

# Oboe Clinic—with Holly White

## Oboe Clinic

- I. Is the oboe a wise choice for this student?
  - Personal Characteristics
    - Intelligent
    - Self-motivation
    - Not easily discouraged or frustrated
    - Financially able
    - Parental input
  - Physical Characteristics
    - Somewhat full lips
    - Lips not turned outward
    - Ability to drop jaw & round and stretch cheeks
    - Double jointed fingers are a problem
  
- II. Once we have a student to teach:
  - Sometimes little fingers can't cover the holes consistently. Put a piece of scotch tape over the G key for a short time until hands can accomplish this goal. This especially happens when using left handed E(flat) key. Wait until after Christmas of first year to teach alternate E(flat) fingering.
  
  - Use “forked F” fingering when going to or from D or any of the 3 right hand cluster keys. Use an E(flat) key with forked F. Important!
  
  - Teach “standard F” fingering. Use it as much as possible. It is in tune. I call it the “banana key fingering.”
  
  - Strive for a more horizontal fingering position:
    - Hit 2<sup>nd</sup> octave key at bottom of key
  
    - Right thumb under thumb-rest at side of nail, not behind knuckle
  
    - Keep hands (palms and fingers) round, not flat fingers
  
    - Cut nails to avoid getting caught in keys
  
    - Wrists flat; not bent in
  
    - Arms slightly out from body
  
    - Horizontal position for ½ hole employment
  
  - Embouchure
    - Stretch cheek muscles down to open mouth

Jaw round like a banana and forward

Hold head up

Oboe out

Bottom teeth are lower than bottom lip

Bottom lip is spongy and rest the reed upon

The degree of turn-in of bottom lip needs to be adjusted for student's physical status and tone desired

Play no more than  $\frac{1}{2}$  way down on reed for control

The tongue should hit the reed exactly at the edge of the tip; not under or over as a beginning point

The tone needs supported, teach it in the way you would any other instrument:

- \*Remember, oboists generally have a hard time getting rid of excess air

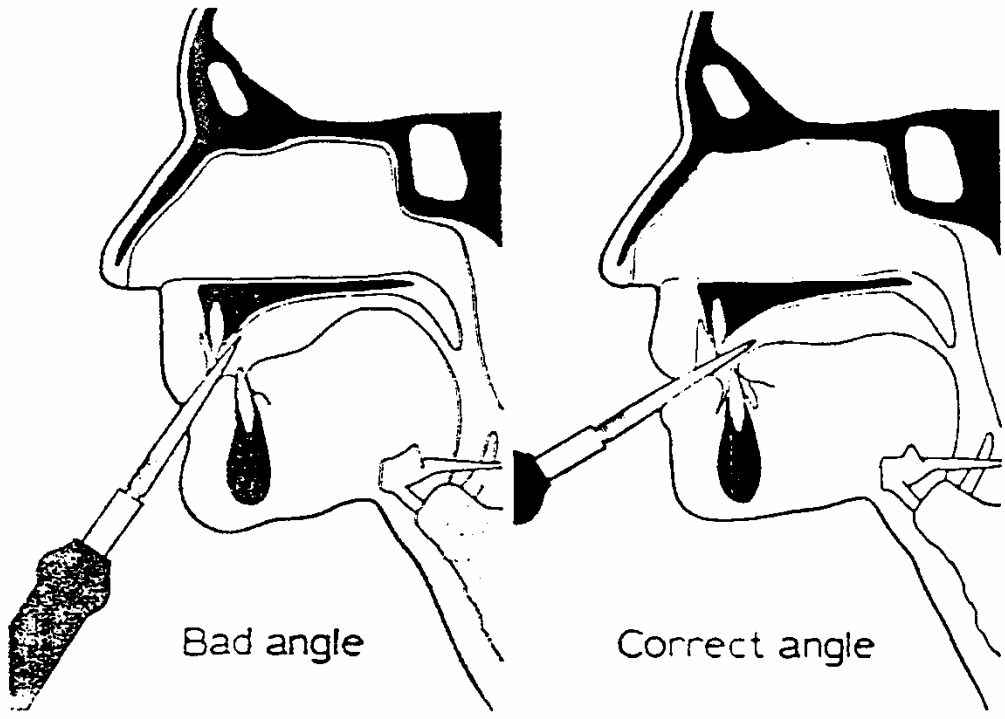
- \*We need support for projection but not as much air as one would think

- \*You might try a little less air intake at first

- \*My more advanced students are taught to inhale, exhale and then play the phrase. This gives support on a very small amount of air and is the stepping stone to vibrato

