

Teaching the Flute Embouchure

When I began playing flute as a woodwind “doubler,” I assumed that making and teaching the flute embouchure would be easy. It came easily for me so it should come easily for everyone. Right?

Wrong! After observing literally thousands of young flutists, producing a good flute embouchure and consequently a good tone and intonation can be a challenge for some students and teachers.

To assist the students in forming and developing their flute embouchure, have each flute student be responsible for providing a small mirror that is to be placed on the students music stand. This will help the students to see that their embouchure is being formed properly.

To ensure a good formation of the embouchure have the students do the following:

Without the flute head joint

1. To aid in the development of jaw flexibility, bend your arm at the elbow. Hold the arm so that the arm from shoulder to elbow is parallel to the floor and elbow to hand is perpendicular to the floor. Take a full breath and expel the air up and down the arm, without moving your head. By projecting the jaw slightly outward, the air stream will rise.
2. With the lips in a natural closed position have the students draw the corners of their mouth into a gentle smile. The lips should remain closed.
3. Place the index finger horizontally on the lip as if it were a flute.
4. Take a full inhale and expel the air, whispering “tu”.



With the flute head joint

5. Place the inner edge of the “blow hole” on the lower lip where the wet and dry part of the lip meet. The lower lip should remain soft and should cover approximately 1/3 of the blow hole. Check it with the mirror.



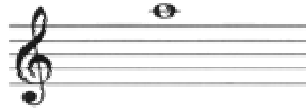
6. Using the mirror, check to see that, when expelling air, the opening in the lips (aperture) is centered in on the blow hole. Adjust, if necessary. Another way of checking to see if the embouchure is centered is to look to see that there is a compact “triangle of condensation” centered on the opposite side of the embouchure plate as your lips.
7. Roll the head joint in or out to create the best tone. The tone is created by splitting the air stream with the opposite side of the blow hole.



If the embouchure is formed properly and the end plug is adjusted properly, you should play the following with a closed head:



You should play the following note on an open head joint:



To aid in the development of the embouchure, have the students learn to play *Merrily, We Roll Along* and other three-note songs by inserting their right index finger in the end of the head joint.



By following these simple steps, students will learn to form a good flute embouchure that will be important in the development of a beautiful flute tone.

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