FUTE 101: MASTERING THE BASICS

A Method for the Beginning Flutist with Teaching and Phrasing Guides

by **PHYLLIS AVIDAN LOUKE**

and

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INTRODUCTION

Welcome to **Flute 101: Mastering the Basics**. We suggest working through this book with an experienced and competent flute teacher who will teach you to balance the flute, to form an embouchure (mouth position), and to make your first sounds.

PARIS OF THE FLUIE

HEADJOINT: This is the section where the sound is produced.

Crown: One end of the headjoint is closed by the crown and the cork/stem assembly. The placement of the cork/ stem assembly affects the tuning of the flute.

Embouchure Plate and Hole: The embouchure plate, which is soldered onto the headjoint, is placed in the chin. The lip partially covers the embouchure hole. The air is blown across the embouchure hole striking the blowing edge to produce a sound. The air alternates going over and then under the blowing edge many times per second. **Tenon:** This is the part of the flute that fits inside of another part. The tenon at the open end of the headjoint fits

into the center joint.

BODY (CENTER JOINT): This is the longest section with many keys.

Barrel: This is the section on which the brand name of the flute usually appears. It is found at the top of the center joint.

Tenon: This is the part of the flute that fits inside of another part. There is a tenon at the end of the center joint that fits into the footjoint.

FOOTJOINT: This is the shortest section of the flute; it has keys that are opened and closed by the right little finger.

BE SURE TO ASK YOUR TEACHER ABOUT:

1. Taking the flute out and putting it back into the case. Always remove sections of the flute from the case by lifting it by the edge of an open end. If the flute is not removed carefully, the keys can be bent.

2. *Putting the flute together and aligning the parts properly.* As you assemble the flute, remember to hold each section near the end where there are no keys.

3. Caring for your instrument. After playing, carefully take apart the flute and place each section in the case. To remove the moisture from each section, wrap a 12" x 12" thin soft absorbent cloth around the cleaning rod to prevent scratching the inside of your flute. Gently twist the cleaning rod through each section of the flute to dry the instrument thoroughly. A wooden cleaning rod is preferred.

4. Proper hand position. Due to variations of mouth, teeth, lips, size of hands, and length of arms, a flute teacher should help determine the optimum position for individual students. Your teacher can also show you how to balance the flute in your hands.

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How To PRACTICE

Practice is the repetition of a skill. Plan to practice a minimum of 20 to 30 minutes per day initially or whatever your teacher recommends. Spending part of your practice time in front of a mirror will help develop your embouchure. To learn each song or exercise:

- 1. Say the note names 5 times.
- 2. Say note names in rhythm 5 times.
- 3. Say note names in rhythm while fingering the notes 5 times.
- 4. Play the song 5 times.

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Cover the end of the headjoint to produce a lower note.



Keep the embouchure hole facing straight up--do not let it roll toward you.

Play lines 1 and 2. Then cover the open end of the headjoint with the right palm and play again.





Playing Tips: LESSON 1A 1. Hold the barrel of the flute with your right hand. Duets 2. Start each note as though you are spitting rice. Duets 3. Use a strong stream of birthday candle air. Our First Duets:











TEACHER'S GUIDE by Patricia George

CHECK THE FLUTE

Before you start teaching a beginning flutist, check the student's instrument. Wash the headjoint to remove any wax, mold, or foreign material. To wash the headjoint, remove the crown and cork/stem assembly. To remove the crown, turn the crown to the left several turns. Place the end of the crown against a soft surface and push down. Repeat this step as needed. Once the cork is free, remove the cork/stem assembly from the open (tenon) end of the headjoint. Wash the headjoint with a mild detergent and hot water. Dry the headjoint with a soft cloth. Replace the cork/stem assembly from the tenon end of the headjoint. Adjust the cork placement so the line on the cleaning rod is in the center of the embouchure hole. Replace the crown. Check the sealing of all pads. Pads that do not seat properly will compromise the sound of the flute. Check the tension of the springs by depressing and opening the keys. The keys should open quickly without any hesitation or drag. If a key opens slowly, the flute should be sent for repairs. Every student deserves a well-playing flute.

SPITTING RICE

The "*spitting rice*" technique, developed by the Suzuki Flute Institute, will coordinate the air and tongue. Take the student outside to spit rice, using the type of rice that must be boiled. Place one grain of uncooked rice on the tip of the tongue and spit the rice out. This technique will teach the motion of the tongue as it releases the air through the aperture. Once the student can spit rice off the tongue well, begin "target" practice. One target spot should be on the ground. Other spots will be positioned at various heights on a fence or wall. This technique teaches how to angle the air as if blowing in the first, second, and third octaves of the flute. Repetitive practice of the spitting rice technique enhances tone and articulation control. Be patient. Repetition is good!

