at your lips

Embouchure

- Whistling shape, with lower lip slightly tucked in—then cinch lips in like drawstring bag
- Can also think: camel upper lip, walrus bottom lip
- Flat chin, corners firm and pointed forward
- No biting the reed!

Tone

- Decide what you love in tone—like depth, richness, etc.
- On the oboe, we need to adjust for different registers
 - Go in on reed for upper registers
 - Voice down for low
- Try to match colors in all registers

Focusing the Sound:

- Start by coughing with your hand on your throat—feel the place that vibrates internally
- Imagine you’re a bullfrog—throat expanding
- Once you key into this area, you can use this sensation to keep yourself from blowing too much at the reed
- By keeping air back from the reed we help tone, technique, pitch, and endurance!

FUNDAMENTALS OF PLAYING THE OBOE

Entrances/Releases:

- Want to be able to enter at any dynamic level and in any character with ease and control
- Make compression before you start playing (no air should come out before you're ready for it)
- Start with tip of the tongue in the tip of the reed
- Release tongue to create sound
- Support past the end of notes

Articulation

- Need a variety of articulations
- Practice legato, staccato, short and mixed articulations
- For clear articulation, tongue in the tip of the reed with 1 taste bud
- Start slowly and increase speed with time

Pitch

- Need to 1) be able to play in tune with yourself 2) be able to play in tune with others
- Know your pitch tendencies
- If you're sharp, go out on the reed
- If you're flat, go in on the reed
- Hear the note before you play

Vibrato

- Vibrato should confirm the pitch, not confuse it
- Use your throat plus abdominal muscles to create vibrato, never your jaw or embouchure

Rhythm

- Light fingers help with rhythm
- Subdivide before you start playing
- Then keep subdividing!
- Use different rhythms for practicing.



Tone: What, Why and How

What is *tone*?

A way to define the kind of oboe sound that we have. There are many kinds of tone, and what you aim for depends on your playing style, musical goals, and even what country you're from.

Another word to describe tone you might hear is *timbre* (which describes both how we differentiate between different instrument sounds AND specific varieties of tone on the oboe).

Why is tone important?

Tone impacts:

Confidence	Ensemble Blend
<i>Musicality</i>	
I love it playing <3	Pitch

Tone facts:

- Good tone comes with time.
- Tone has to develop along with other elements of playing like support, focus, pitch, and vibrato.
- It takes oboes longer to cultivate a nice tone on the oboe than it does on other instruments
- Blowing more air isn't always the answer (and is often counterproductive)
- There isn't only one "right" kind of tone, but some blend better or convey the music more effectively than others.

How do we get a good tone?

- Step 1: Decide what kind of tone you want to strive for!
 - How do you describe a beautiful oboe tone?
 - Listen often to great players:
 - I love: Elaine Douvas, Frank Rosenwein, Eugene Izotov
 - Find recordings on: Spotify, Amazon, YouTube
 - Always keep this at the back of your mind when practicing!
- Step 2: Evaluate your reeds
 - Get off of Jones Reeds ASAP!
 - Find a hand-made reed vendor you like (ideally your own private teacher if you have one)

Tone: What, Why and How

- Reed test: Crow the reed—is it a C? If not, flat reeds must be squeezed up to pitch, inhibiting tone. ☹️

- Step 3: Check your embouchure
 - Should be a whistle shape, with lots of space in your mouth
 - Say “eeeeee” then say “ooooohhh”—which shape do you think will lead to better tone?

- Step 4: Focus and Support
 - ^^This is the biggest fundamentals issue that leads to bad tone!
 - We often blow at the reed, instead of channeling air into it!
 - Focus: use of the throat muscles, in addition to abdominal support and engagement in order to funnel air into the tiny reed opening in an efficient way
 - Focus and support together act like a faucet, controlling the amount of water that is allowed to escape!
 - How do we get the feeling of focusing in our playing?
 - Imagine:
 - Bullfrog throat!
 - Using your support to push out the base of your back
 - Say “ooo” in rhythms—see how you don’t use your lips or tongue to do this? Those are the muscles we need
 - Try playing while imaging those thing and engaging those muscles!

