

FLUTE QUICK REFERENCE SHEET FOR TEACHERS

Dr. Nicole Riner, Visiting Assistant Professor of Flute and Entrepreneurship
University of Wyoming
www.nicoleriner.com
nriner@uwyo.edu

ALIGNMENT AND HAND POSITION

Flute Alignment - Center of the embouchure hole with the center of the C key. Check this by looking down the flute from the either end. • Adjust footjoint so that when you slide your right pinky over, it closes the fingering for low C. • Pull out headjoint $\frac{1}{4}$ inch to start, checking to be sure that C1 and C2, C#1 and C#2, D1 and D1 are in tune. Adjust as necessary.

Setting the Right Hand - Place the right hand middle finger on the E key and then set the other fingers before bringing the right hand thumb to the backside of the tube. • The fingers move from the 3rd knuckle back from the nail. • The knuckles should be the same height as the keys.

Setting the Left hand - Place middle finger on the A key. • Position other fingers • Turn flute over letting the flute rest on your finger tips. • Drop the thumb into position. The left side of the thumb should be centered on the B-flat key, allowing the thumb to roll to the right for the B-natural key. • The thumb is played straight and pointed back towards the player. • As you roll the flute back into playing position, the flute rests on the lowest section of your left hand's index finger.

Placement on face - The lip plate should fit in the flat part of the chin with the bottom lip resting over it. • The embouchure hole should meet the line between your lip and chin. • Keep head up and bring the flute down to you, not your face to the flute!

Tip • Rather than thinking "Hold the flute," think "Balance the flute".

HOW AIRFLOW AFFECTS FLUTE PLAYING

Rather than changing air speed internally, flutists adjust how much air goes into the instrument by changing the angle of the air against the outer edge of the embouchure hole. Think of bringing the lips forward into a relaxed pucker and adjusting the jaw to allow you to blow up and down in a straight line. This motion can be practiced with a Pneumo Pro, by holding a straw between the lips and tracing a line up and down with the end, or by using lip/jaw motion to blow a steady stream of air from the wrist to the fingertips, on a hand held vertically in front of your face. This motion, supported by a constant stream of fast air, will allow you to accomplish all sonic tasks. Here's a little cheat sheet:

Angling air down □ putting more air into flute □ lowers pitch, drops octave, creates crescendo.

Angling air up □ putting less air into flute □ raises pitch, jumps octave, creates decrescendo.

Tip • Think of playing through one long flow of air.

COMMON FLUTE ARTICULATION PROBLEMS AND SOLUTIONS

1) No Articulation: “Pu” or “Ha” sounds will result in airy, inaccurate tone that lacks definition, prevents legato playing, and encourages them to breathe in between every note. It is important the student understands that the air stream is continuous while playing from note to note, and the articulation simply interrupts it to provide rhythmic and phrasing clarity and variety.

2) Incorrect Tongue Placement: Tongue placement remains the same regardless of register or dynamic on the flute. When first teaching articulation to a student, keep it simple! The less-is-more approach works very well for articulation! Say “too” or “toe” to feel the correct placement of the tip of the tongue. The tip of the tongue, and only the very tip, should generally make contact on the roof of the mouth, right behind the top teeth. For more advanced students ready to tackle double tonguing, I recommend “tu ku” or, if that creates too harsh of a sound, “du gu”.

3) Stopping the Sound: For flutists it is unnecessary to DO anything to stop the sound. The performer should simply stop blowing air. The best way to demonstrate this is to have the student sing a note on “ta”. The mouth opens and the tongue articulates to start the note, but to end the note what happens? Nothing! Flute is the instrument most similar to singing and ending a note should feel the same.

4) Resting Position: Lastly, it is important for both the student and teacher to understand what happens to the tongue placement in between articulations. While not in use, the tongue should return to its resting place as low in the mouth as possible. It is important the tongue returns to this lowered position as quickly as possible so as not to disrupt the air stream.

MORE HELPFUL REFERENCES

Websites:

Dr. Riner’s hand-outs and guides: <https://sites.google.com/site/wyoflutes/teacher-resources>

Dr. Riner’s flute pedagogy blog: <https://rinerflute.blogspot.com/>

Dr. Riner’s YouTube Channel: <https://www.youtube.com/@nicoleriner3724/videos>

The best fingering chart for flute and piccolo: <https://www.wfg.woodwind.org/flute/>

Jennifer Cluff’s encyclopedic website: <https://www.jennifercluff.com/>

National Flute Association: <https://www.nfaonline.org/>

Free music downloads (for all instruments!): imslp.org

Essential books for flute students:

Wye, Trevor: Practice Book Omnibus Edition (Novello)

Wilkinson, Fiona: The Physical Flute (Mayfair)

Dweck, Carol: Mindset (Random House)

Moyse, Marcel: De La Sonorite (Leduc)