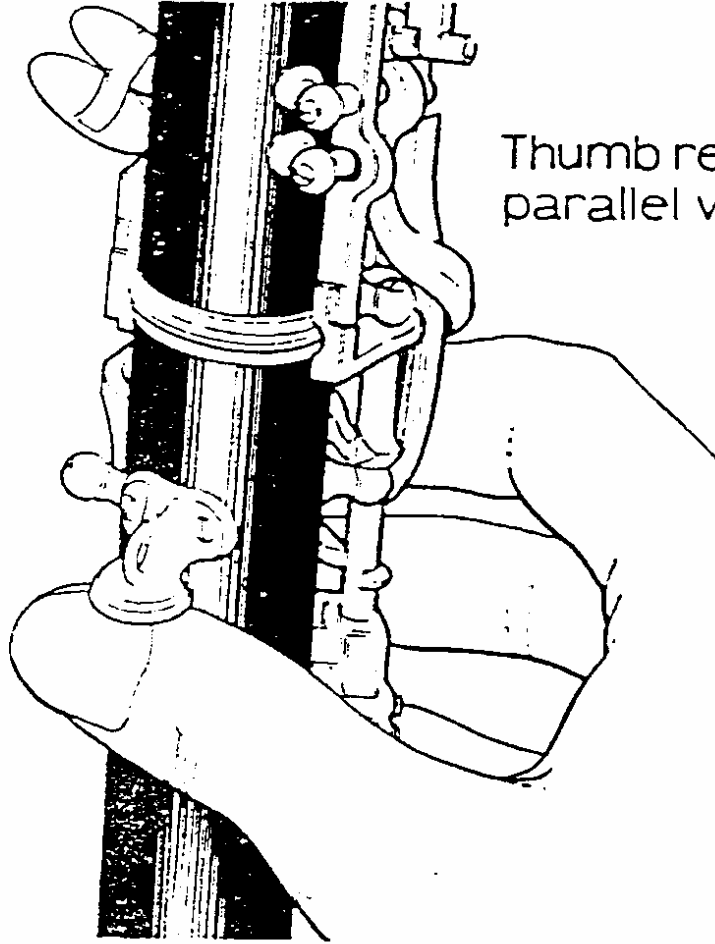
Beginners should gradually work up to longer periods of practice. Mine start at 5-10 minutes with a 15-30 minute or more break. Then gradually increase practice time and decrease rest time. Maybe a kitchen timer would be of value.

Massage face muscles and buzz lips to relax embouchure.



Bad angle

Correct angle



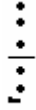
Thumb rest position,  
parallel with nail.

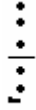
III. Additional Points to Stress

½-hole is used for “in the staff” C(sharp), D, and E(flat)—no octave key with these fingerings.

Do not use an octave key with a ½ hole.

E(flat) is a ½-hole and E is an octave key. Don’t let them cheat.



Standard F(  ) is used primarily. Forked F is used with D and three right hand cluster keys.

Second octave key is used on high A, B(flat), B, and C.

Do not slide or lift top finger of left hand. Rock or Roll it to go from ½-hole to closed hole.

When using a silk cleaning swab, drop the weight through from the top of the oboe. When using a feather, you may swab out from the bottom.

Vibrato sometimes may be taught by using the “inhale-exhale” principle.

IV. Method Books that may help for beginners:

Gekeler Oboe Methods – Belwin

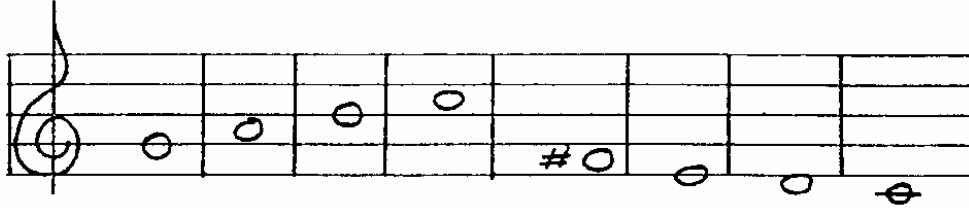
Tunes for Oboe Technic – Belwin

Everybody’s Favorite Series for Oboe (sharp)99 – Music Sales

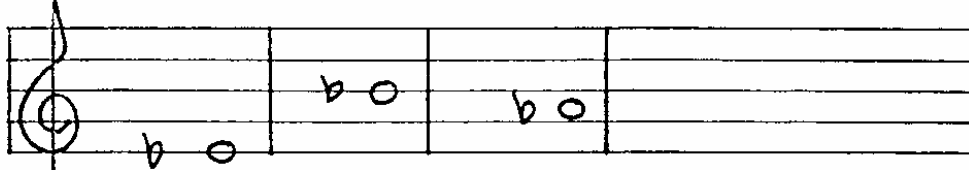
Selected Duets & Pares Scales for Oboe – Rubank