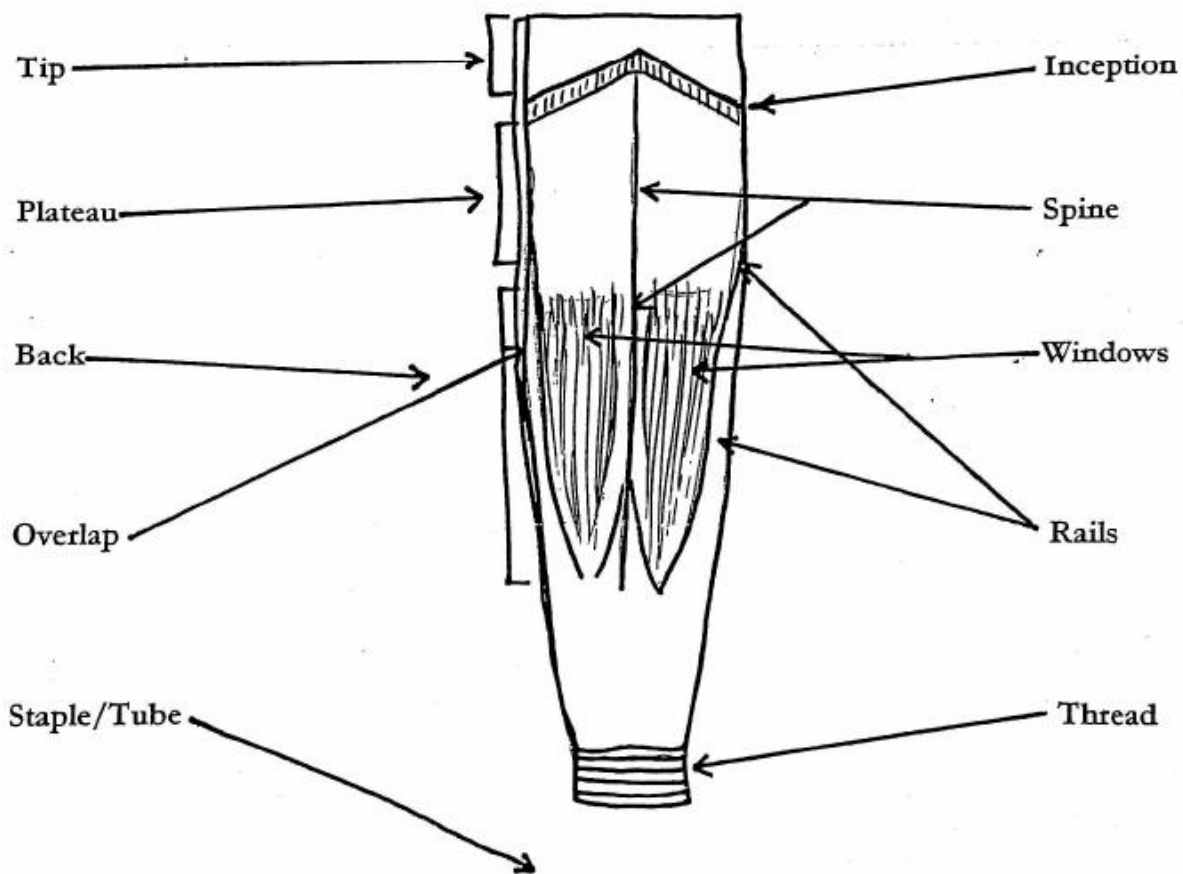


Reed Adjustment Guide

Reed Goals:

