

Day 1 - Bassoon

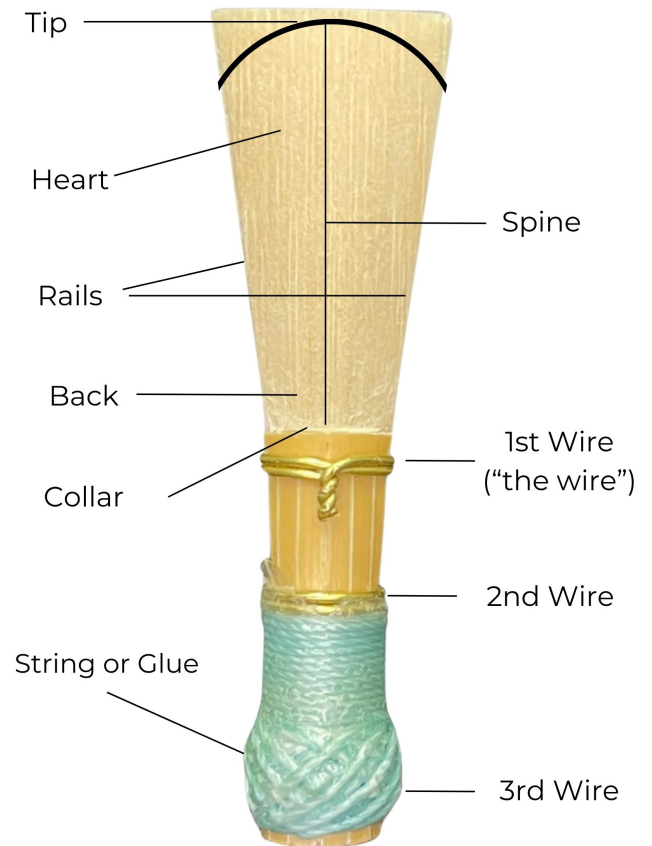
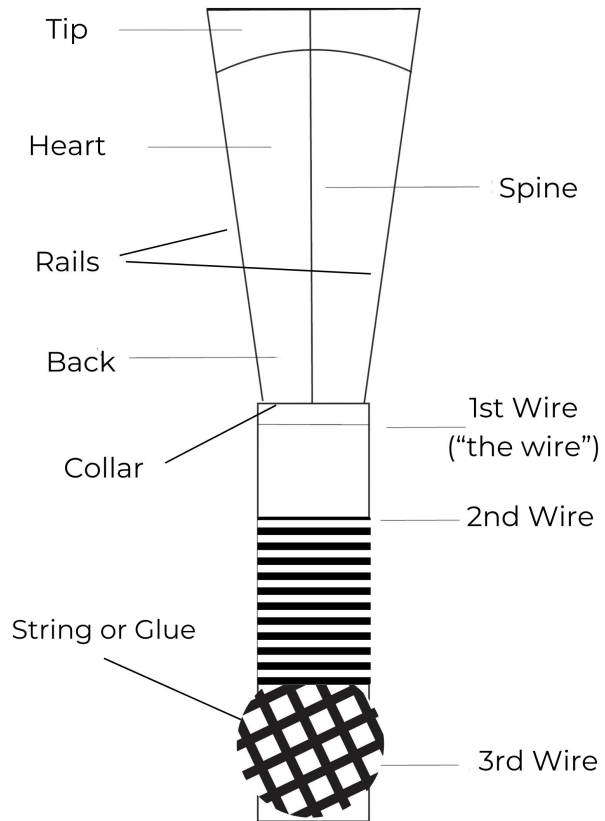


The Midwest Clinic
Chicago, IL
December, 2024

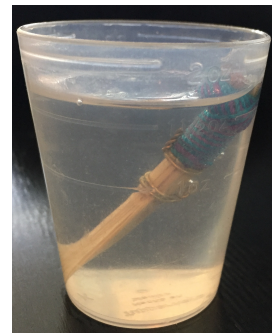
Jennifer Auerbach
with Sally Bohls



Bassoon Reed Diagram



Always soak your bassoon reed in a cup of water before playing! Just putting it in the mouth is not enough. Double reeds have an inside and an outside, not just a top and a bottom like single reeds.



