

Tips for Beginner Flutists- Headjoint Practice
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To begin playing the flute, practice blowing on the headjoint of the flute first. Get these 4 basic sounds and start each one with your tongue. When trying these sounds, always look in the mirror to make sure that your bottom lip is straight on the lip plate. Line up the center of the lip plate to the center of your lips. The goal is to direct the air across the hole so that it hits the “blowing edge” right in the center. The edge splits the airstream resulting in a sound. The end of the headjoint should be pointed to your right. Your bottom lip should cover about 1/3 of the embouchure hole.

1. Low sound with the end uncovered. This is usually the first sound you can easily make on the headjoint. To get this sound, make sure your bottom lip covers a small portion of the blow hole, and blow ACROSS the hole. The air should make a small opening in your lips, similar to the shape that you make when you spit watermelon seeds. Remember to always start the air with your tongue---say “too” or “tah”. This is how you’ll blow to produce the middle range of notes on the flute.

2. Lower sound with the end covered with your hand. Blow more gently (but still start with your tongue!) and open your lips slightly more and you will get a much lower sound than the first sound you played. This is how you’ll blow to play the lowest notes on the flute.

3. High sound with the end covered. Now blow much faster air across the hole and close your lips more to make a smaller opening. If you have trouble getting this sound, insert the tip of your pinky in your mouth, and then remove it. The shape that you just made will be close to the right size to produce this sound. Use your tongue to help you start the airstream. Imagine yourself spitting a watermelon seed all the way across the room! This is how you’ll blow for many of the higher notes on the flute. Also keep checking in the mirror to make sure that you have the lip plate straight and centered on your lip. Be careful not to cover too much of the blow hole.

4. Higher sound with the end uncovered. This is the highest sound to get on the headjoint. Blow much faster air than before (for sound #3) and use your tongue again to start the sound. You may not get this sound the first couple of times you try it, but keep at it. This is how you’ll blow to play the very highest notes on the flute.

For all of these sounds, look in the mirror and make sure that your breath leaves a “vapor trail” in the shape of a “V” across the center part of the blow hole. The clearer that “V” is, the clearer the sound you’ll get. If you see a vapor trail in the shape of a block, or one that goes all the way across the blow hole, your lip opening is too large. Try wrapping your lips around the tip of your pinky and keeping the opening small when blowing, or use a small straw to train your lips to make a smaller opening. Keep working to make a focused sound by creating small lip opening. Form your lips into the shape you use to whistle, spit out a piece of gum or a watermelon seed.