



Beginner's Toolkit: Flute

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0:22 Blowing in the Head Joint

-Different students will learn how to blow into the *head joint* at different rates

-Try not to get too frustrated if you can't figure it out right away—Do NOT give up!

-Set up your Flute embouchure:

Balance the bottom of the *lip plate* on the chin bone

Stretch the lips

Line up the lips directly at the *embouchure hole*

Use the word “Bleah” to shape your mouth

Say “ooo” with the middle of the lips and “eee” with the outside of the lips

Blow and make a sound!

Try to be flexible and willing to experiment

It might not end up feeling like you think it will or should!

Try to get your bottom lip to be at least as wide as the *lip plate*

If your lips are too puckered, you won't be able to get sound!

-Some finer tuning:

Frowning muscles work great for playing loud

Sneering muscles work great for playing soft

Check out these Dana Carvey videos for great exaggerated visuals of the muscles:

[His impressions of President Obama](#) show the frowning muscles

[His impressions of President Trump](#) show the sneering muscles

Keith always told me to keep my tongue wide and relaxed, like a puddle

If your tongue is braced or tensed, it will hurt your resonance

The outer sides of the tongue should gently rest on your upper molars

-Troubleshooting:

Try to keep an open mind, and be ok with experimenting and failing

If you get frustrated, take a break

Frustration often leads to tension, clamping, and bracing

All of these are problematic, and will not help!

Look at pictures of flutists playing and compare to your own:

Is your *embouchure hole* a lot bigger than what you see?

Are your lips looking puckered rather than slightly stretched?

Are your lips far away from the *lip plate*?

Keith Underwood, Flute

This is one of the best pictures of flute lips that I know of! My students and I study it often!



Photo used with permission: keithflute.com

7:49 Putting the Flute Together

11:52 Taking it Apart

- Hold the *body* of the Flute at the top and the *foot joint* at the bottom so that your fingers are not touching any *keys*
- Carefully and gently twist the *body* and *foot joint* together
 - The *rod of the foot joint* should intersect the middle of the lowest *key* of the *body*
- Gently twist the *head joint* onto the *body*: hold the *body* at the top so you are not touching *keys*
 - Look up the Flute from the *foot joint* and line the *embouchure hole* up with the *in-line keys*
 - Many students will be more comfortable rolling in slightly from there
- Using a Sharpie marker, consider marking a line from the *head joint* to the *body*
 - This way you can line it up the same way each time you play
 - The mark will fade over time, so re-mark as needed
- To disassemble the Flute, use the same hand placement and gently twist apart
- Your flute should be swabbed out after EVERY time you play it
- Never twist the Flute body, head joint, or foot joint, with your hands on the keys!**
 - You will severely hurt the mechanism of your instrument!

12:04 Correct Finger Placement

*There are pictures of correct finger placement in my book:

[The No-Nonsense Guide to Becoming a Professional Flutist!](#)

[Fab Feet Spot Dot Cushions](#)

Help keep the right thumb in the right place

Place the right thumb between the index and middle finger

Use the sticker to remind yourself of the perfect spot

[Dr. Scholl's Comfort Double Air Pillo](#) cut into a rectangle and a [Command Picture Hanger Strip](#)

Helps balance the Flute and keep left hand and fingers comfortable (at least for me!)

Helps hold the Flute with the correct left hand position

Line up the start of the pad with the *thumb* key and extend toward the top of the Flute

-The right hand approaches the Flute like a claw

Keep the fingers curved

Use the lightest touch possible with both hands!!!

Do NOT hold the Flute with a tight grip!

-Balance the Flute on the left hand underneath

-If needed, the Dr. Scholl's pad can be removed at the end of the day (if it does not fit in your case)

16:56 Breathing

-Most players will either crunch forward (guilty!), or lean back as they run out of air

Both are BAD, because they hinder the taking of the next breath

-Practice Breathing #1

Use a straw

Breathe out and imagine becoming taller

Keep the crown of your head as the tallest point of your body

Pretend there is an invisible string holding the crown of your head to the ceiling!

The beginning of the breath out happens naturally with the help of gravity, and then the abdominal muscles kick in and help at the end

Your body will want to collapse, but if you concentrate on staying tall, your upper body will remain open

When you release your abdominal muscles, your body will naturally take its next breath in

-Practice Breathing #2

Crouch on the floor or sit in a chair, lean forward, and rest your forearms on your knees

Alternately, lay on the floor on your back.

The tension in your back and neck are released and you will be able to take great breaths!

[ChristineDavisFlute.com](#)

-Check out my website for more information and other media!

-Also, be sure to check out my book:

[The No-Nonsense Guide to Becoming a Professional Flutist](#), available on Amazon.com