Bassoon Embouchure

in 6 easy steps

STEP 1



1) Pinky at the wire

STEP 2



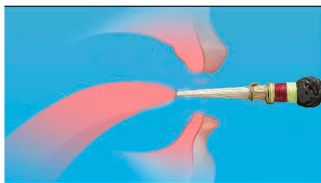
2) Say "how" & breathe in

STEP 3



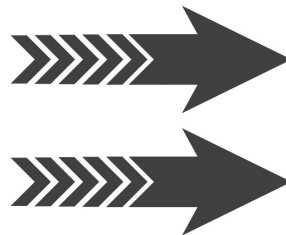
3) Corners forward - lips stay wrapped over teeth

STEP 4



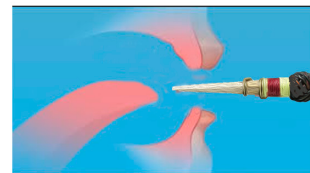
4) Touch tip of tongue to tip of reed

STEP 5



5) Add air pressure before starting sound

STEP 6



6) Pull tongue back and release pressurized air

Source: Bocal Majority Double Reeds: JenniferAuerbach 2021

Bassoon Embouchure:

Mouth position _____

Mouth shape _____

Breathing / how to breathe _____

Tongue position / how to tongue / where does the tongue go and what does it do

Blowing continuously _____

Fill your lungs with air the way you fill a glass with water: from the bottom up:





- Bassoon embouchure can be taller, firmer, more relaxed, corners forward
- Air can be pressurized (or lacking pressure/support)
- Bassoon voicing can be high in the throat or low in the throat (adjust open/closed)
 - Mid-high A up to super high E – think “Eeh” (like “free”)
 - Half hole notes (G-flat, G, G-sharp)– think “Eh” (like “enter”)
 - Low F to middle F – think “Ah” (like “spa”)
 - Low B-flat to low F – think “Uh” (like “bun”)

Sitting on the chair and body position_____

Seat strap options:

S Hook Style Seat Strap



Cup Style Seat Strap



Seat strap position on the chair:



If they have problems keeping the seat strap to stay put, you can use a sheet of rubber shelf liner on the chair.

Over or under the seat strap:



Hand Position

Both hands make a comfortable “C”



Home Keys and Holes:

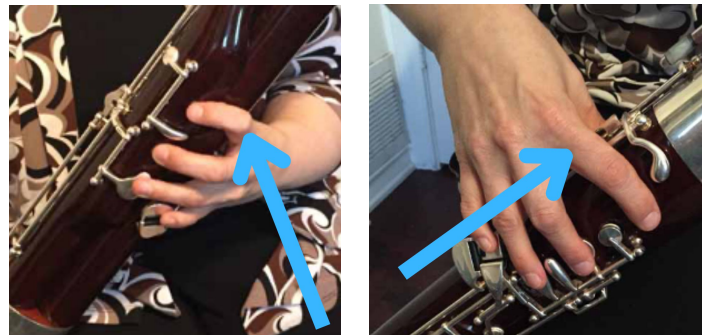
Left Hand

Whisper Key
Hole, Hole, (Key), Top Pinky

Right Hand

Pancake Key
Hole, Hole, Raindrop Key, Square Key

Balance points at the bases of both index fingers:



The crutch can be used, added to the boot joint to prop the right hand up and to keep it from collapsing. Can be used with the round part up or down, players preference. Not everyone needs or uses a crutch. Depends on the hand size of the player (and the palm to finger ratio).

Required Supplies (these are the bare minimum “must-haves”):



Reed Care

- Never handle the reed from the tip; only the string or the glue.
- Don't rotate the reed around on the bocal more than is needed to get it on the bocal.
- Don't chew on the reed (I don't know why they do this...) and don't stash the reed in your mouth for extended periods of time.
- Dry off the reed before putting it away after playing.
- Store the reed in a proper reed case; not in the plastic tube it came in (mold happens).

