

Breathing Warm Up

Skidmore Summer Flute Institute 2011

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Why Breathing Exercises?

- Breath feeds nearly every aspect of playing.
- Breathing practice allows us to train the body to take our best breath each time we breathe in a playing context.

1. Observation & Preparation

- Observe body alignment.
- Sit squarely on chair feeling length in the spine and planting feet flat on the floor.
- Relax the muscles in the neck, chest, and abdomen.
- Gently rest palms on legs and close eyes.
- Concentrate on the rhythm of your breath.

2. Exhalation Circles

a. 3x: Wind Over Tone Hole

- Allow the breath to lead from the bottom up. Drop the jaw, relax the muscles and allow the air to flow in like a bellows.
- This exercise is unmetred and intended to be completed at your own pace.
- Completely empty lungs.
- Freely blow across flute, expelling all air.
- Inhale freely through dropped jaw. Allow the breath to fill from the bottom up.
- Repeat immediately two additional times.

b. 3x: Playing

- Repeat the previous exercise, now playing the note C.
- Repeat immediately two additional times.

3. Exploring the Influence of Posture

a. 3x: 4 counts—Back Breathing

- Exhale all air and fold forward, gently allowing the head and arms to relax down.
- Optional: place hand on lower back
- Inhale through the nose for four.
- Freely exhale through the mouth on “pooh” for four.
- Note expansion in the lower back.
- Repeat this exercise two additional times.

b. 3x: 4 counts—Walking breath

- Empty air entirely from the lungs, almost to point of discomfort.
- Emulate yawn to inhale for four counts.
- Exhale for four counts.
- Repeat this exercise two additional times.

4. Dinosaur Breathe & Hiss

- Stand up. Observe posture/body alignment.
 - Put lowest knuckle of thumb in mouth and take a full, quick breath.
 - Listen to the pitch of the breath. Strive to create the lowest pitch possible.
- a. 3x: 4 counts—Sustained
- Inhale on a dinosaur breath for four counts and hiss out on “ss” for four counts.
 - Repeat two additional times.
- b. 3x: 2/8 counts—Pulses
- Inhale on a dinosaur breath for two counts.
 - Pulse out in quarter notes on “ss” for eight counts.
 - Repeat two additional times.

5. Breathing Pyramid

- Explore the range of your lung capacity without introducing tension. Pace inhalation and freely exhale.
 - Stand in a neutral position.
 - Place hand in front of mouth. Use this to observe breath flow on exhalation.
 - Freely exhale on “pooh.”
- a. 3:6
- Breathe in through a relaxed and dropped jaw for three.
 - Breathe out for six.
 - Repeat two additional times.
- b. 2:8
- Breathe in for two.
 - Exhale out for eight.
 - Repeat two additional times.
- c. 4 *sip* 8
- Breathe in for four.
 - Hold for two counts.
 - Take one fast sip of air.
 - Hold for one count.
 - Take one fast sip of air.
 - Hold for one.
 - Take one fast sip of air.
 - Exhale for eight.
 - Repeat two additional times.

6. Apply to Your Music!

- Choose breathing points ahead of time.
- Indicate breaths with a hold –take as much time as necessary to fill up entirely before continuing

Over the Rainbow from *The Wizard of Oz*

Harold Arlen (1905–1986)

The image displays the first 20 measures of the melody for "Over the Rainbow" by Harold Arlen. The music is written in G major (one sharp) and 4/4 time, with a tempo marking of quarter note = 104. The score is presented on four staves. The first staff contains measures 1 through 6. The second staff contains measures 7 through 12, featuring a first ending (marked '1.') and a second ending (marked '2.'). The third staff contains measures 13 through 18, and the fourth staff contains measures 19 through 20, ending with a double bar line.

Other Helpful Concepts:

- Breathe on a vowel
- Think of the breath in three layers. Fill from the bottom up
- Strive for a “warm” breath (vs. cold on the back of the throat)
- Breathe on a low pitch
- Good posture/body alignment is essential to full breathing
- Physical exercise can also improve breath technique for flute
- Yawn to feel openness and relaxation
- To improve breathing, aim to practice in short sessions throughout the day (4-6 times at most)

Resources:

- YouTube Videos: Exercises and Ideas
 - Arnold Jacobs master classes on breathing
 - Chris Potter: “Breathing for Flutists.”
 - Sam Pilafian and Patrick Sheridan : “Breathing Gym”
- Understanding the Mechanics
 - “3D View of the Diaphragm.” <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hp-gCvW8PRY&feature=player_embedded>.
 - Breathing and posture: <<http://brassmusician.com/posture-and-breathing-by-mike-white/>>.
- Published Materials:
 - Pilafian/Sheridan: Breathing Gym publications (CD, book, DVDs)
 - Frederiksen: Arnold Jacobs: Song and Wind