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Beginning Band Method Book Supplement for: **BASSOON**

by Catrina Tangchittsumran-Stumpf

Practical Applications III

*in partial fulfillment of the degree requirements for a Master's of Music in
Conducting from the American Band College of Sam Houston State University*

Table of Contents

Introduction.....	2
Developing Correct Breathing Habits	3-4
Reeds.....	5
Parts of the Instrument	6
Instrument Assembly	7
Seated Posture & Holding the Bassoon	8-9
Hand Position & Balance Points	9-10
Forming the Embouchure	11
Producing a Sound on the Bassoon.....	12
What if it Doesn't Sound Right? Common Problems & Solutions	13
Instrument Care & Maintenance.....	14-15
Developing Muscle Memory: Finger Wiggling.....	16
Reading Bass Clef.....	17-18
Reading Rhythms.....	19-20
Time Signature	21-22
Putting it All Together (Reading & Playing Music)	23-27
Bassoon Fingering Chart	28-30
Bass Clef Flash Cards	31-39
Acknowledgements/About the Author	40
Works Cited.....	41-42

Congratulations, you've decided to play a woodwind instrument! This book will help guide you through the process of developing correct habits for posture, breathing, tone quality, and hand position. It will also give you information on how to take care of your instrument in order to keep it in good, working condition at all times. This book is designed to be a supplement to whatever method book your school band teacher or your private music instructor already uses.

Remember that playing a musical instrument is a physical activity which requires you to use your facial (and other) muscles in a new and different way. When you first start playing, you may only be able to practice for a few minutes at a time before you get tired. That's okay! Practicing on a daily basis will help you build your endurance and allow you to play with a better sound for a longer period of time. So even if you have trouble at the start, don't give up!

Regardless of which woodwind instrument you choose to play, here is a list of items you will need in order to develop good playing habits:

- Your instrument & method book
- A music stand
- A small mirror (set on your music stand so you can see yourself in it.)
- A pencil (to mark down reminders!)
- A cleaning rod and handkerchief or a swab
- A polishing cloth for your instrument
- Appropriate reeds (for clarinet & bassoon)

Recommended items:

- A metronome (a small device that you set to click and/or blink at a regular rate to make sure you don't speed up or slow down when you play.) If you don't own a metronome, a free one is available online at www.metronomeonline.com
- A chromatic tuner (a small device that will tell you what note you are playing, and if the pitch is accurate.) If you don't own a metronome but you have a computer with a microphone, a free chromatic tuner is available online at www.seventhstring.com/tuner/tuner.html

Developing Correct Breathing Habits

You may look at this section and think, “What do I need to learn about breathing? I’ve managed to live on this earth for years and have successfully inhaled and exhaled enough to still be here today!”

Playing a musical instrument requires you to use more air than you would normally use when you’re just sitting around having a conversation with friends. It also means that you have to learn how to control the rate and speed of the air that you use.

Developing good posture will help allow you to breathe in large amounts of air quickly.

Breathing Technique

1. Start by laying on the floor, flat on your back, with one hand on your stomach and the other hand on your upper chest. Relax and breathe naturally for a few minutes. You should notice that, when your body is relaxed, your abdomen expands first, and then your chest does when you inhale. As you exhale, your chest deflates first, then your abdomen.

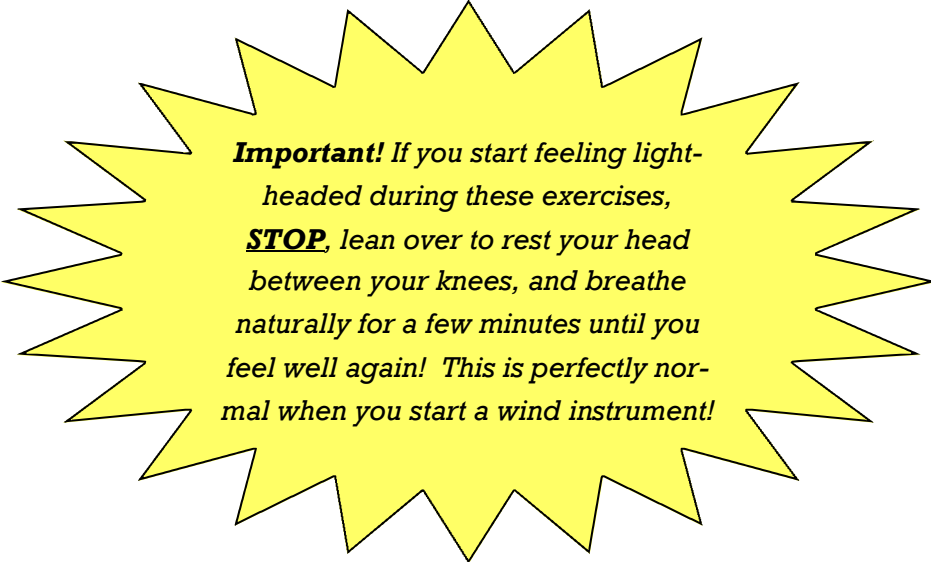


2. Sit up tall in your chair (try to push your spine forward towards your navel.) Relax your shoulders and try to inhale and exhale in the same way that you did while you were lying on the floor—filling your lungs all the way to the bottom first, then up to your chest before exhaling. Try and expand your ribs outwards until you feel like they can’t expand any more before exhaling. If you are breathing properly and expanding your lungs, your shoulders should not move very much as you inhale and exhale.

Checkpoint: Think about saying the word “OH” when you inhale and “HO” when you exhale. If you are breathing correctly, you should feel cold air in your throat when you inhale and you should be able to blow warm air onto the palm of your hand when you exhale.

3. When you play a musical instrument, you need to be able to inhale so that your lungs are full in a short amount of time. Try the following exercise to help you breathe in more quickly:

- Turn your metronome on to 60 beats per minute (mm=60)
- Inhale for 4 beats, then exhale for four beats; make sure that the air is either constantly moving in or out; you should never stop and “hold” your breath in this exercise.
- Inhale the same amount of air over the course of 3 beats and exhale over the course of 5 beats. You may need to add pressure from your stomach muscles to keep the air moving as you exhale. (Imagine blowing out a birthday cake with 1,000 candles on it—you’ll use those same muscles!)
- Inhale for 2 beats and exhale for 6; then inhale for 1 beat and exhale for 8.



Important! *If you start feeling light-headed during these exercises, **STOP**, lean over to rest your head between your knees, and breathe naturally for a few minutes until you feel well again! This is perfectly normal when you start a wind instrument!*

Reeds

In order to play the bassoon, you need to always have reeds on hand. Unlike a clarinet or saxophone that attaches their reed to a mouthpiece, bassoons are double reed instruments. That means, instead of having a single reed that attaches to a mouthpiece, there are two pieces of cane held together by a wire which vibrate against each other to produce sound.

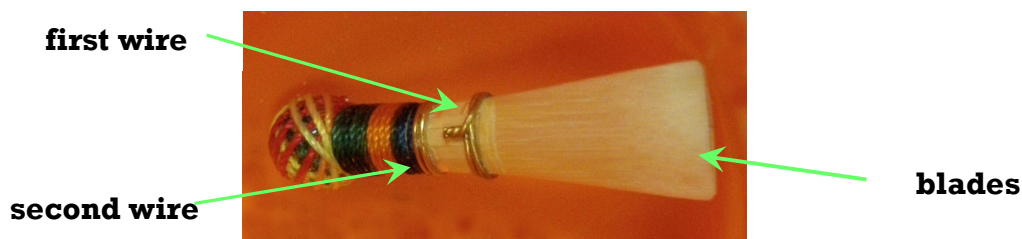
Try to keep 3 or more *good, working* reeds with you at all times. If treated properly, reeds will last a long time—but reeds that have chipped or frayed will produce poor quality sound.

Reeds come in different strengths, ranging from soft to hard. (There's no specific numbering system like there are with clarinets and saxophones.) As a beginner, you can consider starting with a plastic reed—they're more durable and are good enough to get you started. After 6 months to a year, however, you'll need to switch to regular (cane) reeds in order to start developing a more characteristic sound.

Hand made reeds are generally better quality than store bought reeds (which tend to be too hard.) Find a local bassoonist who makes reeds or order them over the internet. Internet sources include Charles Double Reed Co (www.charlesmusic.com), Forrest's Music (www.forrestsmusic.com), Arundo Reeds and Cane (www.arundoreeds.com), and Miller Marketing Co (www.millermarketingco.com)

Keep a small cup (about the size of a medicine cup or a pill bottle) in your case. Put your reed (blades down, wires up) in the water you are getting set up so that it's soft enough when you're ready to play.