Reed Tip Opening

Too Open Too Closed About Right



**Always adjust reeds that have been soaked in water*

How to fix a reed whose tip is too open: with a pair of needle-nose pliers, squeeze from top to bottom on the first wire.

How to fix a reed whose tip is too closed: with a pair of needle-nose pliers, squeeze from side to side on the first wire.

Bocals

Bocals come in sizes; most commonly: 1, 2, 3. There are other sizes, too (and the sizing varies from brand to brand).

- 1 is slightly shorter
- 2 is medium
- 3 is slightly longer

Bold claim: A professional can play in tune on any of these size bocals. The size difference is very slight. If you're lucky enough to be in a position to be able to choose what size to use or buy, most people go with a size 2. If what you have access to is a 1 or a 3, it will be fine.

LPT: trying to fix a player who is playing sharp by giving them a longer bocal usually is putting a band-aid on the situation because most commonly, bassoonists are playing sharp for other reasons (using too much vertical pressure on the reed, not voicing, not using enough air, not putting the lips in an optimal spot on the reed).

Bocal and Reed Exercises

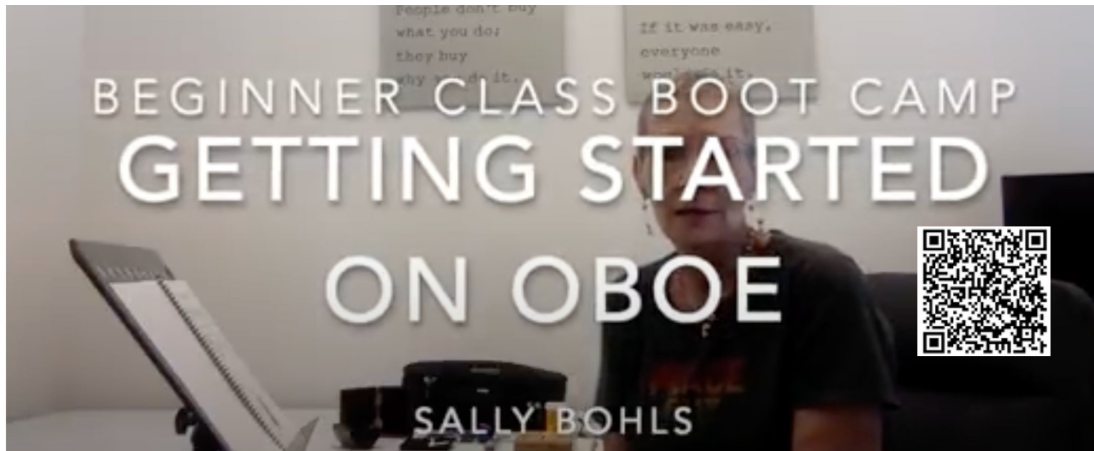


Tonal Energy Analysis Feature



Some Helpful QR Code Links to Videos by Sally and Jennifer

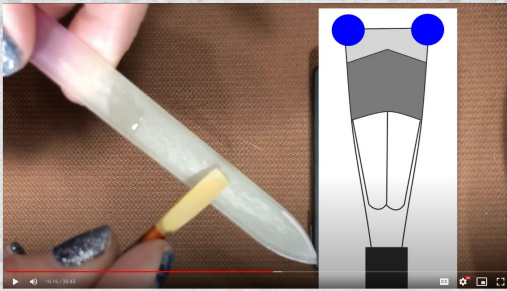
Oboe Beginner Introduction Video with Sally Bohls:



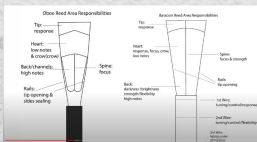
Bassoon Beginner Introduction Video with Jennifer Auerbach:



Oboe and Bassoon Reed Adjusting Tips by Sally and Jennifer
(from our recorded virtual TMEA clinic in 2021):