HEADJOINT ONLY

Once the student is successful at the "*spitting rice*" technique, begin instruction using the headjoint. Have the student sit in a chair with closed eyes. Sit or stand directly in front of the student, with your thumbs and middle fingers holding the ends of the headjoint. As the student pretends to spit rice, place the headjoint in the chin. The embouchure hole of the headjoint should be centered with the student's natural aperture (opening of the lips). The headjoint is always brought to the flutist, not the flutist to the headjoint. If a student has a teardrop on the top lip, place the headjoint slightly to the student's left (or your right). Repeat several times until the student is confident that each time you bring the headjoint up, sound will be produced. Remind the student to blow with fast air.



Have the student hold the headjoint in the "*cradle*" position. The cradle position (as shown in the photo) keeps the fingers away from the blowing area. While pretending to spit rice, the student brings the headjoint into playing position to produce a sound. Between each attempt, the headjoint is removed from the chin to prevent dizziness. If there is difficulty producing a sound, repeat the steps where the teacher places the headjoint into playing position. A student who has learned to place the headjoint in the chin and successfully get a sound, should next repeat the following three-part sentence: "The tongue releases the air, the embouchure hole and aperture are centered, and the embouchure hole of the headjoint should be parallel to the ceiling."

LEARNING TO COUNT

Students who play with rhythmic accuracy and understanding have learned rhythms aurally before visually. Play the *Follow the Leader* game on the headjoint to practice this concept, as follows. The "leader" plays one $\frac{4}{4}$ measure using a variety of quarter-, half-, and whole-note patterns, and the "follower" imitates the pattern. Start simply by playing a $\frac{4}{4}$ measure of $\frac{1}{2}$, until the student can easily play this back. Then progress to the opposite pattern of $\frac{2}{2}$. Notice that the rhythmic patterns of these two measures are the opposite of one another. Teach rhythms symmetrically to increase the student's rhythmic awareness. For example, teach $\frac{1}{2}$, followed by $\frac{1}{2}$. The more muscles involved while playing rhythmic games, the more the student's rhythmic understanding and performance will be enhanced. Have the student tap both feet (heels on the floor and feet moving from the ankles) in $\frac{4}{4}$ time while playing these rhythmic games. Tapping rhythms on the lap using both hands while counting aloud will enhance rhythmic understanding.

NOTATION AND MONEY

An efficient way to teach notation is to relate rhythmic durations to money. For example $\downarrow = 25$ cents, $\downarrow = 50$ cents, and $\circ =$ one dollar. Place four quarters (25 cents) in a row on the music stand. Have the student play the rhythm ($\downarrow \downarrow \downarrow \downarrow \downarrow$). Then stack two quarters and place two more quarters after the stack. This rhythm would be played $\downarrow \downarrow \downarrow \downarrow$. Repeat using other combinations of quarter, half, and whole notes. Then let the student compose various combinations of the quarters and you play their rhythms. Once the student has mastered the concept of one measure, repeat the process with four-bar and eight-bar phrases.

USING THIS BOOK

After completing the preceding steps, progress to the *Fun With The Headjoint* pages. Plan to repeat the *Follow the Leader*, *Money-Notation*, and *Fun with the Headjoint* sections during each lesson, possibly for several months. Continued headjoint study will enhance tone and control. Do play with the student and use vibrato. By Lesson 9, the student will naturally begin to imitate your vibrato. At the first signs of vibrato, stop and teach the principles of vibrato! (See page 78)

In the *Follow the Leader* part of the lesson, have the student experiment with practicing glissandi and simple three-note melodies on the headjoint by inserting the right index finger into the open end and pulling it out. Covering the open end of the headjoint with the right palm will produce a lower note. In this "stopped" position, it is possible to overblow two higher pitches (harmonics). If there are problems reaching a higher-pitched note, have the student stand when tonguing the high note. Remember the tongue releases the air to produce the tone. Putting the lips/embouchure in the "Pooh" (as in "Winnie the Pooh") position will help find the proper air angle for the higher notes.

Before beginning Lesson 1, align the headjoint and the body of the flute. The center of the embouchure hole should be aligned with the center of the D, E, and F keys. In order for the student to find this placement at home, mark a line on the headjoint and body with nail polish or a fine point permanent marker. Check this line at each lesson since it will wear off. For the best intonation on most flutes, the headjoint should be pulled out from the body of the flute about a quarter inch. To accurately determine this measurement, use a pencil to draw a line on the headjoint with the headjoint pushed in all the way. This line provides a place from where to measure the quarter inch. Check this measurement with a ruler. Lessons 1 through 5A may be played without the footjoint to reduce the weight of the flute. This will position the pinky for correct placement on the D $\#/E_P$ key when the footjoint is added. The D $\#/E_P$ key is depressed for every note except C1, C#1, D1, D2, E3, B3, C4.

On each Lesson page, you will find several boxes with information on new concepts and helpful suggestions. These contain lifetime reminders for successful flute performance, fun ideas for warming up, and possible questions for the student to discuss with you.



- We encourage the student to place the right hand on the barrel of the flute when playing Lessons 1 through 3A. Having the right hand on the barrel provides many benefits such as:
- Placing and stabilizing the flute in the chin
- Keeping the lower lip spread out across the embouchure plate
- Keeping the left and right shoulders down and relaxed
- Encouraging the end of the flute to be forward
- Helping focus the sound

Generally, the student should stand for lessons. The student should stand with the left foot in front and right foot in back, as if serving in volleyball. The left foot should be pointed to the center of the music stand, and the lower body angled 45 degrees to the right. As the head turns to the left, the upper body will slightly spiral to the left to achieve the lineup of nose, aperture, embouchure hole, and left elbow crease, with the center of the music stand.