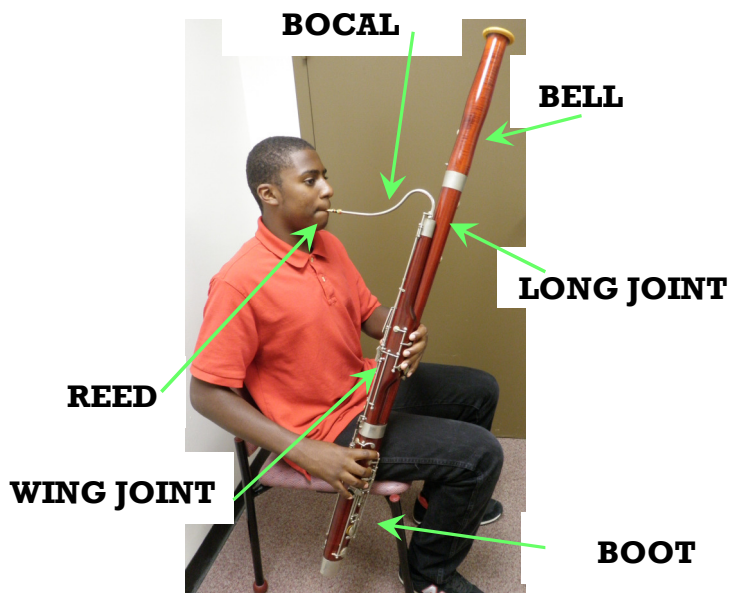
Parts of the Reed



Parts of the Instrument

Before you get started, ask your music teacher to help you put a mark on your case to help you identify which side is the TOP and which side is the BOTTOM. (As a general rules, the latches flip UP to open on most cases.)

Put your instrument case on the floor and open the latches. When you open your case, this is what you should see:



A word of caution:

Be very careful when handling your bocal. Bocals that get dented or bent often cannot be repaired—and replacing a bocal can cost several hundred dollars! Always keep your bocal in your hand, resting in the bell of your bassoon, or in your case when not in use.

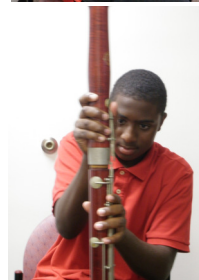
Instrument Assembly

1. Put your instrument case on the floor and open the latches. Be sure that you're opening the case right side up.



2. Put your reed in a small cup of clean water to soak while you continue to set up. Be sure that the entire reed is submerged while you set up. A small pill bottle or Tupperware container works well for this purpose.

3. Take out the boot joint from the case and hold it in your left hand.
4. Use your right hand to put the wing joint into the boot joint. (The wing joint is the long, skinny joint that has a semi-circle indent or "flare" in it.) Be careful that you don't damage the whisper key! Align the inside curve of the wing joint with the hole for the long joint.
5. Insert the long joint (the long, skinny piece) into the boot joint. Align the left hand thumb keys and lock the long joint to the wing joint (if your bassoon has this mechanism.)
6. Pick up the bell with your right hand and depress the key with your thumb. Push the bell on to the end of the long joint and align connecting levers on the long joint and the bell.
7. Insert the crutch in the hole on the side of the bassoon
8. If you're already at your seat, you can insert your bocal by grasping it just above the octave vent and inserting it into the wing joint. After you've inserted the bocal, be sure to align the vent hole with the whisper key. When you're ready to play, push the wire-wrapped end of the bassoon reed onto the bocal.
9. If you need to walk around (for example, from a storage room to your seat) place the long side of the bocal into the bell of the bassoon (never the wing joint!) so that it can't get bent while you're moving around.



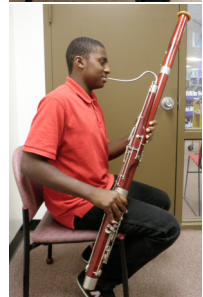
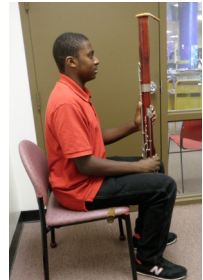
Developing Proper Seated Posture

Before we start learning how to play our instrument, we need to first start to develop proper posture. Correct posture isn't just about looking professional while you play—it helps you breathe better. This is important, since you have chosen to play a wind instrument!

Imagine a garden hose that's turned on full blast. If you bend the hose, the flow of water will slow down or stop altogether. When you hunch over, you are putting a "kink" in your airway, which makes it more difficult to breathe in and out.

Seated Posture & Holding the Bassoon

1. Place the seat strap across the front of your chair. The hook or cup from the seat strap should hang to the right side of your seat. Sit far back in your chair.
2. Hold the bassoon firmly with the thumb keys toward you and attach the seat strap to the boot cap by hooking it through the hole nearest to you.
3. If you haven't already done so, grasp the bocal near the octave vent and insert it into the wing joint. Align the octave vent with the whisper key.
4. Hold the bassoon firmly with your right hand and lean forward slightly from the back of your chair. Adjust the seat strap until the bocal touches the center of your mouth. When the bocal is properly positioned, it should leave your mouth at a slightly downward angle. If the bocal points up from your mouth, will cause your sound to be thin and sharp.
5. Place the reed on the bocal using your right thumb and index finger until it is tight and lies horizontal.
6. Tilt the bassoon to the left so that it leans against your right leg and across your body. You will look past the right side of the bassoon to see your music, the conductor, etc.



7. Adjust your music stand so that you can see the music by looking straight ahead. You shouldn't have to look around the bassoon to see your music!
8. Push your spine forward towards your belly button to draw yourself up straight. You always want to sit tall (but relaxed) while you play in order to make breathing as free from tension as possible.

Hand Position & Balance Points

Playing with correct hand position will allow you to play faster notes with greater ease and will help avoid playing-related injuries later on in your playing career.

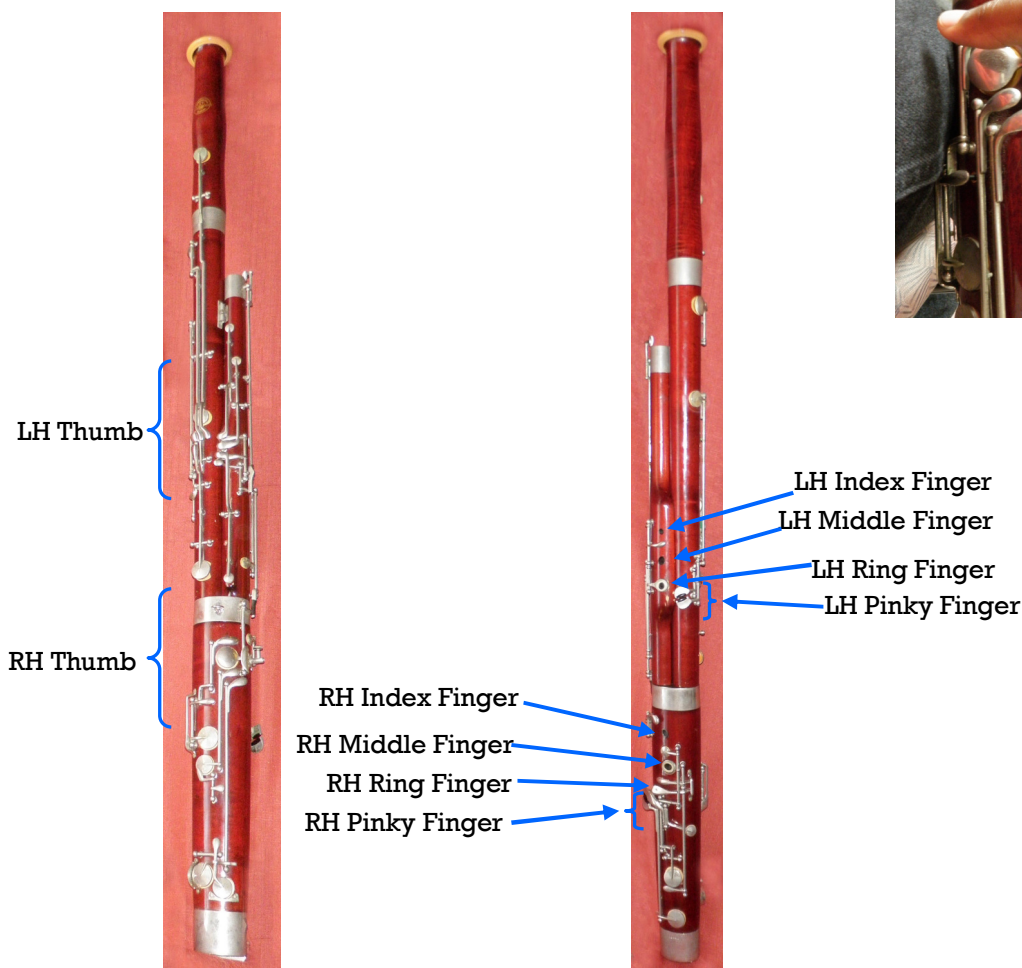
If your bassoon is set up correctly, it will balance in three places:

1. Your bassoon should be secure enough that you can easily balance the bassoon against your right leg so that it will stay in place without having to hold it with your hands (but don't let your hands stray far if you test this—you don't want to drop your bassoon!)
2. **Left Hand:** The weight of the bassoon should be held on your left hand at the corner of your palm near the base of your index finger. (If you are transferring to bassoon from flute, this is a similar spot to where the flute rests.) The long joint of the bassoon rests against the palm here, while the heel of your hand should be away from the instrument so your fingers approach the bassoon at approximately a 45-degree angle. Your index and middle finger will be fairly curved and your ring finger will be fairly flat. The index finger will need to have the flexibility to rock on and off of the tone hole so that it can cover all of the hole, none of the hole, or some of the hole (using a technique called "half-holing.") The thumb should be relaxed and free to depress one or more of the thumb keys as necessary.



3. **Right Hand:** The right palm should rest on the crutch (hand rest), between the index finger and the thumb. This hand is responsible for ensuring that the bassoon does not rotate towards the left while you play and helps avoid gripping the bassoon with the *left* fingers. (As you can imagine, gripping the instrument while trying to use the same fingers for playing notes is rather difficult.) The thumb should be relaxed and hover over the thumb keys and should not be used to grip the instrument. Your wrist will need to be straight, so your arm will rest slightly away from your body.

Note: You may need to cut down the size of the post on the crutch in order to make it sit comfortably in your hands—especially if your hands are on the smaller side.



Forming the Embouchure & Producing a Tone

“Embouchure” (pronounced *AHM-buh-shur*) is the term for the way you form your lips and facial muscles in order to play a wind instrument. The term comes from the French word *bouche* (pronounced *boosh*) which means “mouth.”

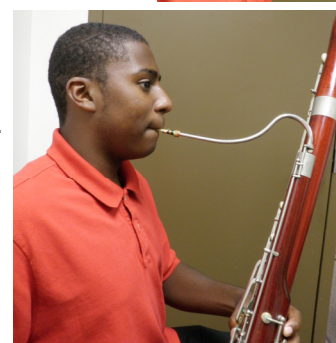
Sit on the front edge of your chair and push your spine forward towards your navel. If possible, position a mirror on a music stand in front of you so you can see your face and mouth in it while sitting properly.

1. Place the tip of your finger on your lower lip.
2. Draw the tip of your finger into your mouth and take the lower lip with it.
3. Bring the top lip down slightly over your top teeth and rest the lip on the top of your finger. (You can also try forming your mouth as though you were about to whistle—note that your lip very slightly covers your teeth. That’s how much you’re aiming to cover your teeth here.)

Using your reed only, repeat this process:

1. Place the tip of the reed on your lower lip.
2. Draw the reed slightly into your mouth while taking the lower lip with it.
3. Bring the top lip down to slightly cover your top teeth and then rest your lip on the top of your reed. With the reed in your mouth, the top lip should almost reach the first wire of the reed, and the bottom lip should be slightly behind it.
4. Close the lips around the reed so that there is slight but equal pressure around the reed, as if you are pulling a draw-string around a cloth bag.

This is the basic bassoon embouchure. It should form a slight overbite (so that the lower jaw is positioned a little bit behind the upper jaw.) It is also a “soft” embouchure—that means that there is a little pressure from the lower lip and none from the top lip.



Producing a Sound on the Bassoon

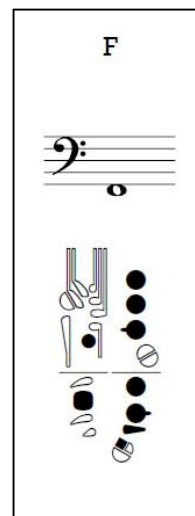
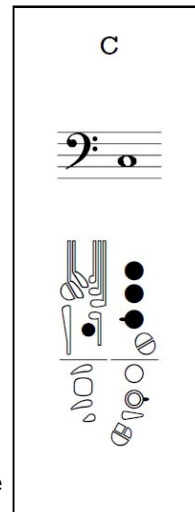
Now that you understand the basic principles of how to form your embouchure, you're ready to produce your first sound!

1. Start with your reed only. Draw the reed into the mouth and form the embouchure as described.
2. Play through the reed. The raucous sound you hear is called the "crow." You should hear a wide range of high and low sounds that represent the overtone series on the bassoon. (If not, turn the page for some troubleshooting tips.)
3. Next, set up your instrument (with bocal and reed attached.) Cover the three holes in your left hand and put down the whisper key. This will form a "C." *(Note: A guide to reading the fingering diagram to the right is located on page 28.)*
4. Set your embouchure, take a deep breath, and blow through the reed while using a very soft embouchure. If you're playing with a tuner on your stand, this C will likely be very flat or even register as a B-natural. It will also probably sound rather ugly. That's okay right now!
5. Play the note several times, then increase the intensity and speed of your air to raise the pitch to an in-tune C. It is important to change the pitch with your air speed and not jaw pressure.

Congratulations, you've played your first note! Before we move on, try to produce one more note.

1. Finger a low "F" according to the diagram on the right.
2. Set your embouchure, breathe, and play the note.
3. The note may be somewhat raucous. That's okay! Use your air support and slight support from your lower jaw to bring the note into tune.

If you're having trouble producing a correct sound, the next few pages will guide you through how to play with good sound.



What If It Doesn't Sound Right?

Sometimes, even when you think you've done everything right, you still don't sound exactly like you're supposed to. Here's a short guide to help you identify common problems with sound production—and suggestions on how to fix them.

Tone Quality	Suggested Remedy
Correct Sound of Crow	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> More often than not, if you've followed the instructions you will get a reasonable sound. Congratulations! Keep practicing until you can consistently achieve the correct tone every time you play.
High Pitched Crow with Too Few Sounds You can make a sound on the reed alone, but the sound is pinched and there are not a wide variety of tones being produced.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Your embouchure may be too tight or pinched. Think about relaxing more to decrease the pressure in the embouchure (especially in the lower jaw.) It's also possible that the reed is too stiff or closed off. Ask your teacher for help in adjusting the reed (they'll need to check the thickness of the reed and the balance in the cane.) They can also try flattening the first wire (closer to the wide end of the reed) to close the tip and make the reed easier to play.
Low Pitched Crow The crow of the reed is very low.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> It is possible that you are not using enough air support or using enough support from the lower jaw. Try increasing air speed and lower jaw support. If you have increased your support and the crow is still low, ask for help in adjusting your reed. Your reed may be too long and/or wide, or you may need to loosen the first wire.
Correct Sound on Low F	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Congratulations, great job!
Unsupported Sound on Low F Your low F is out of tune is flat and your tone is thin	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> This is likely caused by lack of support from your lower jaw— increase your lower jaw support slightly (but be sure to keep a soft embouchure.) You may also not have enough support from your air stream. Use a faster air stream and increase the support from your abdominal muscles.
Low F is correct, then unsupported, then correct	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Inconsistent sound in your low F is usually due to the fact that you are not accustomed to playing with consistent sound. Focus on producing a steady, fast air stream and maintaining lower jaw support as you play long notes.

Instrument Care & Maintenance

An instrument is essentially a small machine that is powered by you. Like most machines, it needs to be properly cared for in order to remain in good working condition.

There are three major concerns when it comes to caring for an instrument.

- 1) **Personal Responsibility**—Your instrument is an investment, so be sure to take care of it! This means keeping it in a secure area and away from extreme temperatures at all times, keeping it in your case when you are not playing it (so it can't get dropped or otherwise broken), and taking care to not eat right before playing. (The acid from your saliva and sugar from gum/candy can eat away at the inside of your instrument. And no one wants chunks of lunches past rotting inside their instrument anyway.) Finally, be careful when putting your instrument away—you should never have to “squash” your instrument case to close it. If your case doesn't close easily, open it up, make sure your instrument is sitting in the case properly and that nothing is pressing down on the keys before trying to close it again.