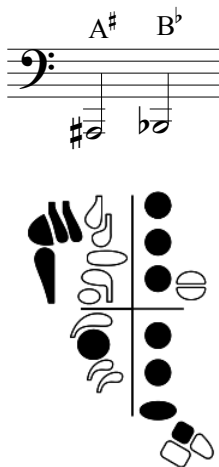
**Easy Oboe & Bassoon
Reed Adjustments
Anyone Can Do!**



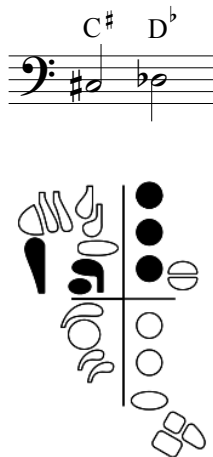
**Sally Bohls
&
Jennifer Auerbach**



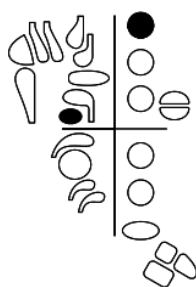
Trouble-Shooting Select Notes on the Bassoon



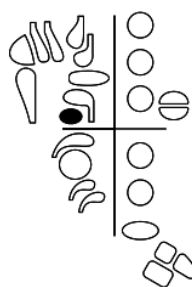
For the low notes in general and specifically this note, make sure all the left hand thumb keys are depressing the keys enough to press pads down all the way. Also, play closer to the tip of the reed, relax the lips and use more relaxed air.



If this note comes out flat, use firm, fast air and slightly firmer lips.



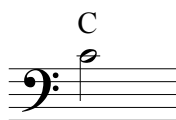
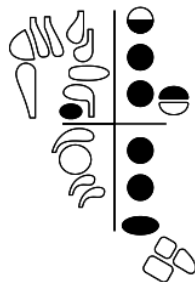
If this note is flat (very common) at first, use firm, fast air, slightly firmer air. It is also very important to have a reed that is strong enough to play this note in tune. With a very soft reed, regardless of what the player does, it may not be possible for the note to come out correctly.



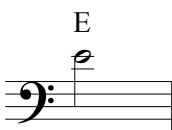
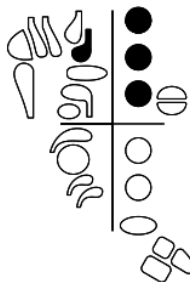
Similar to the issue with E



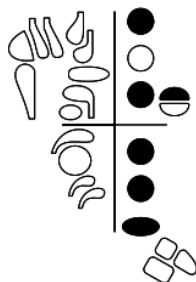
If this note has trouble speaking (also G-flat and G-sharp), check to make sure the correct amount of half-hole is being used and use more air.



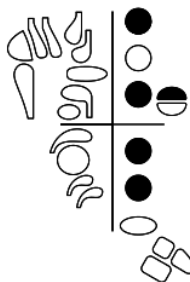
If this note is flat (also for A, B-flat, and B in this range), use faster, more intense air, and think higher voicing in the throat (more closed throat).



If this note has trouble speaking or is very flat (also the F and E-flat near it), use much faster air and slightly firmer lips.



If this note has trouble speaking or is very flat (also the E and E-flat near it), use much faster air and slightly firmer lips.



Bassoon Reed Common Problems and Solutions

PROBLEM	CAUSE	SOLUTIONS
The reed is hard to control. The player may sound buzzy or very flat, especially on 4th line F and 3rd space E.	Too much vibration.	1. Try tightening the first and/or the second wires. 2. Try squeezing from side to side on first and/or the second wires (check tip opening after). 3. Last resort is to clip the tip 1mm, which can be done with scissors.
The reed is hard to tongue. The reed may sound explosive (player blows, sound hesitates and then explodes).	Not enough vibration. Possibly tip too open or too thick.	1. Try squeezing the first wire from top to bottom to close the tip, then test. 2. Try using sane paper at the tip (220 grit). 3. Try sanding the tip with sandpaper flat on a table.
The reed is hard to blow. The player may also sound sharp overall.	Not enough vibration	1. Try squeezing from top to bottom on first and/or the second wires (check tip opening after). 2. Try using sandpaper in the heart and the back (220 grit).

