

WHAT DO I DO WHEN I HEAR THAT?

76TH MIDWEST BAND AND ORCHESTRA CLINIC
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MCCORMICK PLACE W181

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NOTES

- Students should have a mirror/front-facing camera on their music stand & have various examples of a "model embouchure."
- If not using music stands, have big mirrors in strategic locations around the room and send students to look at their embouchures while they play.

FLUTE

CONCERN	POSSIBLE CAUSE OR SOLUTION
No Sound	Aperture not aligned with tone hole Tool: <u>Pneumo-Pro</u>
Airy Sound	Aperture too wide / inefficient aperture Improper headjoint placement (align tone hole w/ first key) Improper bottom lip placement Wrong finger placement (especially left hand, pinky) Check for leaks Visualizers: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• "Focused, fast wind" "pinpoint wind"• "Aim wind at the ledge of your stand"
Wispy, Bubble-Like Sound	Check hand and finger position (esp. Thumb, pinky, and first finger)
Pitch Too High (Sharp)	Overblowing- aim air lower Tongue too high / corners too pulled- relax corners down Tone hole may be rolled out too far
Pitch Too Low (Octave)	Aperture too tall/wide/inefficient Air: faster and more focused Tone hole may be rolled in too far
Breathing Between Every Note	Take real/full breaths before playing Slur then tongue Long tones on first pitch - "use that wind for the entire phrase"

Bb Clarinet

CONCERN	POSSIBLE CAUSE OR SOLUTION
No Sound	<p>More mouthpiece in mouth. Firmer corners. Anchor top teeth. Don't "bite" Reed issues (alignment? broken/chipped?)</p>
Weak, Flat Sound	<p>More mouthpiece in mouth ("you might squeak, that's ok!") Fast wind through the clarinet Reed issues (alignment?) Visualizers</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Arch tongue ("hiss like a cat", "teeh")
Constant Squeaking	<p>Check top teeth, firm corners, proper amount of mouthpiece Check for proper instrument angle No biting (make sure bottom teeth are not touching reed) Covering holes completely with squishy part of finger Avoid hitting the side keys Chin bunched / too much bottom lip in the mouth Reed issues: chipped, broken, not broken in (too dry/new)</p>
Shrill or Flat High Register	<p>Arch tongue ("hiss like a cat", "teeh") Too much bottom lip Reed strength may be too low Upgrade mouthpiece (if possible)</p>
Loose, 'Foghorn' Sound	<p>Too much air compared to weak reed strength/corner strength Check for teeth anchored on the mouthpiece No support from face (corners/chin)</p>

Listening to model players is a key component to the development of tone quality and musicianship!

SAXOPHONE

CONCERN	POSSIBLE CAUSE OR SOLUTION
Same As Clarinet	See Above
Loud, Uncontrolled Sound	Chin not being flat (too much bottom lip) Corners too loose (corners should draw in towards the mouthpiece) Reed too hard
Jumping Octave	Check embouchure: no biting Hand position: around palm keys, no unnecessary octave key

DOUBLE REEDS

CONCERN	POSSIBLE CAUSE OR SOLUTION
No Sound	Incorrect embouchure (check embouchure guides at end of this handout) Crow on reed
Pinched Sound	Too much lip pressure/ not enough reed in mouth Embouchure may be too flat/ not rounded enough Instrument angle / head angle (head too up/instrument too low) Check reed for issues (broken? Too closed?)
Brash Sound	Too much reed/ too much air Instrument angle / head angle
Finger Issues	Half-holing exercises (slow to fast)
Flat Pitch	Engage abdomen Faster air speed
Sharp Pitch	Imagine egg in mouth "Ah-oh" embouchure
Wild, Loud, or Unfocused Sound	Tighten at corners of mouth Engage abdomen Less air, more ab support

DOUBLE REEDS (CONT.)

CONCERN	POSSIBLE CAUSE OR SOLUTION
Stuffy Sound	Less reed in mouth Loosen/relax embouchure Drop jaw
Quiet Sound	Faster air, higher volume Bigger breath
Difficulty Playing Low Notes (Sputtering)	Less reed in mouth Lower tongue "Ah-oh" vowel shape Try slurring first
Difficulty Playing High Notes	More reed in mouth "eeh" vowel shape Squeeze reed with corner of mouth Drawstring bag embouchure Raise tongue
Wild Venting Notes	Air support, faster air
Notes Sticking Out of Timbre	Long tones Steady air speed
Air Escaping from Mouth	Long tones, slurred scales Slightly tighter embouchure (drawstring bag)
Sloppy Fingers	Use "soda can" (rounded like holding a can) fingers Relax; Fingers too far from keys