- 2) **Removing moisture from your instrument**—

After you've finished playing for the day, be sure to put your reed in a case that is NOT air tight. Reeds need to dry out, otherwise they will grow mold—and most of us don't want to put our mouths on moldy reeds. Purchase a reed case that will protect your reeds and also allow them to dry properly.

You'll need to swab your instrument once you've finished playing for the day. Disassemble the instrument in the opposite order from how you put it together (bocal, long joint, wing joint, boot.) Dump the water out of the small side of the boot (NOT the large side) before swabbing. Be sure your swab is not tangled. This is very important—tangled swabs can get stuck in the instrument, requiring an avoidable trip to the repair shop. Drop the weighted end of the swab through the instrument and gently pull it through. If the swab gets stuck, do NOT pull harder—pull it back the way you put it in, untangle it, and try again.

3) **Awareness**—Because Bassoons are “small machines” with moving parts, sometimes those parts need a little care and maintenance. Here are some signs that you should ask your band director or a repair person to look at your instrument:

- One or more notes aren't sounding correctly
- A key is slow coming back up after being depressed
- A key does not return to its normal position after being depressed
- You see a screw sticking really far out. (Note: The screws on your instrument are precisely adjusted to make it work. If you think a screw needs tightening, take it to a professional. Unless you or your parent know what they're doing, you could cause serious damage to your instrument if you attempt to “fix” it yourself!)

Remember: When in doubt, take it to a professional! (And if you have to leave your instrument at the repair shop, be sure to ask for a loaner instrument to use in the meantime.)

Other Notes on Bassoon Maintenance:

- Put a piece of flannel or other cloth underneath the long joint in the case to prevent the joints from banging together. Using cardboard shims to secure your instrument will help prevent the need for minor adjustments.
- If you play on a wooden bassoon, about once per year you'll need to swab your instrument with a little almond oil or raw linseed oil to prevent moisture from seeping into the wood from the inside.
- The joints on your instrument may loosen with changes in humidity. During the winter or in dry conditions, you can wrap some waxed dental floss on the loose joint(s) to tighten the seal.
- Clean out your bocal at least twice per year to clear out any build-up. Fill the bocal with warm, soapy water, use a bocal brush, then rinse. Repeat until the bocal has been clear. Make sure the vent hole isn't obstructed.

Developing Muscle Memory: Finger Wiggling

Now that you understand how to hold your instrument, it is going to take some time to become familiar enough with it that you won't have to look down and think about exactly where each of your fingers is supposed to go before you play. This is called developing "muscle memory."

Finger Wiggling is an easy way to help speed up the process of developing muscle memory (and, hopefully, solidifying good playing habits along the way!) It's also an activity that requires very little thought and lots of time—so you can do other things like listen to music or watch TV while you work on developing your good habits!

For the first week you have your instrument, set aside 30-60 minutes of time in the evening—while you are watching TV, listening to music, talking to a friend, or any other activity you can do without the use of your hands.

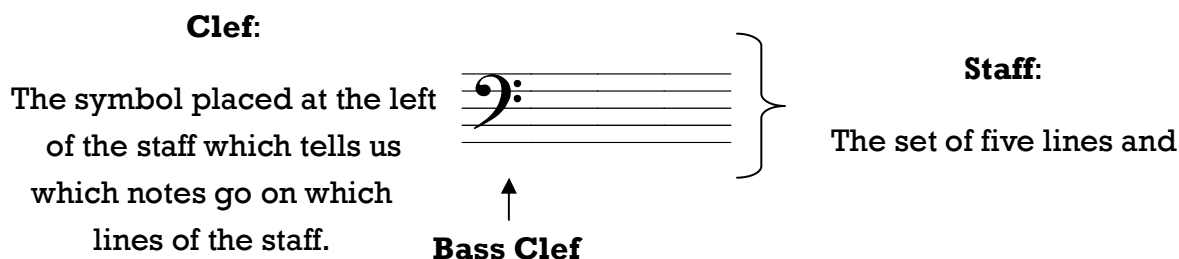
Assemble your instrument and find a seat where you can get comfortable. Start by reviewing your balance points on the instrument, then hold the instrument properly. Spend 5-10 minutes lifting and lowering your index finger repeatedly ("wiggling"). After 5 or 10 minutes (or, if you're watching TV, at the next commercial break), start wiggling your second finger up and down. Repeat this with each finger of your left hand. Then, repeat this with the fingers in your right hand.

By "wiggling" your fingers one at a time, your fingers will start remembering where they're supposed to go without having to think about it. Through the course of the week, you should start to be able to pick up your instrument and place your fingers without even having to think about it—which leaves your brain free to think about other things (like notes, rhythms, and which fingers you're supposed to put down to play a particular note).

As you learn new notes, practice "wiggling" the fingering to help you develop muscle memory for each of the notes you learn.

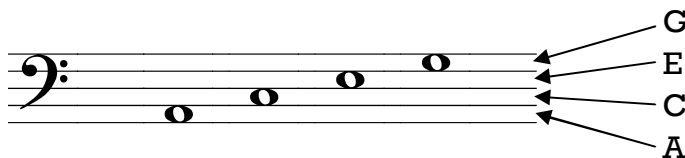
Reading Notes in Bass Clef

Before you learn to start making sound on your instrument, it's important to be familiar with the symbols of music.

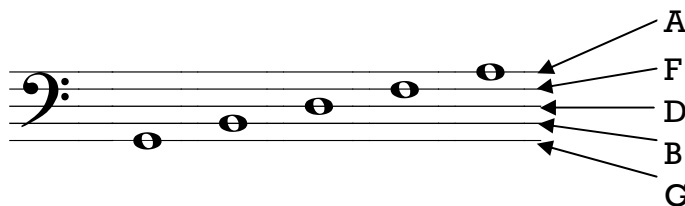


Each line and space of the staff has a name that corresponds to a letter of the alphabet. Only the first seven letters of the alphabet (A through G) are used in reading music. After G, the letters repeat—so our musical alphabet goes A, B, C, D, E, F, G, A, B, C, D, E, F, G, etc.

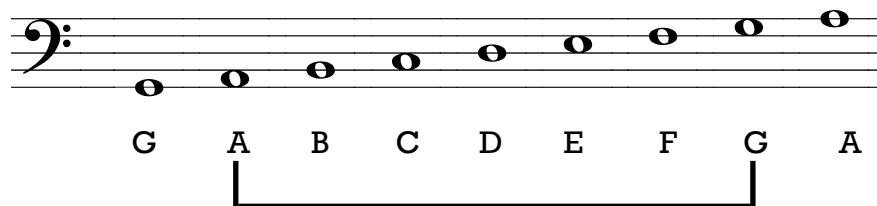
The notes that go on the **spaces** of the staff can be remembered by the saying **All Cows Eat Grass**. The first letter of each word can be stacked to give you the notes which go on the spaces in the staff.



The notes that go on the **lines** of the staff can be remembered by the saying **Great Big Dogs Fight Animals**. The first letter of each word can be stacked to give you the notes which go on the lines of the staff.

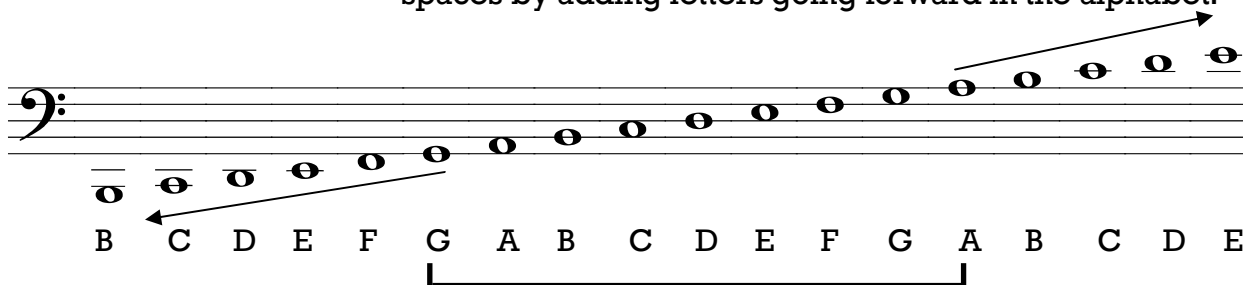


When you put both sayings together, the lines and spaces alternate to reveal pieces of our musical alphabet. *(And remember: Our musical alphabet starts at A and ends at G—then we repeat the same letters over again!)*



Our musical alphabet can be extended above and below the staff using **ledger lines**. We continue alternating the pattern of lines and spaces to name additional notes.