First Wire Adjustments

Side to Side	Top to Bottom
Opens the tip	Closes the tip
Adds resistance	Makes more flexible
Makes sharper	Makes flatter
Strengthens	Weakens
Makes tone darker	Makes tone brighter

Second Wire Adjustments

Side to Side	Top to Bottom
Closes the tip	Opens the tip
Adds resistance	Makes more flexible
Makes sharper	Makes flatter
Strengthens	Weakens
Makes tone darker	Makes tone brighter

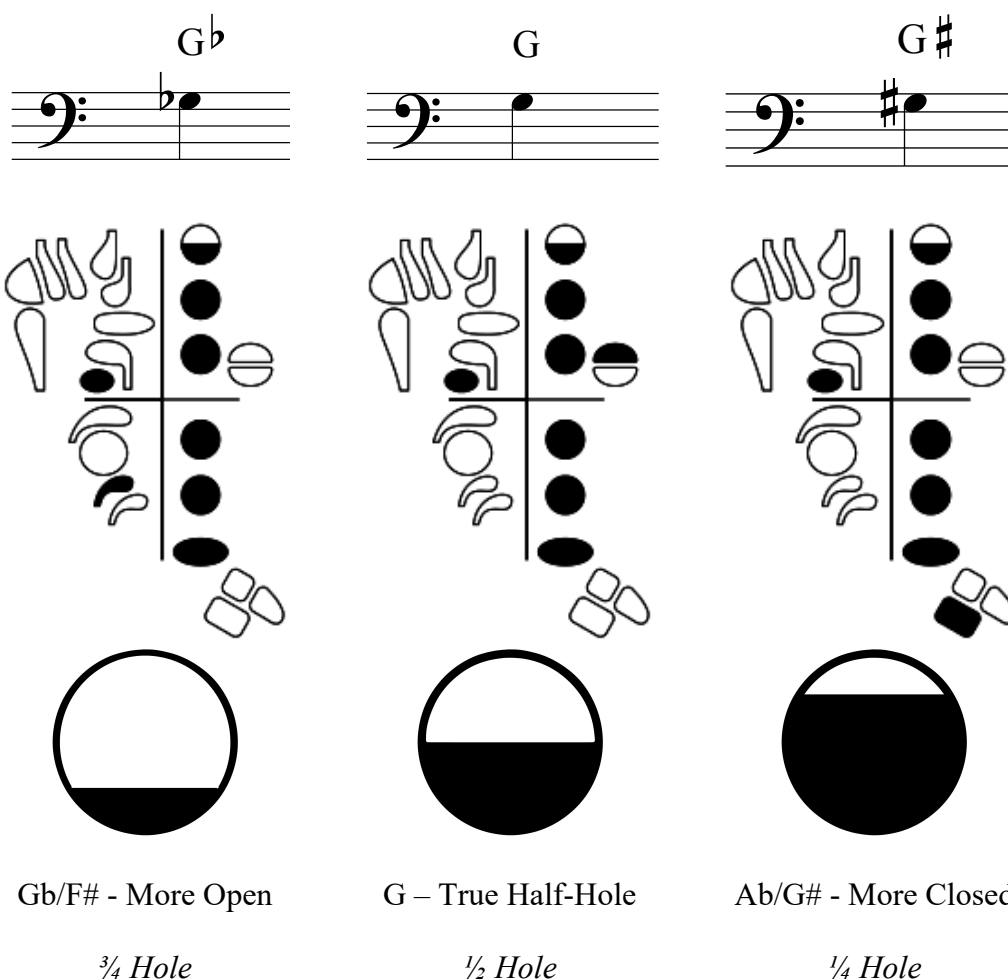
Pitch of the reed plus bocal: The bassoon reed plus the bocal should be a C#. The addition of the bocal is equivalent to the staple of the oboe reed and I think this is critical to checking the pitch of the reed. To crow the bassoon reed by itself (no bocal), put the lips on the first wire, use no pressure with the lips, and blow calm, warm air. You should hear a crackling sound where the pitch breaks into octaves (lows and highs) – we are striving for a balance of the lows and highs. Lows correspond to flexibility and highs correspond to strength.