- **Flute:** Emmanuel Pahud, Jasmine Choi, Jeanne Baxtresser, Bobbi Humphrey
- **Clarinet:** Anthony McGill, Richard Stoltzman, Sabine Meyer
- **Oboe:** François Leleux, Albrecht Meyer, Toyin Spellman-Diaz
- **Bassoon:** Cristian Coliver, Jeffrey Lyman, Judith LeClair
- **Saxophone:** Timothy McAllister, Joe Lulloff, Amy Dickson, John-Edward Kelly

**WW
PLAYERS**

ALL BRASS

CONCERN	POSSIBLE CAUSE OR SOLUTION
Fuzzy Sound	<p>Faster & more consistent wind Open aperture; avoid squeezing top/bottom together Keep corners firm Visualizers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "Fast wind straight ahead" • "Fast wind pushed from your belly button" • "Consistent wind like throwing a paper airplane"
Pinched Sound	<p>Open: teeth, throat, aperture Drop tongue Oral cavity shape: "ah/oh" Visualizers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "Taller vertical space in mouth" • "Open throat like you are yawning" • "Drop tongue like you are at the doctor's office" • Open teeth: stem of mouthpiece or pinky finger between lips/teeth
Weak Sound / Dull Sound	<p>Yawn the breath Increase amount of wind (weak sound) Increase speed of wind (dull sound) Even pressure on top/bottom lips with straight head (not horn) Visualizers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Uncurl the instrument - blow 12' of wind straight ahead • "Hit the white board with your air" • "Throw your wind to my hand" • Airplane propellers / pinwheel game
Too Loud / Spread/ Blaring Sound	<p>Consistent wind, firm corners Open and relaxed: teeth, throat, aperture Raise/arch back of tongue Visualizers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Open teeth: stem of mouthpiece or pinky finger between lips/teeth • "Consistent wind like throwing a paper airplane" • Long tones: steady sound the whole way
Small Range	<p>Sirens on mouthpieces Lip slurs using all valve combinations Pitch bends on full instrument</p>

ALL BRASS (CONT.)

CONCERN	POSSIBLE CAUSE OR SOLUTION
<p>Wrong Partial: Consistently Too Low (Especially Trumpet)</p>	<p>Faster wind Firmer corners Build embouchure strength and flexibility daily:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sirens on mouthpiece (start low, slide high, slide low) • Mouthpiece buzz: low then high [DONT SQUEEZE] • Lip slurs • Chromatically ascending long tones <p>Monitor students at all times for inappropriate tension</p>
<p>Wrong Partial: Consistently Too High (Especially Tuba)</p>	<p>Relax corners Check for: no rolling lips inwards over teeth Bigger aperture / Taller space in oral cavity Visualizers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Golf ball • Popsicle stick at doctor's office • Say out loud: "eeeaaaahhhhoohhhhh" • "Fog up the mirror with warm air" <p>Build embouchure strength and flexibility:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lip slurs (descending/let the pitch drop) • Chromatically descending long tones (taller and taller as you go) • Reverse Sirens (start high, slide as low as you can) <p>Tuba</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Flap lips like relaxing after a long day <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Make sure there is still enough tall space in oral cavity and between teeth
<p>Double Buzz</p>	<p>Sometimes occurs when students play too loud- back off slightly to regain composure Embouchure adjustment needed (depends on register) Use a mouthpiece visualizer, if possible, or free buzz to see and diagnose Long Tone/ simple slurring exercises are strongly recommended</p>

BRASS PLAYERS

- **Trumpet:** Tine Thing Helseth, Alison Balsom, Susan Slaughter, Wynton Marsalis
- **French Horn:** Sarah Willis, Stefan Dohr, Dale Clevenger
- **Trombone:** Joseph Alessi, Wycliffe Gordon, Jennifer Wharton, Christian Lindeberg,
- **Euphonium:** Demondrae Thurmon, Gail Robertson, David Childs, Steven Mead,
- **Tuba:** Velvet Brown, Carol Jantsch, Alan Baer, Øystein Baadsvik

This section includes common problems/solutions across for some instrument-specific concerns.