Notes above the staff continue the pattern of lines and spaces by adding letters going forward in the alphabet.



To figure out which note comes next **below the staff**, start from the bottom line of the staff (first line G), and count backwards in the alphabet.

Congratulations! You can now figure out any bass clef note name on, above, or below the staff! The next step is to be able to look at a note and recognize it immediately (without having to count up and down.) Use the flash cards at the end of this book to help you practice reading notes faster.

When do I play?

Now that you can read the notes on the staff, read a fingering chart, and produce a good quality tone on your instrument, it's time to learn the terms and symbols that tell you when and for how long you will play.

Beat

Put the first two fingers of your right hand on the front side of your neck (near your voice box)—you'll be able to feel your heartbeat or pulse. Sometimes our heart beats fast (like after you've been running) and sometimes it beats slow (like when you're drifting off to sleep), but it is almost always steady. Music has a steady pulse that we call **beat**.

Rhythm

While the underlying beat of music is always the same, we have different symbols which determine for how many beats each note should be played.

The four most common symbols that tell us how long to play a note are as follows:



Whole note



Half note



Quarter note



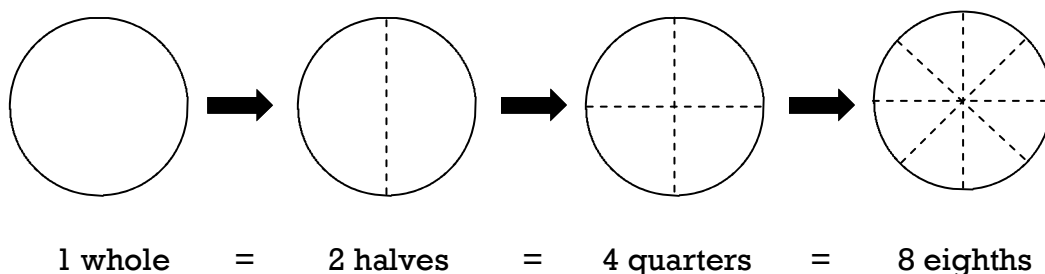
Eighth note

These symbols can be mixed and matched into varying patterns in music; the organization of note lengths in time is called **rhythm**.

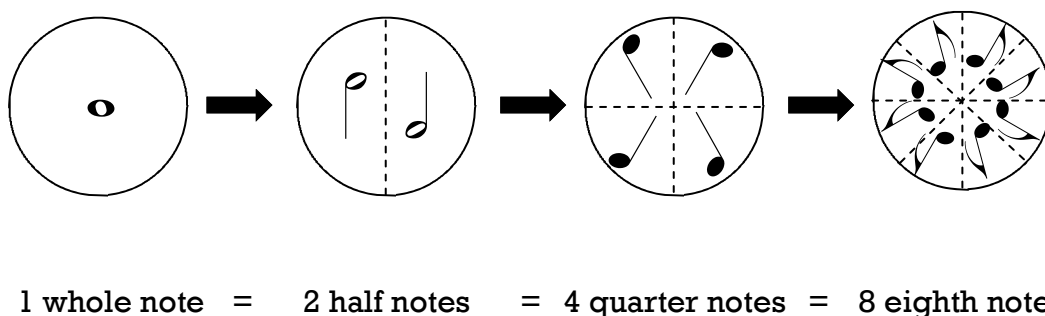
Young musicians often use the terms beat and rhythm interchangeably—but they actually mean different things. Remember: **beat** is always steady; **rhythm** can (and often does) change.

Learning how long each note value lasts in relation to another is a lot like using fractions in math.

In math,

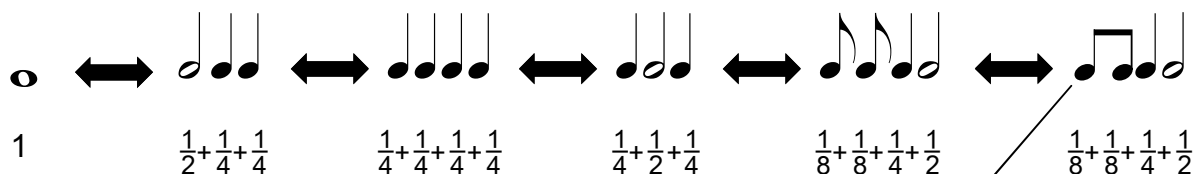


In music,



When we add numbers in math, we know that if $1+1$ equals 2 and $2+3=5$, then $1+1+3$ also equals 5. (This is known as the *transitive property* in case your math teacher ever asks.)

Applying the same rhythmic equivalencies above (1 whole note = two half notes = 4 quarter notes, etc.), we can come up with any number of rhythmic combinations that equal one whole note:

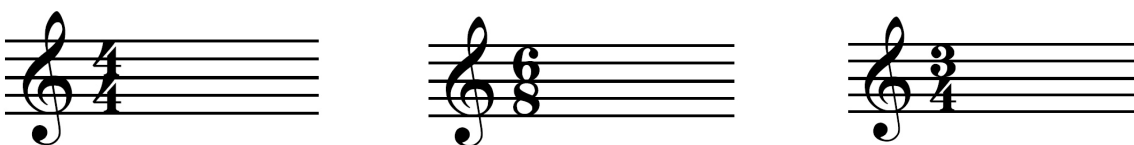


FYI: Pairs of eighth notes are often written like two quarter notes connected by a single bar line rather than two eighth notes with a flag each. (♩=♩)

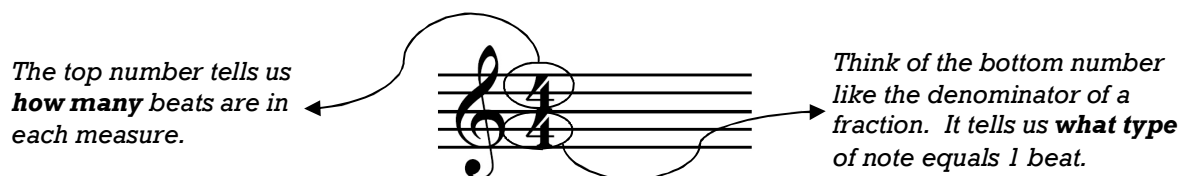
Time Signatures

While the last example grouped rhythms by whole notes, it's actually possible to group them in any number of ways. But how do you know how beats and rhythms are grouped in your music?

When you are reading a piece of music, to the right of the **clef** sign, you will find two numbers stacked on top of each other like this:



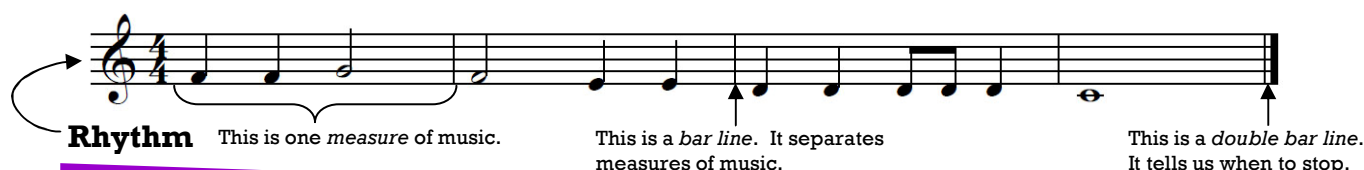
These symbols are called **time signatures**. They tell us how our notes will be grouped in our music. These groups are called **measures**.



As a young musician, the most common time signature you will see is called "four-four". The top number tells us how many beats are in each measure. The bottom number tells us what type of note equals one beat. Think of the bottom number like the denominator of a fraction—if the bottom number is a 4, think of the fraction $\frac{1}{4}$. Another name for that fraction is a "quarter"—so if the bottom number of the time signature is 4, then we are counting in quarter notes.

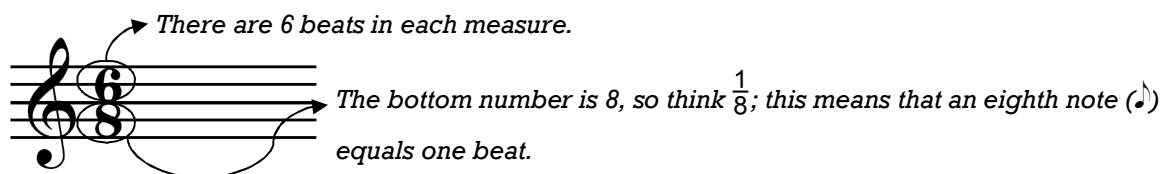
The time signature $\frac{4}{4}$ then means that there are 4 quarter note (♩) beats in every measure. Rhythms will always need to "add up" so that they are equal to 4 quarter notes in each measure.

