

# THE COMPLETE WOODWIND INSTRUCTOR

By Deborah A. Sheldon  
and Robert Sheldon

A GUIDEBOOK FOR THE MUSIC EDUCATOR

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board of the Journal for Research in music education, the faculty advisory board of the bulletin of the Council for Research in Music Education, Research Committee of the Band Education Network of the World Association for Symphonic Bands and Ensembles. She holds membership in several music organizations that promote music and music education. Sheldon maintains a regional and national profile through music teaching seminars, instrumental conducting clinics, and research dissemination forums.

**R**obert Sheldon has taught instrumental music in the Florida and Illinois public schools and has served on faculty at the Florida State University where he taught conducting and music education classes, and directed the university bands. He now maintains an active composition and teaching schedule in Illinois, and regularly accepts commissions for new works. Sheldon received the Bachelor of Music degree from the University of Miami and the Master of Fine Arts degree from the University of Florida. An internationally recognized clinician, Sheldon has conducted numerous Regional and All-State bands throughout the United States and abroad. He holds membership in several music organizations that promote music and music education. The American School Band Directors Association has honored him with the Volkwein Award for composition and the Stanbury Award for teaching. He has also been an eight-time recipient of the American Society of Composers, Authors and Publisher's "Standard Award" for his compositional contributions in the educational repertoire. Several of his compositions are featured on a recently released compact disc entitled "IMAGES: the Music of Robert Sheldon". In 1990, he was honored by the International Assembly of Phi Beta Mu as being the International Outstanding Bandmaster of the year.

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### CREDITS

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*The Beginning Woodwind*

# Program

Experts, texts, and methods have been consulted in the creation of this comprehensive and updated guide to teaching all of the woodwind instruments. Most band directors know that when teaching beginning students to play a woodwind instrument in a classroom situation, it's often difficult to address the needs of each individual at every step of their musical and technical development. As the difficulty level of the ensemble literature increases, so do the challenges faced by the students and their instructors. This text is full of teaching strategies which have been proven successful by outstanding school band and orchestra directors and university instructors from across the country. It is designed to help instrumental music teachers give their woodwind students a successful experience characterized by a positive approach to the technical idiosyncrasies of playing the instrument.

Band and orchestra directors will want to use *The Complete Woodwind Instructor* in planning rehearsals, sectionals, and lessons. It is compact enough to fit on a music stand and be a constant teaching companion. Music education students will find it user-friendly and will refer to it often as they learn to teach and play all instruments in the woodwind family. University methods instructors will enjoy having a complete, unified woodwind text all in one.

*The Complete Woodwind Instructor* contains practical ideas for teaching included sound and sequential methods for starting beginners. Complete task analysis of the processes for beginners, which include assembly, creating a sound, posture and hand positions, and tone production are compactly outlined for immediate access.

Most of the common problems associated with playing each of the instruments are addressed and a variety of solutions suggested. This text takes much of the guess work out of teaching the mechanics of the instrument and problem diagnosis. Ultimately, this saves the music educator valuable time to focus on other musical issues.

In the flurry of starting woodwind students, instrument care and maintenance is sometimes overlooked. This book includes appropriate care and maintenance suggestions for each instrument. Crystal-clear descriptions of these processes make it easy for beginners to develop good care habits. The exceptional format of the section on care and maintenance make the book simple to use and band directors will find they consult it regularly.

Instrumental music educators have the added challenge of making sure that instruments are in good working condition. Instruments which are in need of repair cause frustration among students, parents, and teachers. Sometimes repair problems are relatively minor and, if corrected by the instrumental music teacher, little instruction time is lost. The text addresses many common repair problems associated with each of the instruments and a variety of "do-able", cost effective and time-saving solutions which can be easily executed by the teacher are recommended.

It's difficult to remember all of the fingering for each woodwind instrument, especially if you're not a woodwind player. This text provides uncomplicated fingering and trill charts in addition to a

complete section on special fingering considerations which are specific and unique to each instrument. This information will help your students to play with improved technique, confidence, and intonation.

Some other topics included in *The Complete Woodwind Instructor* focus on tips for selecting an instrument (helping to guide students, parents, and teachers in making good musical decisions), a guide to vibrato study for more advanced players, special equipment needs, recommended recording artist, intonation exercises, tips for guiding students into private instruction, and thoughts on bringing experts into the classroom.

This book is meant as a practical guide. There is a lot to know about each particular instrument, so an extensive related literature list is included for students and teachers interested in more advanced information.