TRUMPET

CONCERN	POSSIBLE CAUSE OR SOLUTION
Same as 'All Brass'	See above
Embouchure Issues	See embouchure building guides at the end of this document

HORN

CONCERN	POSSIBLE CAUSE OR SOLUTION
Embouchure Issues (Top/Bottom Lip; Chin; Corners)	Let top lip do the heavy lifting (mouthpiece should be $\frac{2}{3}$ top lip, $\frac{1}{3}$ bottom lip) Everything on the outside of the mouthpiece goes outward, everything on the inside goes inward TOOL: 2nd valve ring as mouthpiece visualizer
Stuffy Sound	Head angle: head may be too low/too much pressure on top lip Bell angle: make sure the bell is not angled into the body
Intonation Issues	Check hand in bell Check to see if students are buzzing appropriate pitch Adjust individual slides as necessary Sit horns away from bell-front brass and timpani (overtone clash and effect intonation)
Accidental "Stopped" Horn	Hand too far in bell; wrist collapsed Back of hand at "2 o'clock" in the bell
Wrong Partial/Pitch	Buzzing, lip slurs, audiate (hear before play), sing
Brash Sound	Keep throat open (fogging a mirror)

TROMBONE/EUPHONIUM

CONCERN	POSSIBLE CAUSE OR SOLUTION
<p>Slide Issues: Crossing Partials (Coordination Issue between Wrist, Tongue, Embouchure, Wind)</p>	<p>Check slide grip: two fingers and a thumb (not entire fist) Relax wrist Move slide smoothly and fast using wrist first Fast air and fast slide to cross partial/accommodate for length of instrument "Faster buzz" / "Faster vibration" Practice one at a time: slide it, air-play and slide it, play it <u>Check slide</u>: Is it clean? Well-lubricated?</p>
<p>Slide Issues: Articulation and Slide</p>	<p>Air-play with articulation without instrument Air-play with articulation and slide along on instrument Slide: fast, accurate movements, avoid glissando <u>Check slide</u>: Is it clean? Well-lubricated?</p>

TUBA

CONCERN	POSSIBLE CAUSE OR SOLUTION
<p>Same as 'All Brass'</p>	<p>See above</p>
<p>Embouchure Issues</p>	<p>See embouchure building guides at the end of this document</p>
<p>Wrong Partial: Consistently Too High</p>	<p>Relax corners Check for: no rolling lips inwards over teeth Bigger aperture / Taller space in oral cavity Flap lips like relaxing after a long day Make sure there is still enough tall space in oral cavity and between teeth</p>

SNARE

CONCERN	POSSIBLE CAUSE OR SOLUTION
"Thud"	Don't play directly in the center of the drum Play about $\frac{1}{3}$ away from the rim
Uneven Hands	Slow-to-fast practice w/ metronome Check for even stick height Too much tension in non-dominant hand Check for wrist motion vs. elbow motion
Accidental Multiple Bounce	Wrist too tense/ relax Practice full legato stroke (not tap or down stroke)
Accidental Rim Click	Check drum height/angle
Dynamic/Volume Issues	Practice different playing positions (stick height from drumhead)
Everything Accented	Play lighter - don't press too hard; Need more rebound Practice various strokes: down, tap, up, full Visualizer: "Pull the sound away from the drum"

MALLETS

CONCERN	POSSIBLE CAUSE OR SOLUTION
"Thunk" - No Resonance	Playing on nodes instead of resonator tubes/ end of bars
Volume	See above
Everything Accented	See above (pull the sound out of the bar)
Unable to Track	Stand placement: students should see music/bars at the same time Slow-then-fast

PERCUSSIONISTS

- Keiko Abe
- Evelyn Glennie
- Lee Stevens
- Gordon Stout
- Lionel Hampton
- Gary Burton

CHARACTERISTIC EBOUCHURE BUILDING GUIDES

CONSIDER

- Many issues can be solved by building a characteristic embouchure on the 'mouthpiece' of instruments.
 - Remember: Forming and maintaining a correct embouchure becomes more complicated with a fully assembled instrument.
- This sequence can be taught rhythmically - each instrument has "eight steps".
 - All instrument guides below contain eight steps... this aids in heterogeneous ensembles so that you can speak a common language ("everyone, step 1... step 2...". If homogeneous, feel free to delete redundant steps.
 - If working this rhythmically, start slowly at first (one prompt per half note: "step one... two... three..."), speed up to one prompt per quarter note, and then finally one smooth motion to set the embouchure.
 - The words in "quotations" are what we recommend as verbal prompts for students.
- We think this is the foundation for success on all future executive skills. Take time building step-by-step and "jump back to mouthpieces" frequently each class throughout a students' instrumental journey. In other words, continue mouthpiece work long after these basic steps are mastered!

