

CLARINET SKILLS CHECKLIST

ASSEMBLY

- 🍎 Open case with the “lid-side up,” either on a table or on the floor—be careful!
- 🍎 Assemble in this order: 1) wet the reed on your tongue 2) attach bell 3) attach upper joint 4) attach barrel 5) attach “bare” mouthpiece 6) add ligature and reed. Build it from the bottom up!
- 🍎 Proper ligature and reed placement: ligature touches the etched line on the mouthpiece, screws tightened (not TOO tight); thin “hair” of black shown above tip of reed.
- 🍎 Disassembly should be exact opposite of assembly (remove items in reverse order).

CARE

- 🍎 Wipe instrument with a soft cloth after each use (remove finger oils).
- 🍎 Swab inside of clarinet (without the mouthpiece) after each use with the clarinet upside down (swab from bell to barrel). Clean the mouthpiece once per month with soap and water.
- NOTE: Cork grease should be used SPARINGLY—only when joints become difficult to assemble.
- 🍎 Store reeds flat in a reed guard—this will make them last longer and prevent warping.
- 🍎 When breaking in a new reed, play on it for only 5 minutes, then switch to a different reed. Be sure to number your reeds (on the plastic cases) to keep track of which ones work best.

NEVER: submerge any part of the clarinet in water; set clarinet on a music stand; store extra items in the case that might press against the clarinet and cause damage; play clarinet right after eating/drinking/chewing gum (always rinse your mouth with water before playing).

POSTURE

- 🍎 Sit up straight, feet flat on the floor.
- 🍎 Arms relaxed and held out slightly from torso (arms should not touch your body).
- 🍎 Sit up straight on the front 6-8 inches of the chair, chin up.
- 🍎 Clarinet bell should hover between knee caps, never touching the chair or knees.

HAND POSITIONS

- 🍎 Curved hands with “pads” of fingers on the keys (no “flat” fingers, no finger “tips”).
- 🍎 Fingers point slightly downward (not perpendicular to the instrument).
- 🍎 Pinkies must rest on (never under) the tips of the correct keys (Left: C-sharp key; Right: C key).
- 🍎 Left thumb on the “ring” key (angled slightly upward); right thumb under the thumb rest (press upward firmly against teeth).
- 🍎 Left hand is always ON TOP!
- 🍎 Fingers 1-3 on each hand “hover” just above the keys. Find correct finger locations 5 times (Etch-a-Sketch concept).
- 🍎 Left index finger is always touching both the A key (top) and A-flat/G-sharp key (side).
- 🍎 If you are having difficulty supporting the weight of the clarinet, try a neck strap!
- 🍎 If your right thumb gets sore from supporting the instrument, try a foam thumb rest pad.
- 🍎 If your top teeth get sore from playing, try an adhesive mouthpiece pad.

-tone production

- 🍎 Correct mouth formation (form the mouth first, then “plug in” the mouthpiece).
 - Stretched, FLAT CHIN (not “bunched up”)
 - Lower lip forms a pad over the lower teeth—like putting on chapstick. This lip touches the reed at the “V” spot (where reed and mouthpiece come together). Must be thin and firm.
 - Mouth “corners” touch sides of mouthpiece. Cheeks “glued” in (no puffing). Think “oo”.
 - Top teeth rest directly on the mouthpiece, just 1/4” to 3/8” from the tip of mouthpiece.
 - Top lip is stretched firmly over the top teeth. It does NOT curl under the teeth to form a pad.
 - No air pockets between lips and teeth.
 - Lips press toward the mouthpiece and chin/nose pull away.
 - Lips feel like they are pulling your teeth back into your mouth.
 - If the corners of your mouth feel tired or sore after playing, you are playing correctly!
 - TONGUE: middle of your tongue should always be arched!
- 🍎 Good, clear “TOO” sound (mouthpiece & barrel only), always starting with TIP OF TONGUE NEAR THE TIP OF THE REED.
- 🍎 Mirror check: ELIMINATE bunched-up chin, puffy cheeks, embouchure leaks, droopy posture, etc.
- 🍎 Produce a clear tone using the correct amount of mouthpiece in the mouth:
 - TOO MUCH in mouth = squawky tone, lots of squeaks
 - TOO LITTLE in mouth = thin, weak tone (or no sound at all)
- 🍎 Hold a tone for 6 seconds or longer (any note). Next goal: 10 seconds.
- 🍎 Demonstrate the “register key tap” technique to start on low notes and “pop out” high notes:
1) Low G to high D 2) Low A to high E 3) Low B-flat to high F
- 🍎 Pass “chin test”: play 10 or more 8th notes (mouthpiece & barrel only) while touching your chin with your free hand. GOAL: ZERO chin movement.

SCALES (found on page 42 of the Standard of Excellence book)

CONCERT B-FLAT MAJOR SCALE

- 🍎 Notes 1-5, half notes ↑ and ↓.
- 🍎 Notes 1-8, half notes ↑ and ↓.
- 🍎 Notes 1-8, quarter notes (as written) ↑ and ↓.
- 🍎 **Arpeggio**, quarter notes.
- 🍎 **Thirds**, quarter notes.
- 🍎 **MASTER LEVEL**: Full scale with arpeggios and thirds (both lines), 100 bpm or faster.

CONCERT E-FLAT MAJOR SCALE

- 🍎 Notes 1-8, half notes ↑ and ↓.
- 🍎 Notes 1-8, quarter notes (as written) ↑ and ↓.
- 🍎 **Arpeggio**, quarter notes.
- 🍎 **Thirds**, quarter notes.
- 🍎 **MASTER LEVEL**: Full scale with arpeggios and thirds (both lines), 100 bpm or faster.