Beat: ♩ ♩ ♩ ♩ ♩ ♩ ♩ ♩ ♩ ♩ ♩ ♩ ♩ ♩ ♩

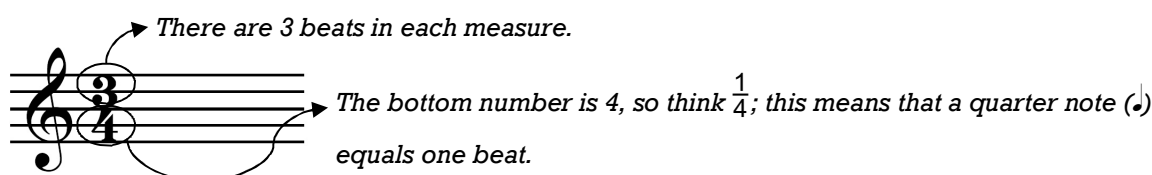


There are endless possibilities for the time signatures you can play. The only limitation is that the bottom number has to relate to one of our possible note values (1 = whole notes, 2 = half notes, 4 = quarter note, 8 = eighth notes, etc.)

Examples:



This time signature means there are 6 eighth notes in each measure.



This time signature means there are 3 quarter notes in each measure.

Rests

In addition to the symbols that tell us when we should play, there are also symbols which tell us when we should leave silence in the music—these symbols are called rests. The most common rests are as follows:



Whole rest



Half rest



Quarter rest

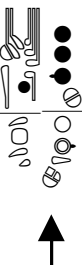
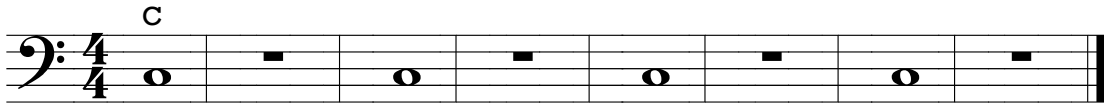


Eighth rest

As the names would imply, a whole rest takes up the same number of beats as a whole note, a half rest equals the same number of beats as a half note, etc. Thus, when “adding” the number of beats in a measure, rests count for just as much time as their “note” equivalent.

Putting It All Together

Now that you've learned the basic skills of music reading and tone production, let's put them all together!

1.  

Play—2--3--4—off—2-3-4—Play—2-3-4—off--2-3-4—Play—2-3-4—off--2-3-4—Play—2-3-4—off--2-3-4


Note: An explanation on how to read this fingering diagram can be found on page 28.


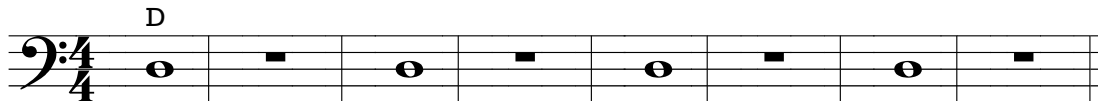
Here's your first musical exercise.


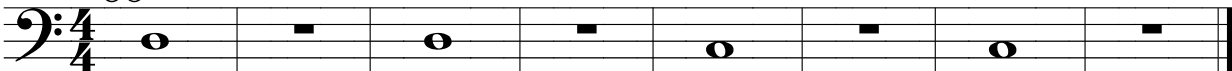
Set up your instrument, sit with good posture, and hold your instrument in playing position.


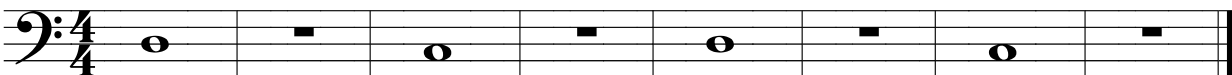
- Look at the music! What is your time signature? What does it mean?
- What's your first note? What's the fingering? Do your notes change in the piece?
- If you are not working with a teacher at the moment, it may be helpful to turn on your chromatic tuner. (Make sure it is set to "C" so the correct notes show up for your instrument!) The tuner will help make sure you're playing the correct pitch.
- Turn your metronome on—set it to somewhere between 60-80 beats per minute. Tap your big toe (not your whole foot!) so that your toe hits the ground as the same time the metronome taps.
- Here we go! Think "1-2-3-breathe" then play through the exercise! Hold each whole note for 4 beats, then don't play (rest) for 4 beats during each whole rest. You should be thinking:

Play—2—3—4—Off—2—3—4breathe—Play—2—3—4—Off—2—3—4breathe

Great! Now that you've got that first exercise down, here are a few more! Be sure to watch  the music carefully—sometimes the notes change!

2.  

3.  

4.  

Articulation

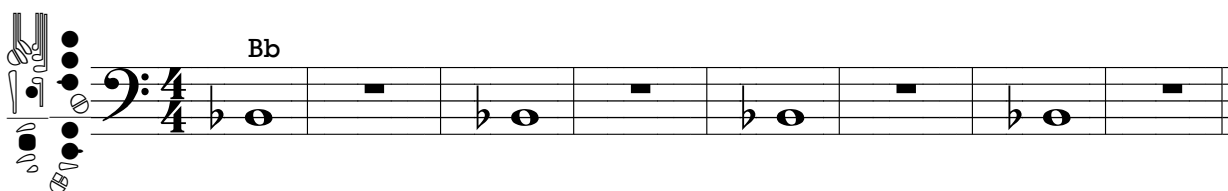
Now that you've played through your first exercises, go back and play them again one more time. This time, think about *articulation*, or tonguing.

In order to tongue notes on bassoon, the tip of your tongue will touch the tip of the reed. The tongue should move in an up and down motion. Say the word “ta” a few times, and you’ll notice that on the “a” part of the syllable, the tongue is at the bottom of the mouth.

When you articulate, your tongue should move as little as possible—keep the center part of the tongue low in the mouth (as when saying “ta”) and move only the front of the tongue to articulate. (If you try saying “ta ta ta ta ta” quickly, you’ll understand the motion better.)


Only tongue the reed as hard as is necessary to start the note—if you tongue too hard, then you will simply get an ugly sound and it will be more difficult to tongue quickly as you get more advanced.

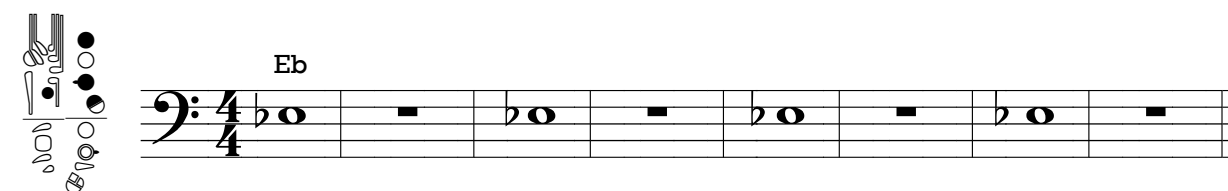
Play each exercise again, focusing on a clear “ta” sound at the beginning of each note.