Instrument	Embouchure Building Guide
Flute	<p>Uncovered flute head joint goal pitch: A</p> <p>Process:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. "Left hand" holds the head joint 2. "Right hand" closes the head joint (take this away over time) 3. "Sit tall" 4. Bring "head joint" to you 5. "Lower lip": head joint just below/on bottom lip, $\frac{1}{3}$ of tone hole covered with lip 6. "Line of lips": flat, parallel with head joint 7. "Right angle": head joint perpendicular to head 8. "Fast wind straight ahead" - poh/toh syllable <p>This is most effective when students can see what they are doing by using a mirror or front-facing camera on their music stand.</p> <p>Students might naturally roll the tone hole too far "out" when using a mirror at first so that they can see the tone hole in the image. Remind them that their bottom lip should cover about $\frac{1}{3}$ of the tone hole and the tone hole should face up towards the ceiling.</p>

Instrument	Embouchure Building Guide
Clarinet and Alto Saxophone	<p>Clarinet mouthpiece and barrel goal pitch: F# Clarinet mouthpiece goal pitch: B/C Alto saxophone mouthpiece and neck goal pitch: Ab Alto saxophone mouthpiece goal pitch: A</p> <p>Process:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. "Left hand" holds mouthpiece/barrel/neck 2. "Sit tall" 3. Bring "small piece" to you 4. Barely cover bottom teeth with "bottom lip" 5. Place the small piece in your mouth; rest "fulcrum" on bottom lip. 6. Check "angle". 7. Anchor top teeth on top of mouthpiece and close lips. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Clarinet: "Milkshake face" - firm corners ◦ Alto saxophone: "Oooh" - circular embouchure 8. "Fast wind straight ahead" <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Clarinet: "Heeeh/teeeh" ◦ Alto saxophone: "Hoh/toh" <p>In the mirror, students should watch for firm corners and a flat, pointed chin. They can also check for appropriate angles and amount of mouthpiece in their mouth.</p>
Double Reeds	<p>Students should crow on their reed daily! Oboe pitch: Concert C (octaves apart preferred) Bassoon: Concert Eb-F# (several pitches is preferred)</p> <p><u>Oboe:</u></p> <p>Embouchure: Rounded/ not flat; forward ("O" in home) Tip of reed on middle of bottom lip, roll lip in; top lip covers top teeth Crow a steady C (octaves apart preferred)- one pitch indicates too much pressure</p> <p><u>Bassoon:</u></p> <p>Whistle (or say "oooh") Distance between teeth w/ rounded corners Crow on reed (several pitches preferred- one pitch indicates too much pressure)</p>

Instrument	Embouchure Building Guide
<p style="text-align: center;">Brass</p> <p style="text-align: center;">(This is a general guide. There are slight differences between each brass embouchure.)</p>	<p>Brass players should buzz on their mouthpieces (in tone and in tune) consistently with a stimulus pitch in context.</p> <p>Process:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Non-dominant "hand holds" the mouthpiece: two fingers on top, thumb on bottom, near the end of the stem 2. "Sit tall" 3. Bring "small piece" to you 4. Set "top lip" (just the top lip contacts the mouthpiece) 5. "Make space" between lips and teeth 6. Set "bottom lip" (space between lips and teeth is still present) 7. "Check angle": horn $\frac{2}{3}$ top lip $\frac{1}{3}$ bottom lip, other brass even pressure on top and bottom 8. "Fast wind straight ahead" - haaaah/taaaah <p>In the mirror, students should watch for firm corners, tall space, and a flat, pointed chin as well as angle of their mouthpiece.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">Additional Brass Teaching Tools and Activities</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Buzz the mouthpiece in tone and in tune. • "hit the bullseye of the pitch" • Sirens on the mouthpiece: start low or high and smoothly slur higher or lower to build flexibility <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Watch for tension - students should never "squeeze" • Paper blowing and buzzing • Teaching tool: incentive spirometer <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Clip the mouth guard off of the spirometer so that you have an open tube. ◦ Attach the brass mouthpiece to this tube. Students can now either blow wind or buzz through the incentive spirometer. ◦ When a high-enough velocity of wind is being blown, the ping pong ball floats. ◦ This tool adds resistance to make it more challenging / requiring a higher velocity of wind. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ To solve weak, dull, and/pinched sounds, add some resistance to the spirometer. Have students just blow wind through it to see the ping pong ball move. Then buzz. The ping pong ball will likely stay still. This is because when they buzz they are creating a "dam" that is preventing their wind from going through the mouthpiece! Go back to building an embouchure with tall space and no inappropriate tension. Lips and teeth should be tall and open. ▪ To solve blasting, add resistance and have students buzz through it. Students should work towards suspending the ping pong ball and controlling it in "mid air" in the middle of the tube for various number of beats.