I Recommend – Belwin

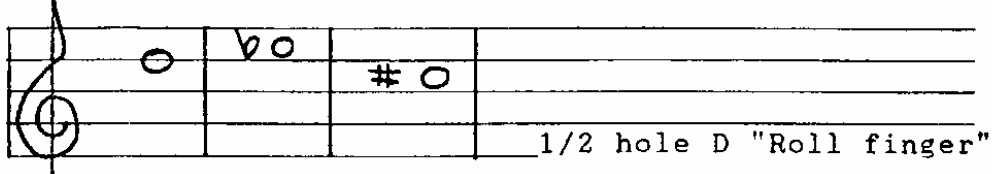
V. I teach the beginner, notes in the following order:



Then:



Then:



VI. Switching students to Oboe.

Easy Switch to and from saxophone.

Fingerings are very similar

Mouthpiece aperture is different but not extremely difficult, the student just pushes more air through the sax.

Harder Switch to and from flute

Difficult Switch to or from clarinet

VII. Purchase of oboes --PLASTIC--

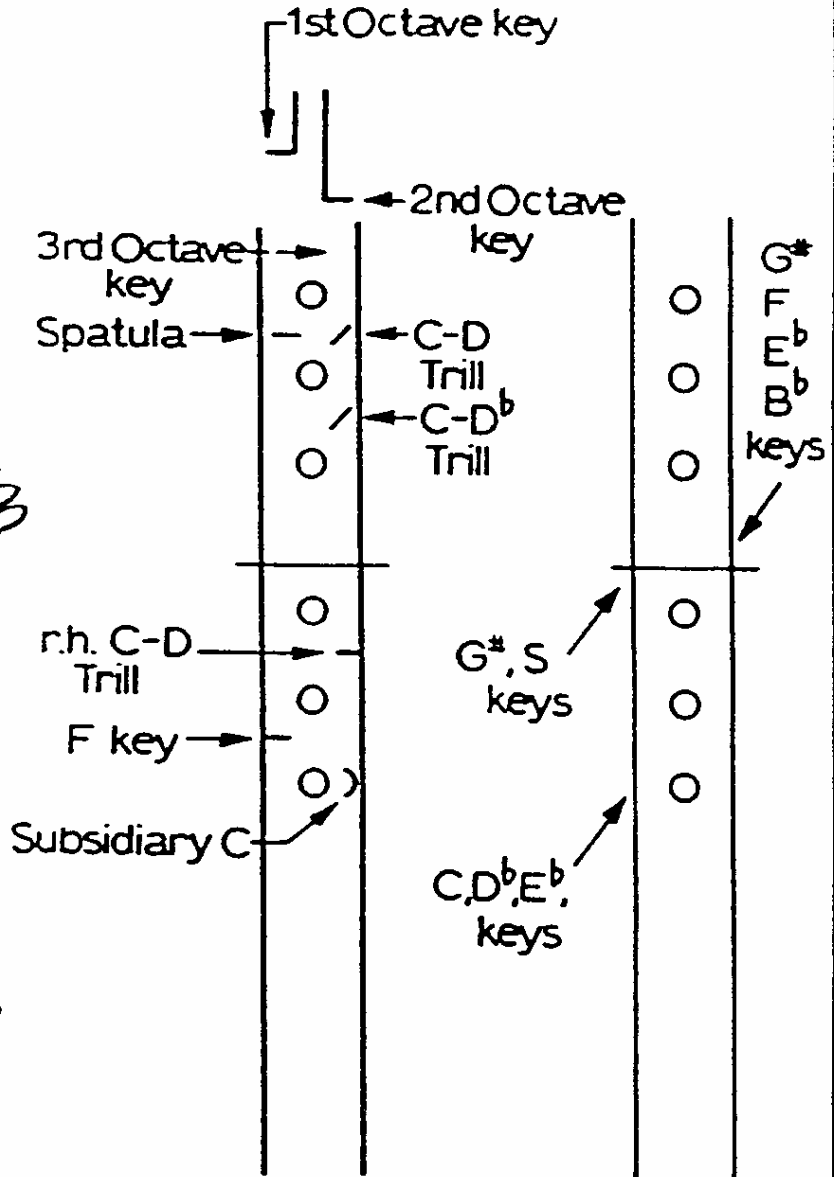
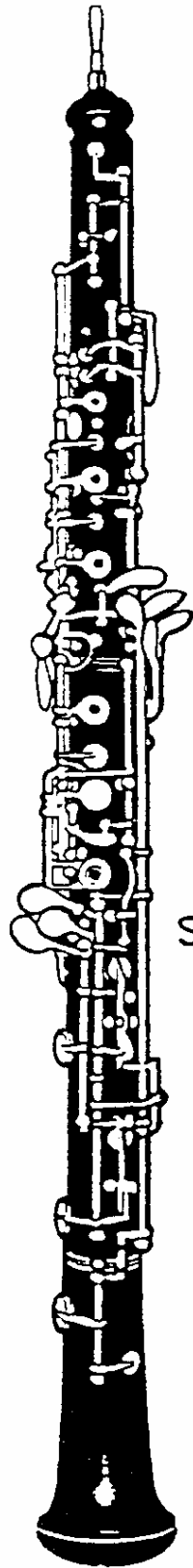
Beginner - less keys (no Bb, some trills, no side f's), covered keys