Not All Half-Holes are Created Equal

The first note the students learn over the break is G. Start getting the used to these notes by playing starting on G and descending to other notes they know (to E, to F, etc...).

The left hand position is very important here – students should coordinate the hands coming up and going down together or else the notes will not come out properly. There is also the matter of the half hole. On middle F-sharp, G, and A-flat the left hand first finger covers only half of the hole. It takes practice learning to “role” the finger down to uncover the hole. Saying “rolling the finger” is the best way to explain what happens in this process and you should watch the bassoonist to see that they’re doing this right so they develop a good habit.

*Check to make sure that students use the whisper key and half hole for mid-high G-flat, G, and G-sharp and resonance key for G (but not the others):

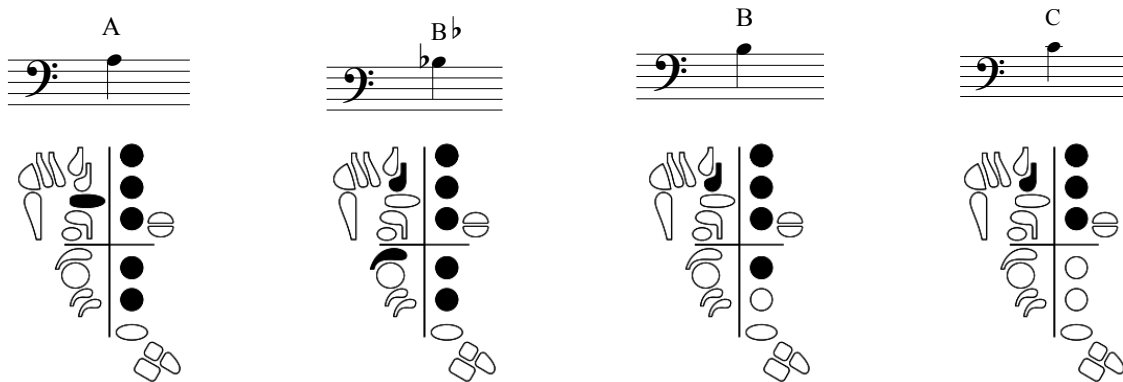


Flicking and Venting and Thumb Keys.... Oh My!

Second Octave Notes on the Bassoon

If you ever want to start an argument among bassoonists, ask them what the correct way to flick is.

The notes in the second octave (tenor range) require more air in order to make them come out high enough (in the correct octave) and to be in tune. The tendency is for students to bite more to get the notes to speak and play in tune. It is important that they learn to do this with faster air and higher voicing and not by biting. The embouchure IS slightly **firmer**, but not pinched off. I use the verbiage: “firmer embouchure.”



The notes in the second octave need some help in order to speak clearly initially and sometimes to sustain their sound. To accomplish this we use the technique of **FLICKING** or **VENTING** (two different things). The main difference between flicking and venting is that with flicking you touch the octave key and release it and with venting you touch and hold the octave key the whole time.

Technique:	Flicking	Venting
What:	Quickly touch one of the left hand thumb keys before tonguing a note and let it go after it speaks.	Touch and hold one of the left hand thumb keys for the whole duration of the note.
How:	Uses the SPEAKER KEYS to help the notes speak.	Uses the VENT KEYS to vent the wing joint causing the notes to sound correct.
Pros:	Allows the player more freedom to play with more fluid technique in faster passages.	Very simple to do at first – students learn the octave keys as part of the actual fingering. The notes always speak and sustain well.
Cons:	After the octave key comes off, more air is needed in order to sustain the right note or it could drop or growl.	Later when playing faster, using these keys all the time without regard to the situation can significantly slow the technique in fast passages.

In the flicking system, professionals typically will do the following with regard to how and when to flick:

- **System 1:** whenever you tongue A, B-flat, B or C, you must flick the note. Whenever you slur stepwise (within 2 half steps) you don't have to flick those notes.
- **System 2:** whenever you approach A, B-flat, B or C from a different range (below F or above E-flat) you flick these notes.