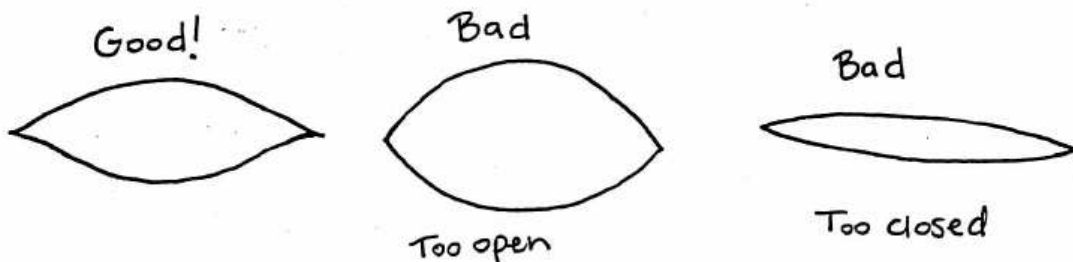
- Ease!
- Pitch Stability
- Beauty of Sound
- Dynamic Range
- Ability to make all of the musical ideas we have inside come out of the instrument!

Parts of the Oboe Reed:



Opening of the reed:

- We want the opening to be “enough”—not too open or too closed
- “Funny looking” openings often mean the resistance/articulation on the reed will be strange



Materials Needed:

- Reed that needs adjusting!
- Reed-knife
- Sharpening stone
- Plaque
- Short Ruler
- Razor Blades (GEM)
- Cutting Block
- Tuner to check reed pitch

If you want to purchase materials but aren't sure what to get, ask me or your private teacher before purchasing.

Some Things to Remember:

- New reeds will be harder than those that have been played a lot
 - If you haven't taken the time to "break reeds in", start with that
- If you're new to reed-making, it's always best to consult with your private teacher about what your reeds need
- Practice scraping on old reeds before you scrape a reed you *really need* to have working
 - When using your reed-knife, consider how much pressure you're using and knife angles
- Less is more when it comes to scraping and clipping
 - You can't put the cane back on!
- If you make a change to your reed, always try it again before scraping/clipping more!
- We want the reed alone to crow around a "C", depending on your oboe—check this pitch often!
- If you're really excited about reed-making, consider taking reed-making lessons with a private teacher!

What's the problem?

Too Flat

- Check the opening of the reed—if it's really open, try gently squeezing the reed to close the opening a bit. Then try the reed again
 - If it's still really open, you may need to do "long scrapes" (from the back of the windows up through the plateau) in order to get the reed to close down
- Make sure there are no cracks
- How long has the reed been soaking? Oversoaked reeds can be flat
- Clip the reed (place reed on block, use razor blade to take off a tiny portion of the tip)

Too Sharp

- Check the opening of the reed—is it really closed?
 - If yes, ask how old the reed is—it might not be fixable
 - To open the reed up, try soaking for 30 seconds in warm water

- Scrape the following areas in order: corners of the tip, inception, windows in the back

Too Resistant/Non-Vibrant

- Is the reed too closed or too open? If so, reference above.
- ****Scrape the corners of the tip, and off the end of the tip to get rid of any extra cane****
- Scrape following in order (trying reed in between each): the sides of the tip, the corners of the inception, the rails/sides of the plateau
- Is the spine too thick? If so, scrape next to it to reduce the spine

Not Resistant Enough

- If the pitch is also low (or at least not sharp), clip the reed
- Define the inception

Tone is Bad

- Scrape the sides of the tip
- Blend between the plateau and the tip if feeling like they're too separate
- Scrape the sides of the plateau (if reed isn't flat)
- Scrape the windows of the back (if reed isn't flat)

Won't Play Low Notes

- Check the opening—too closed or too open can make playing low difficult
- Scrape the corners of the tip
- Make sure that the reed isn't too heavy overall (if so, scrape tip, plateau and do some long scrapes)

Won't Play High Notes

- Check all of the above (particularly the resistance and pitch of reed)
- If high note pitch is flat, create more contrast between the tip and plateau
- Make sure the whole reed is vibrating otherwise (if not reference "Too Resistant" above)

Non-Salvageable:

- Cracked (especially a deep crack)
- Too old
- Too closed
- Corners missing
- Open on the sides
- Clipped too many times (too short)