Intermediate - side f and low Bb

Pro - better voicing, resonance, and split ring key

Wooden - can be purchased for a student who is very serious under the direction of a specialist

# Fingering Chart for Trills



Musical notation for the first system shows a sequence of chords: B, Eb, D#, Eb, F, and G#. The chord diagrams below show the fingerings for each chord. The first diagram shows B (finger 1 on 2nd string, 2 on 4th, 3 on 5th) with an arrow pointing to an open C# string. The second diagram shows Eb (finger 1 on 2nd, 2 on 4th, 3 on 5th) with an arrow pointing to an open C# string. The third diagram shows D# (finger 1 on 2nd, 2 on 4th, 3 on 5th) with an arrow pointing to an open C# string. The fourth diagram shows Eb (finger 1 on 2nd, 2 on 4th, 3 on 5th) with an arrow pointing to an open C# string. The fifth diagram shows F (finger 1 on 2nd, 2 on 4th, 3 on 5th) with an arrow pointing to an open C# string. The sixth diagram shows G# (finger 1 on 2nd, 2 on 4th, 3 on 5th) with an arrow pointing to an open C# string.

Musical notation for the second system shows a sequence of chords: G#, S, G#, G#, G#, G#, and G#. The word "or" is written between the first and second chords, and between the fifth and sixth chords. The chord diagrams below show the fingerings for each chord. The first diagram shows G# (finger 1 on 2nd, 2 on 4th, 3 on 5th) with an arrow pointing to an open S string. The second diagram shows S (finger 1 on 2nd, 2 on 4th, 3 on 5th) with an arrow pointing to an open G# string. The third diagram shows G# (finger 1 on 2nd, 2 on 4th, 3 on 5th) with an arrow pointing to an open G# string. The fourth diagram shows G# (finger 1 on 2nd, 2 on 4th, 3 on 5th) with an arrow pointing to an open G# string. The fifth diagram shows G# (finger 1 on 2nd, 2 on 4th, 3 on 5th) with an arrow pointing to an open G# string. The sixth diagram shows G# (finger 1 on 2nd, 2 on 4th, 3 on 5th) with an arrow pointing to an open G# string. The seventh diagram shows G# (finger 1 on 2nd, 2 on 4th, 3 on 5th) with an arrow pointing to an open G# string.

(Trill both keys with one finger)

Musical notation for the third system shows a sequence of chords: Eb, D#, G#, G#, G#, G#, and G#. The word "or" is written between the fifth and sixth chords. The chord diagrams below show the fingerings for each chord. The first diagram shows Eb (finger 1 on 2nd, 2 on 4th, 3 on 5th) with an arrow pointing to an open D# string. The second diagram shows D# (finger 1 on 2nd, 2 on 4th, 3 on 5th) with an arrow pointing to an open D# string. The third diagram shows G# (finger 1 on 2nd, 2 on 4th, 3 on 5th) with an arrow pointing to an open S string. The fourth diagram shows G# (finger 1 on 2nd, 2 on 4th, 3 on 5th) with an arrow pointing to an open S string. The fifth diagram shows G# (finger 1 on 2nd, 2 on 4th, 3 on 5th) with an arrow pointing to an open S string. The sixth diagram shows G# (finger 1 on 2nd, 2 on 4th, 3 on 5th) with an arrow pointing to an open S string. The seventh diagram shows G# (finger 1 on 2nd, 2 on 4th, 3 on 5th) with an arrow pointing to an open S string.