Enjoy *The Complete Woodwind Instructor!*

SECTION  
**2**

*The*  
**Flute**



The flute presents probably the least difficulty of all of wind instruments with regard to assembly. Still, there are a few points that will help the player achieve the best results.

- Check to be sure the tenons are clean. Wipe gently with a clean cloth to remove dirt if necessary.
- Start by picking up the main body of the flute and the head joint. Avoid gripping the rods as they are easily bent. Assemble together gently, but don't wiggle side-to-side as this will damage the connection. Tenons should fit snugly into the sockets.
- Turn the foot joint slightly to promote proper finger placement on the right hand. Align the key rod of the foot joint so it bisects the tone holes on the main body.



# Flute

- Next, take the head joint and gently twist onto the main body in the same manner as the foot joint. Note that the head joint was the last to be assembled and will be first in disassembly. The head joint should be pushed in until it fits completely into the tenon receiver. It can later be pulled out a bit to help get the instrument in tune.
- Align the blow hole on the head joint with the tone holes of the main body.

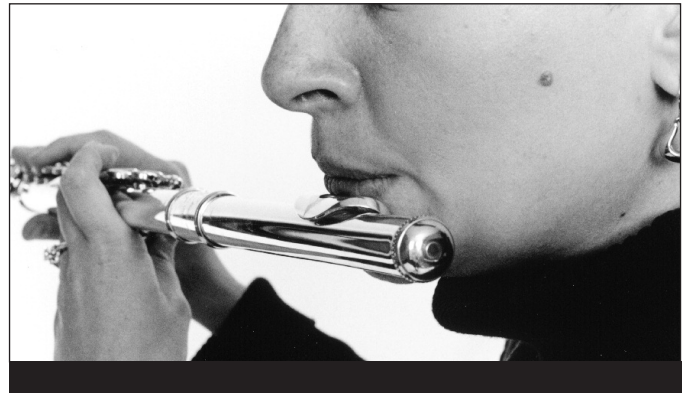
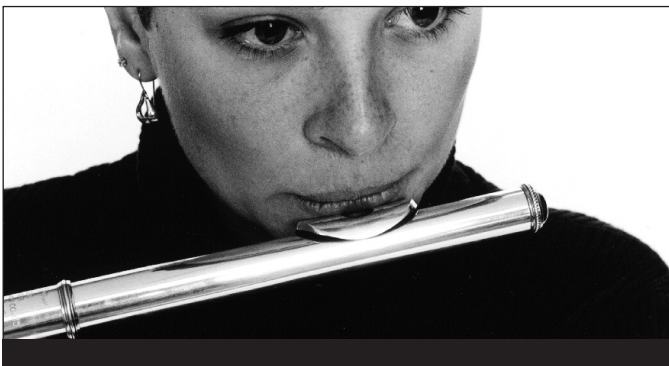


- Other points to remember during assembly:
  - Check that all trill keys are closed as they sometimes open due to spring problems encountered in storage.
  - Check bumper corks as they can sometimes become dislodged and create problems.
- Disassemble the instrument in reverse order of the assembly.



This can be a very frustrating part of learning to play the flute for many students. Some seem to discover a sound immediately while others can take many days. The following are some ideas for developing a good sound from the start.

- Produce the first sounds using just the head joint. This allows the student to concentrate on the sound without thinking about fingerings.
- Set the blow hole against the center of the closed lips. Roll the head joint down and out while maintaining contact with the lower lip.



- Blow a focused stream of air across the open hole toward the outside edge.
- Breathe through the mouth, not the nose. Let old air out before taking a new breath.
- When the student has successfully created a sound using only the head joint, put the entire flute together and have the student use the same tone production suggestions to play a third space open C-sharp (**Details in Posture and Hand Position**).
- When the student is somewhat comfortable in creating a sound on a third space open C-sharp, start using the left hand by having the student play C, B or B-flat, A, and G.
- Some techniques which may help teach tone production include:

Once the sound is achieved, set the flute lower (toward the chin) and roll the head joint in to improve focus of air stream through smaller aperture.

Use the word "POOH" to create a burst of air when beginning a sound.

Think of creating a sound by blowing across an open pop bottle.

Play with relaxed facial muscles.

Think of playing with a light bulb in the mouth to open the inner chamber and lower the tongue.

Imagine you are splitting the air stream over the outer edge of the blow hole.

Watch yourself play in a mirror to be sure air condensation forming on the embouchure plate opposite the lips is focused.