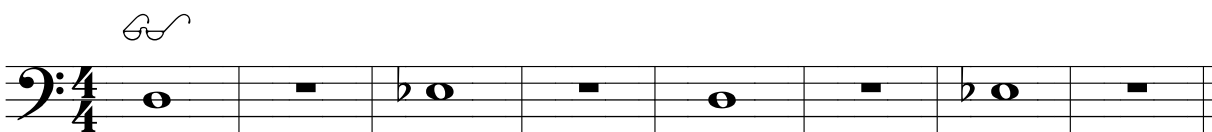
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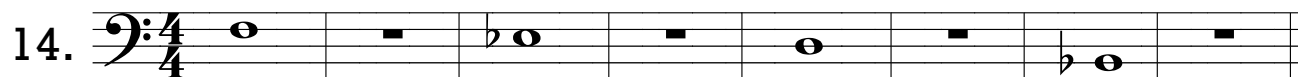
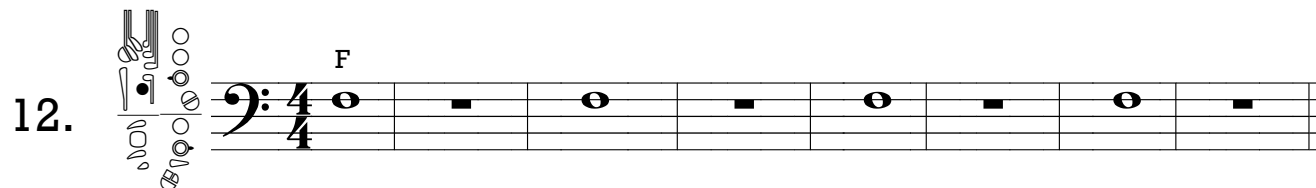
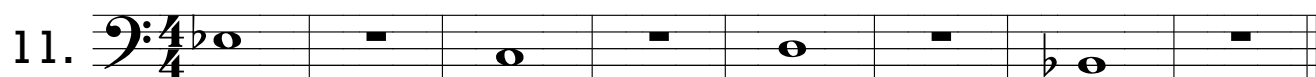
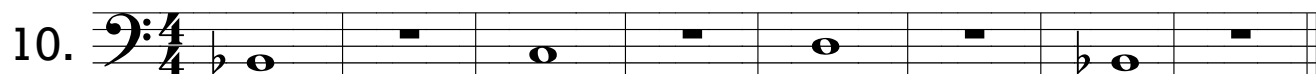
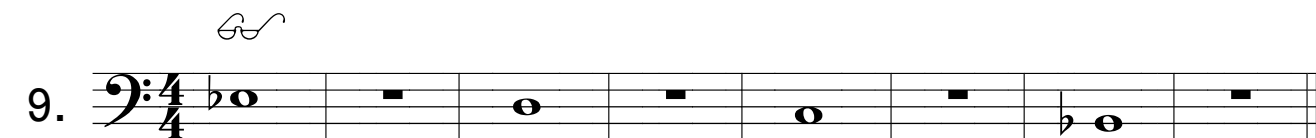
As you start playing more exercises involving different notes, be sure you are working to instill good playing habits.

- Are you setting your embouchure correctly? Are maintaining a soft embouchure and appropriate air velocity?
- Are you looking down at your hands to see the notes? (Remember, looking down will negatively affect your sound!)
- Are you supporting your at the appropriate balance points (right leg, left palm, right palm)?

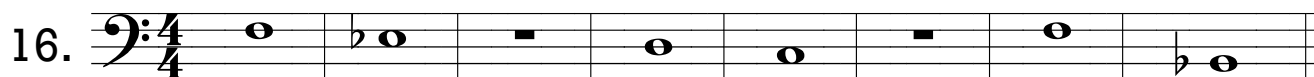
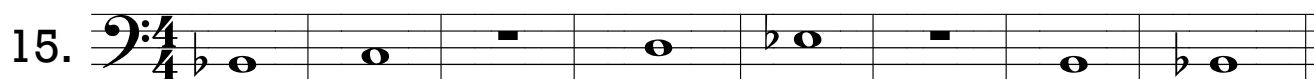
6. 

7. 

8. 



Take a breath after each whole note if you need to. Be sure to speed up your air for the second note of each pair, and don't forget to articulate!



Remember, half notes get 2 beats in 4/4 time. Don't change the way you constantly blow air when you play from any whole note exercises—just separate the notes by lightly tonguing where appropriate.



Now that you have a better understanding of how to produce a good tone, read music, and read a fingering chart, you have all of the tools you need to teach yourself many of the songs and exercises you will find in your band method book. The rest of the materials in this book will help you strengthen the skills you have already learned.

Bassoon Fingering Chart

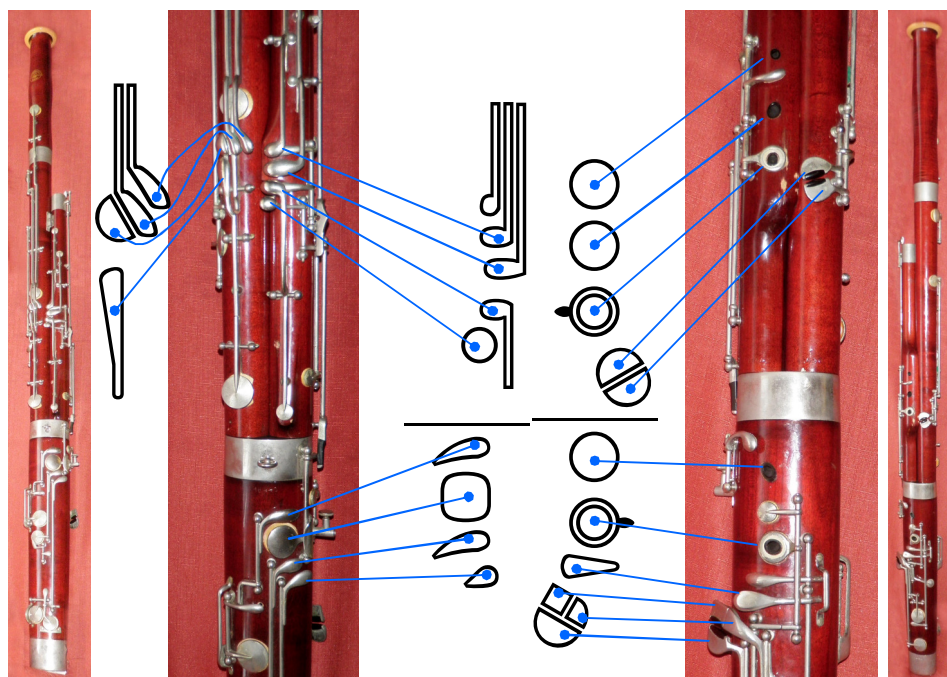
This chart shows both preferred and alternate fingerings for the bassoon. When more than one fingering is shown, the first is the most common.

Every instrument has a few notes that don't sound quite in tune when they are played. The chart below will show you the pitch tendencies for those notes—that is, if a note tends to be a little sharp (too high) or flat (too low.) If you adjust the pitch on those notes, you'll sound even better faster!






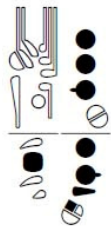
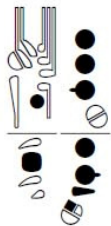
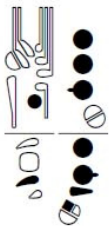
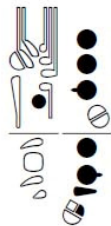
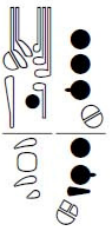
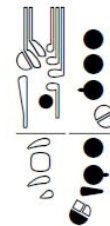
How to Read A Fingering Chart:

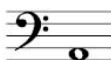
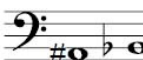
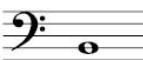
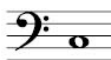
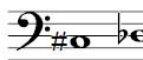

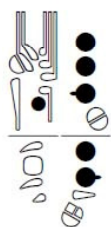
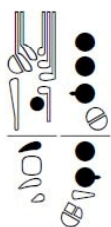
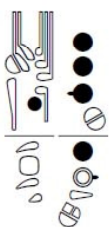
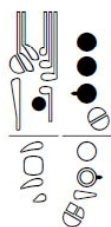
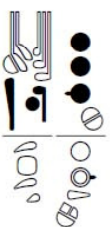
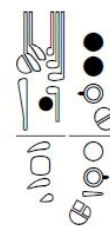
Each of the shapes in the fingering chart correspond to a key on the bassoon.





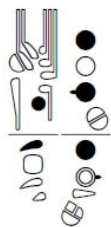
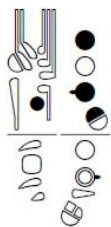
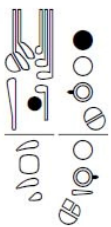
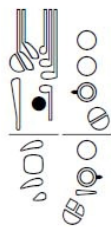
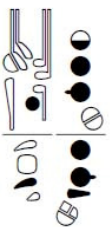
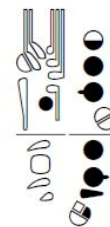
In the chart on the next two pages, if a key or hole is filled in (like this: ●) it means you should push that key down. If a key is open (like this: ○) it means that key stays up.