Musical notation showing a sequence of notes on a treble clef staff. The notes are: G4, A4, B4, C5, B4, A4, G4, F4, E4. The notes are grouped with slurs and breath marks. Below the staff, the word "or" is written.

L	L	L			J		J
● ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○	● ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○	● ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○	● ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○	● ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○	● ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○	● ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○	● ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○
			G#	C	G#	S	C(C#)

Musical notation showing a sequence of notes on a treble clef staff. The notes are: G4, A4, B4, C5, B4, A4, G4, F4, E4. The notes are grouped with slurs and breath marks. Below the staff, the word "or" is written.

L	L	L	L	L	L	L
● ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○	● ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○	● ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○	● ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○	● ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○	● ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○	● ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○
	B $\flat$	G#	G#	G#	B $\flat$	S

(Teeth emboucher)

## Oboe Reeds

### Reed Sources

Handmade from pros, college students, or advanced high school students

Commercial reeds

Choose a longer scrape

Avoid wire

Look for a heart

### Adjusting reeds

Tools needed: plaque, knife or single edge razor blade or exacto knife, pliers without teeth

If reed is too hard:

Lightly thin out tip and heart

Close opening from sides near top of wrapping

If reed is too soft:

Cut tip of reed

Open reed with pliers from flat part of wrapping near top of wrapping

Try to maintain stable temperature with respect to reeds:

In winter, place reeds in a reed case (not air-tight) and put case in inside pocket when going back and forth to school

Don't put oboe or reeds in trunk of car or near heater or air conditioning ducts.

In summer don't place reeds next to a sunny window or air conditioning

Slow, gradual changes in temperature will help to keep it from cracking

Reed must be wet to adjust. You may open the top of the reed or close it with your fingers before deciding whether to use the pliers.

Soak reeds in hydrogen peroxide to clean. Use lukewarm water for one minute (2 minutes if child hasn't played the day before) to soak reeds in before playing.

Lipstick clogs the pores and vascular bundles.

Reeds normally last 3-4 weeks.

This may be obvious to the professional director, but I constantly remind students to guard against braces on teeth, sweaters, stands, hair, etc. Remind the student to open his mouth 1<sup>st</sup>, place reed on bottom lip and bring top lip down. Don't touch reed with teeth.

## Problems

Gurgling in the low register. Try:

1. Wetting the reed more
2. Less pressure on reed from lips
3. Dropping jaw
4. Opening reed
5. Check bottom pad on top joint held down by bridge key – sometimes this leaks

Sharpness in high register. Try:

1. Dropping jaw
2. A little longer reed
3. Opening the reed
4. A little harder reed
5. Playing the correct pitch on a stable instrument and have the student sing the pitch correctly and/or play to match the correct pitch (sometimes they just don't know where the pitch is).
6. Sometimes a visual analysis will prove to the strong-willed student that the pitch needs adjusted
7. Use harmonic fingerings.
8. Lengthen scrape.

Thin sound. Try:

1. Opening mouth.
2. Harder reed (more wood in heart).

Oboe is too loud and over balancing band. Try:

1. Thinning reed (tip and heart).
2. Closing tip.
3. Keep using support so that pitches stay stable.
4. Don't tell them to blow easier.

Too much air left over after playing.

Try teaching: Breathe in, let all the air out, then play the phrase (much less air).

Holly White is a professional oboist and oboe instructor from Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, where she carries a load of approximately 70 private oboe students per week. She received her Bachelors Degree in Music Education and Performance from Morehead State University in Kentucky and her Masters in Performance from Eastern Illinois University.

She has studied with Joe Martin, a student of Tabuteau, Paulette Chrise – from the Paris Conservatory, Jerry Siruchek from I.U. in Bloomington, and Ray Still from the Chicago Symphony.

Mrs. White has been teaching oboe for over 20 years and has successfully placed students in such fine schools as Eastman, Julliard, Peabody, Manhattan School of Music, Northwestern, and Interlochen. Several of her students are playing professionally here and abroad. However, she states that she specializes in teaching students in grades 4 through 12. Her students are consistently awarded 1<sup>st</sup> chair seats in competitions up to and including the national level. She has taken pride in never having had an oboe student turned down for an oboe scholarship.