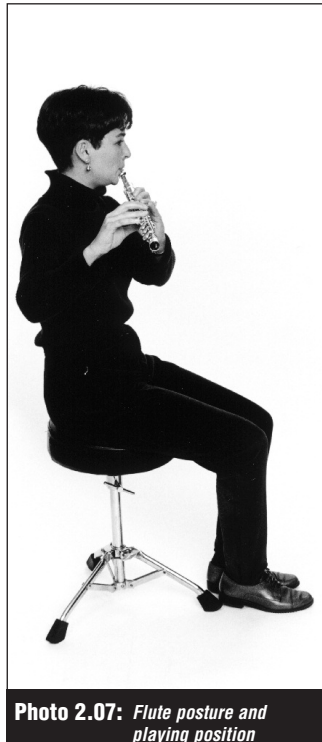


The most common flute posture problem is the habit of resting the right elbow on the back of the chair. This problem alone can cause many related difficulties, such as reduced technical facility and problems with breath support affecting tone and pitch. Good habits must start from the outset. "Unlearning" bad habits is difficult and often confusing to some students. There are other specific posture and hand position considerations also listed.

- The left hand should be positioned on the main body to cover



**Photo 2.06:** *Flute posture and playing position*



**Photo 2.07:** *Flute posture and playing position*



**Photo 2.08:** *Piccolo posture and playing position*



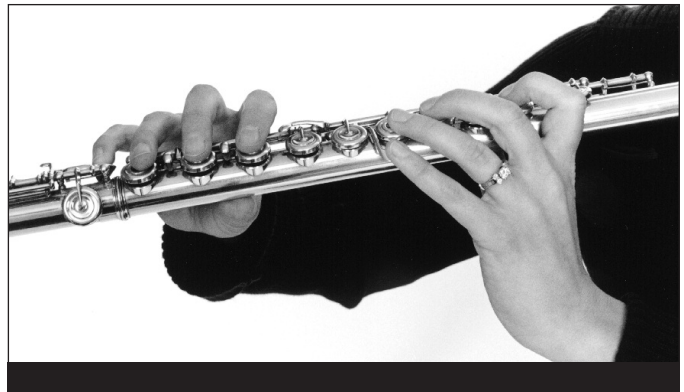
**Photo 2.09:** *Alto flute posture and playing position*

the C key with the index finger, the A key with the middle finger and the G key with the ring finger. The left hand thumb will control the B and B-flat keys on the back of the flute. The little finger should rest lightly on the A-flat key. The flute will also come in contact with the palm of the hand just at the base of the index finger.

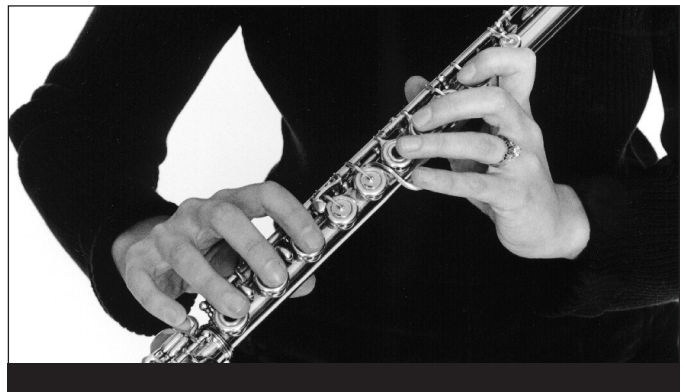
- The right hand should be positioned with the index finger on

the F key, the middle finger on the E key and the ring finger on the D key. The right hand thumb will come in contact with the back of the flute between and underneath the F and E keys. The little finger will rest on the E-flat key unless needed to negotiate other foot joint keys. In playing notes that do not involve right-hand fingerings, the flute may sometimes come in contact with the palm of the right hand just at the base of the index finger.

- There are five main points of contact in supporting the flute: the embouchure, the thumbs, the base of the left-hand index finger, and the right-hand little finger (except when playing D).



- When monitoring the beginners' hand position, be sure they have



“skipped” the appropriate keys.

- Fingers should always be slightly curved. Think of playing with “graceful” fingers.
- Use finger pads instead of the tips. This will be especially helpful when the student moves to an open-hole flute where complete closure of the tone hole by the finger pad is necessary to create a seal.
- Adjust the left-hand wrist position to allow the ring finger to reach the center of the G key.
- “Little” fingers should rest on top of the keys, never under them.
- Turn the foot joint slightly to promote proper finger position of the right hand. Align the key rod of the foot joint so that it bisects the tone holes on the main body.
- When playing in a flat key, use both thumb keys to form the B-flat. When playing in other keys, use the half thumb to form the B-natural. This avoids other fingering problems related to using a half-thumb and right-hand index finger B-flat fingering.