Recommended Bassoons

Recommended for: first year players

Absolutely acceptable for: intermediate players

Possible to be used for: advanced players (but something more is preferred)

Fox 41

- Plastic body
- Has 4 left hand thumb keys
- Has a plateau key om the left hand 3rd finger to aid those with shorter fingers to reach from the thumb all the way around to the fingers on the left hand
- Comes with 2 Fox C bocals (sturdier to withstand less experienced players)

Recommended for: intermediate players

Absolutely acceptable for: first year players

Possible to be used for: advanced players (but something more is preferred)

Fox 222D

- Wooden body
- Has all 5 left hand thumb keys (starting Sept. 2022 these come standard with 5, previous to 2022 they only came with 4 thumb keys)
- Has a plateau key om the left hand 3rd finger to aid those with shorter fingers to reach from the thumb all the way around to the fingers on the left hand
- Comes with 2 Fox C bocals (sturdier to withstand less experienced players)

Recommended for: advanced players

Possible to be used for: intermediate players (have to make sure their left hand can reach)

Possible to be used for, but not recommended for: first-year players

Fox 220

- Wooden body
- Has all 5 left hand thumb keys
- Has a high E key
- Has a ring key om the left hand 3rd finger
- Comes with 2 Fox T bocals (used to come with CVX bocals, but these became the T bocals) – more open and resonant sound.
- Has whisper key lock
- Has rollers on the right hand thumb to aid in agility.
- Long bore internal design (easy to make a good sound)

Fox 240

- Wooden body
- Has all 5 left hand thumb keys
- Has a high E key
- Has a ring key om the left hand 3rd finger
- Comes with 2 Fox T bocals (used to come with CVX bocals, but these became the T bocals) – more open and resonant sound.
- Has whisper key lock
- Has rollers on the right hand thumb to aid in agility.
- Short bore internal design (more flexible to get the most variety of tone colors and dynamics)

Recommended Middle School Bassoon Solo List

First year players (6th grade)

Standard of Excellence: Festival Solos book

Serenade from Don Giovanni by Mozart
St. Anthony Chorale and Rondo by Haydn
Minuetto by Beethoven

Classic Festival Solos volume 2

A Little Song
March of the Bassoons
A Russian Folk Song
March of the Leprechauns
The Troubador
Gavotte by Johnson
In the Hall of the Mountain King

Repertoire Classics (ed. Kevin Fuller)

Londonderry Air
Andante by Gluck

Master Solos (Intermediate)

Romanze by Siennicki

Second year players (7th grade) - Easy

Standard of Excellence: Festival Solos book

Cavatina by Mozart

Classic Festival Solos volume 2

In the Hall of the Mountain King

Repertoire Classics (ed. Kevin Fuller)

Ave Verum Corpus
To a Wild Rose
Bourree by Hande
Andante by Gluck

Master Solos (Intermediate)

Romanze by Siennicki

Second / third year players (7th/8th grades) - Medium

Repertoire Classics (ed. Kevin Fuller)

Tambourin by Gossec

Gavotte by Gossec

Panis Angelicus

Master Solos (Intermediate)

Three Baroque Dances (any/all movements)

Solos for the Bassoon Player

Bourrees I and II by Bach (just movement 1 or both movements)

Entr'acte by Bizet

Third year players (8th grade) – Advanced

Solos for the Bassoon Player

Adagio from Sextet by Beethoven

The Sorcerer's Apprentice

Repertoire Classics (ed. Kevin Fuller)

Tarantella by Rossini

The Swan by Saint-Saens

Not from a collection

Galliard Sonata no. 3, any movement, but the Allegro is great

Telemann Sonata in f minor, movements 1 or 2

Hindemith Sonata, movement 1 only

Mozart Bassoon Concerto, movement 3 (maybe movement 2)

Weber Bassoon Concerto, movement 2 (maybe movement 3)

Vocalise by Rachmaninov

Merci Sonata in G minor for bassoon (movement 1, but can do both 1 & 2)