The curriculum of this book is based on three areas of concentration:

- Learning to play the flute: air, articulation, technique, sound
- Learning to read and understand music notation
- Learning to play musically

LEARNING TO PLAY THE FLUIE

The flute consumes air faster than any other wind instrument except for the tuba. To explore the natural breathing mechanism, have the student practice headjoint activities while lying on the floor. Lying on the floor will not only help develop good body alignment, but will also illustrate the natural movement of the abdomen. Lying on the floor may also calm a wiggly young student!

BALANCING THE FLUTE

After completing the headjoint pages, the student should use the headjoint and the body of the flute only. This shortened flute is lighter for a young student to balance. At first, the right hand should be placed on the barrel or nameplate of the flute for stability. The flute should balance on the space between the 2nd and 3rd knuckle of the left index finger. The left thumb should touch the B/Bb key close to the crease of the 1st knuckle with the thumb straight and pointed to the ceiling. When the right hand is placed in playing position, rest the right pinky on the tenon of the body. Later when the footjoint is added, good right-hand position may be developed by having the student make a fist with the right hand, sticking out the right pinky, and placing it on the D#/Eb key. Then place the next fingers, in order, on the D, E, and F keys. Finally, bring the thumb forward to touch the back side of the flute.



A good way to approach the fingering system of the flute is to name the fingers. The left-hand notes spell the word BAG and the right-hand notes spell the word FED. Refer to fingers by the name of the note that is produced when that finger is put down. The left index finger is B and the right index finger is F.

Since the flute overblows naturally at the octave, the fingering is the same in each octave on the following pairs of notes: E1/E2, F1/F2, F#1/F#2, G1/G2, Ab1/Ab2, A1/A2, Bb1/Bb2, B1/B2, C2/C3, and C#2/C#3. If you play the lower notes in the preceding list, you will play chromatically from E1 to C#2. Then if you play these notes in the next octave, you will produce E2 to C#3. The two notes needed to connect these two chromatic fragments are D2 and Eb2. Notice the index finger is lifted for these two notes. Referring to the lifting of this finger as "opening the octave key" will help the student finger these notes correctly.

When teaching third-octave notes, teach the fingering based on changes to the known 1st/2nd-octave fingering. For example: C2 to C3 = same, C#2 to C#3 = same, D2 to D3 = lift right fingers and add right pinky, Eb2 to Eb3 = add left 1 and 4, E2 to E3 = lift G finger, F2 to F3 = lift A finger, F#2 to F#3 = lift A finger, and G2 to G3 = remove left thumb.

When playing flute, the fingers should move from the 3rd knuckle back from the finger tip. The only exception is the left index finger which will move from the 2nd knuckle because the flute is balanced just above the 3rd knuckle. The goal is to keep the fingers very close to the keys when playing. Throughout this book, several exercises have the student play trills in the "I am going home" rhythm on page 7. Other exercises have several notes in sequence such as the Old Faithful exercise on page 18. Not only do these exercises teach quality execution of the fingerings, but they also teach the student to avoid slowing the air stream when moving the fingers. The fingers must be articulate and move separately from the air stream. The air stream is the constant – air is always flowing out when playing the flute.

It is difficult to balance the flute when playing C2/C3 and C2/C for two reasons. First, the weight of the mechanism of the flute is heavier on the back or rod side of the flute, and second, there are few fingers involved in fingering the notes. If the flute is not well-balanced just above the left knuckle, the flute will roll back toward the player when the thumb is removed. If the student moves the left elbow when lifting the left thumb, the flute is being balanced on the thumb. Practice trilling from B to C and B to C \pm to teach proper balance. Both elbows should hang down and not move when playing the flute.

TONGUING AND TONE

The attack is the first part of the sound a listener hears. Having a quality attack is the first step to good performance. The jaw should be relaxed and hang from the skull. The tongue should be placed between the upper and lower teeth touching the top lip in the center of the aperture. If the aperture is naturally off-side to the left, then the tongue will need to move to the left to be in the center of the aperture. When tonguing properly, there is no movement of the jaw. Continue to check to be sure the embouchure hole is level or parallel to the ceiling. The repeated tonguing warm-up exercises in the practice boxes should be played on one puff or long stream of air. Joseph Mariano referred to this concept as *"tonguing on the air."* A good syllable to use for single tonguing is "tu" or "thi." For double tonguing, use "thi-key." The tonguing should be as forward and as high in the mouth as possible. Triple tonguing will be "thi-key-thi."

Part of the secret of developing a beautiful sound has to do with making the oral cavity large (drop or hang the jaw) and directing a consistent air stream high on the embouchure hole wall. In order to direct the air stream high on the wall, the student must develop the embouchure. Having the lips in the "Pooh" position is a winner.