

Making a Sound!



A Beginner's Guide to the Oboe



By Jessica Wolf



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The Oboe Embouchure:

The word “EMBOUCHURE” means the shape of our lips and mouth while we play. Generally, the shape of the embouchure when you are playing the oboe should almost the same as when we say “no oboe.”

Here are 5 easy steps to set up an oboe embouchure on the REED ALONE...



Playing The Reed Alone...

1. To start, hold your reed by the string and lay the cane on your lower lip, like a cushion.
2. Next, round the corners of your lips, like you're saying “ooo.”
3. Then, drop your lower jaw by saying “oh” and take a breath.
4. Last, cover your bottom and top teeth with your lips so they don't touch the reed.
5. Now blow! Your reed should play a high B or C.

Reminders to Get a Good Sound...

Make sure you have equal pressure from all sides of your lips.

Keep your teeth open and apart - no biting!

Keep space inside your mouth, like you are yawning with your mouth closed.

The corners of your mouth should be forward and rounded.

Don't put too much of the reed in your mouth.

Your bottom lip should be a cushion - not too firm and not too soft.



Crowing the Reed...

Next we are going to try a technique called "crowing" on the reed. The goal of this exercise is to get two notes to sound - a low C and a high C - at the same time. First, lay the tip of the reed on your bottom lip where the wet/dry line is. Then roll your lip in slightly, so about $\frac{1}{8}$ inch of the reed is in your mouth. Cushion the top of the reed with your top lip. Then blow! See if you can get both the low and the high note in the crow to sound. This is a good way to test if your embouchure is correct and if your reed is working properly, and crowing the reed is great practice to develop your embouchure.***

****This is just for practice. You will not crow on the reed when you are actually playing the oboe.*

Possible challenges when crowing the reed...

1. Only the high note sounds - You may be biting or pinching the reed too tight. Try saying "oh" to separate your teeth, or soften your lips.
2. Only the low note sounds - Your embouchure may be too loose. Try rolling in your bottom lip more, or firming the corners of your mouth a little.
3. You hear rushing air - Try rolling in your bottom lip and firming the corners of your mouth. Also make sure you are supporting your air!
4. Nothing sounds, or you only get a high squeaky sound - You are probably biting or tightening your lips too much. Try saying oh or softening your lips like a cushion more and rounding them into a circle.



Hand Position

When you hold the oboe, it is important to make sure to curve your fingers and play using the PAD of each finger, not the tip. Also, make sure that you practice keeping your fingers close to the keys when you lift them - that will eventually help your fingers go faster when you are playing runs of lots of notes! See the next page for a diagram of where to put your fingers on the oboe.

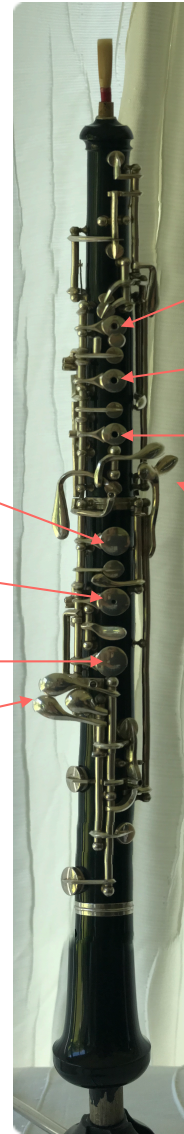
Remember to position your thumb on the thumb rest near the nail not the joint!



YES



NO!



LH Finger 1

LH Finger 2

LH Finger 3

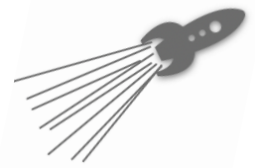
LH Pinkie

RH Finger 4

RH Finger 5

RH Finger 6

RH Pinkie



Playing Your First Notes!

Finally the moment you've been waiting for! It's time to try making a sound on the whole oboe! Push the reed all the way into the receiver. Let's not use any of the keys for this first note. Just hold the thumb rest to help you balance the instrument. Now here comes the tricky part... sit up straight and bring the oboe to you. Do NOT lean forward or reach for the oboe. Now let's do those same 4 steps we used to make a sound on the reed.

1. Lay the reed on your lower lip, like a cushion.
2. Next, round the corners of your lips, like you're saying "ooo."
3. Then, drop your lower jaw by saying "oh" and take a breath.
4. Last, cover your bottom and top teeth with your lips, so they don't touch the reed.
5. Now blow a steady stream of air.

Helpful Suggestions...

- Practice re-forming the embouchure by following the 4 steps a bunch of times, so it becomes muscle memory.
- Try putting less reed in your mouth.
- Keep space inside your mouth, like you're yawning with your mouth closed.
- Try practicing in front of a mirror.
- Make sure you are putting equal pressure with your lips from all sides of the reed.
- Try adjusting the angle of the oboe to your body. The oboe should be at about a 45 degree angle.
- Try firming or softening your lips to see how it changes your sound. Find the perfect balance.
- Keep your teeth apart. Don't bite!