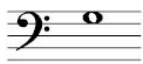
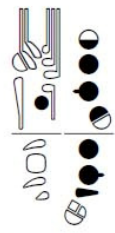

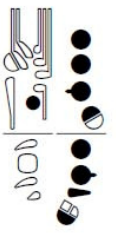
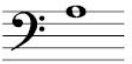
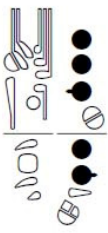
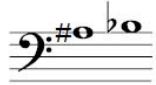
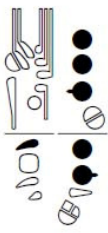

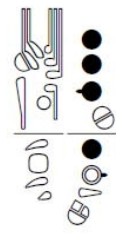

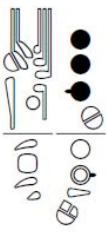

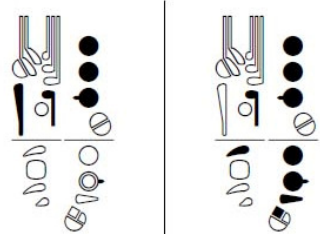

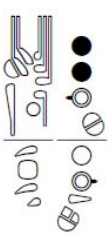
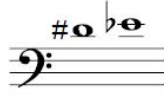


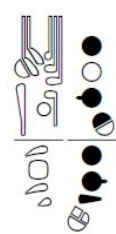

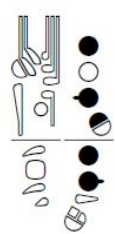

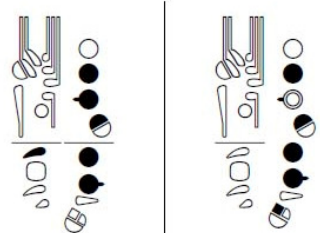

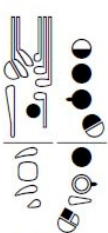

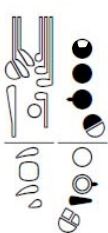

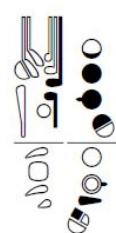

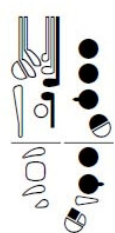


Note Name	A# or B _b	B	C	C# or D _b	D	D# or E _b
Note in Staff						
Fingering						
Pitch Tendency	Sharp	Sharp	Sharp	Sharp	Sharp	Sharp

E	F	F# or G _b		G	G# or A _b
					
					
Sharp		Slightly sharp	Sometimes flat		






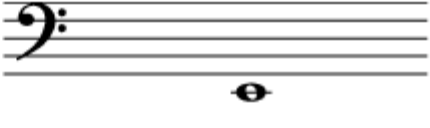
A	A# or B _b	B	C	C# or D _b	D
					
					
	Moderately sharp			Sharp or Flat	




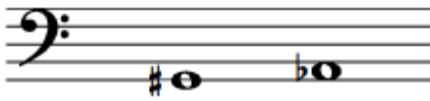
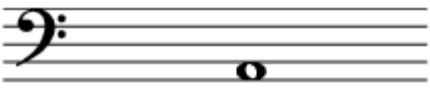
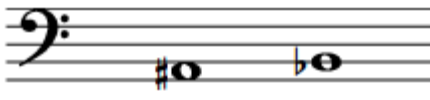
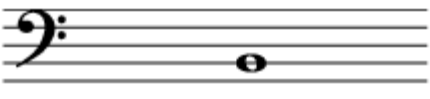
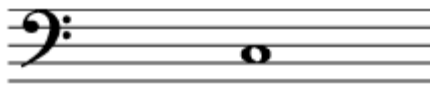
D# or E _b		E	F	F# or G _b	
					
					
In tune	Sharp	Slightly flat	Slightly flat	Moderately sharp	

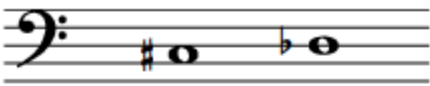
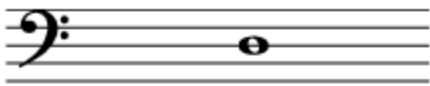
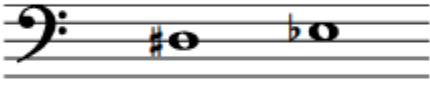
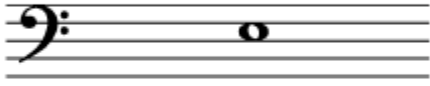
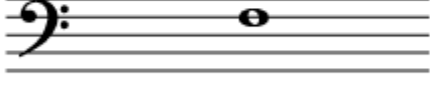
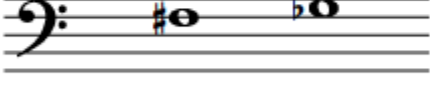
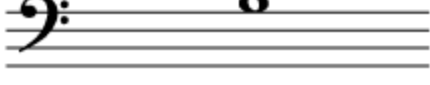
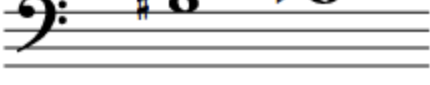
<p>G</p>   <p>Very sharp</p>	<p>G# or A_b</p>  	<p>A</p>  	<p>A# or B_b</p>  	<p>B</p>  	<p>C</p>  
<p>C# or D_b</p>  	<p>D</p>  	<p>D# or E_b</p>   <p>Slightly flat</p>	<p>E</p>   <p>Flat</p>	<p>F</p>   <p>Flat</p>	
<p>F# or G_b</p>  	<p>G</p>   <p>Sharp</p>	<p>G# or A_b</p>  	<p>A</p>  	<p>A# or B_b</p>  	

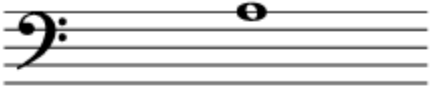
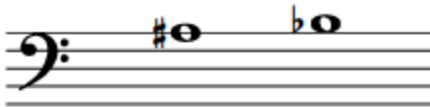
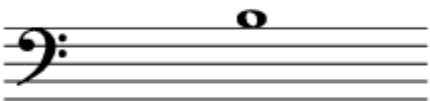
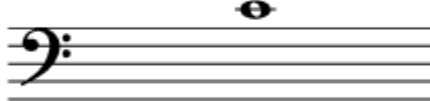
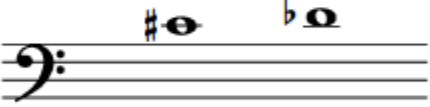
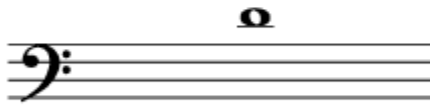
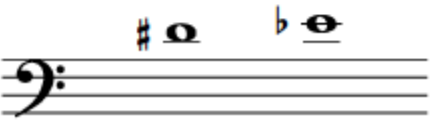
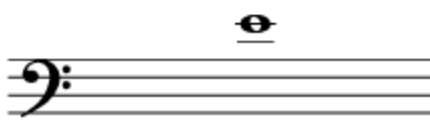
Bass Clef Flash Cards

Cut out the flash cards on the following pages and use the “Reading Notes in Bass Clef” section (pages 17-18) and your fingering chart to fill in the note name and fingering on the back of each card. Use them to quiz yourself until you can instantly identify both the name and the fingering for each note!

Acknowledgements

Many thanks to all of the people who worked with me to make this project possible. Special thanks go to:

- The ABC Clinicians and Conductors for sharing their knowledge and wisdom—much of which had a direct impact on this product.
- The students who volunteered to come in during their summer vacation to participate in this project, and their parents for providing permission for their participation. Thank you, Isabelle Keneally, Fiona Farley, Carolyn Grahm, Izaak Grant, and Mateo Lauron.
- My fellow ABC candidates who offered guidance, suggestions, and encouragement during the process of completing this project and my colleague, Denny d'Alelio, for his guidance on bassoon.

About the Author

Catrina Tangchittsumran-Stumpf is entering her seventh year as the director of



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Ms. Tangchittsumran-Stumpf holds a Bachelor of Music in Music Education from James Madison University, and is pending completion of a Master of Music in Conducting from the American Band College of Sam Houston State University. Her primary instrument is flute, on which she performs regularly with the Fairfax Wind Symphony. She is certified to teach Instrumental Music (grades k-12) in the State of Virginia and has completed Level 3 assessment training for the International Baccalaureate Middle Years Program.

In addition to her position as the Band Director at Jefferson Middle School, Ms. Tangchittsumran-Stumpf serves as the Color Guard and Marching & Maneuvering Instructor for the Wakefield High School Marching Warriors. She is the Manager for the Arlington Junior Honors Band & Orchestra for Grades 4-6.

Ms. Tangchittsumran-Stumpf is a member of the Music Educators National Conference, the Virginia Music Educators Association, the Virginia Band & Orchestra Directors Association, and the Women Band Directors International.

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