



Yorktown High School Clarinet Survival Sheet

No student will be denied the opportunity to participate in the band program based on the quality/brand of their instrument. Achievement is enhanced when students perform on quality instruments and understand how to properly care for their instruments. The intent of this document is to serve as a guide for parents and students as they navigate the many options that are available for aspiring musicians who seek to upgrade their instruments and/or purchase the necessary materials to perform required routine maintenance on their instrument.

- **All Musicians Should Own a Metronome and a Tuner.**
- **It is better to buy a quality, used professional instrument than a new beginner/intermediate instrument. Many new instruments will never play in tune, and no amount of practice or hard work will help you make such an instrument sound good.**
- **Quality mouthpieces/reeds have a profound impact on the quality of your sound. Do not underestimate the value of a quality mouthpiece/reed!**
- **Routine maintenance can prevent the majority of reasons you would need to send an instrument to the repair shop. Clean instruments = Happy/working musicians.**

Clarinet Accessories/Cleaning Materials

- Cotton or Silk pull-through swab/chamois (not felt, natural fibers preferred) (~ \$8)
- Mouthpiece brush (~ \$2)
- Polishing cloth (~ \$4)
- Reed Case (~ \$12)
- Pad Saver (~ \$10)
- Cork Grease (~ \$2)
- Key Oil (~ \$3)
- Thumb rest cushion (~ \$1)
- Mouthpiece cushion (~ \$5)
- Clarinet Stand (~ \$15) Bass Clarinet Stand (~ \$60)

Maintenance

- Take the instrument apart in the reverse order of assembly, shake moisture out of each end, and swab each piece. The Chamois/swab should have a strong cord attached to it with a weight on the end of the cord that is smooth so as not to scratch the bore.
- The mouthpiece must be cleaned from both ends. Place forefinger in the center of the chamois to wipe the tone chamber. *Do not* pull the the chamois through the mouthpiece, the weight can damage the tip.
- When cleaning the joints, always drop in the swab from the top down and remember to wipe moisture off of the cork end.
- Do not leave the reed on the mouthpiece! It must be carefully dried and placed in a reed case to prevent warping.

Bb Clarinet Instrument Recommendation (listed in order from step-up to professional)

- Buffet E11 Bb Clarinet (~ \$1,500)
- Buffet Crampon R13 Professional Bb Clarinet with Nickel Silver Keys (~ \$3,050)
- Buffet Crampon R13 Green Line Professional Bb Clarinet with Nickel Plated Keys (~ \$3,050) - will not crack.

Speak with Band Director &/or Private Instructor before purchases to ensure best deal and appropriate choices

Mouthpiece

- Ridenour RE10 Bb Clarinet Mouthpiece (~ \$50)
- Vandoren M30 Series Bb Clarinet Mouthpiece (~ \$85)
- Vandoren M13 Lyre Bb Clarinet Mouthpiece (~ \$90) [The Lyre model is a little more open than the Vandoren M13. It permits easy blowing with harder reeds and produces a rich and centered sound. Recommended for symphonic and chamber music].
- Gennusa Excellente Clarinet Mouthpiece (~ \$95) GE* or GE**
- Leblanc Robert Marcellus Clarinet Mouthpiece - M13 (~ \$100)

Ligature

- Rovner Dark Bb Clarinet Ligature & Cap (~ \$18)

Bb Bass Clarinet Instrument Recommendation

- Leblanc 7168 Low Eb Bass Clarinet (~ \$1,600)
- Jupiter 673BN Low Eb Bass Clarinet (~ \$1,800)
- Buffet and Selmer wooden bass clarinets are the best - for aspiring collegiate musician
- Go nickel-plated, silver bends too easily.

Mouthpiece:

- Selmer Paris Standard Series Bass Clarinet Mouthpiece, Model C* (~ \$195)
- Selmer Paris C85 Bass Clarinet Mouthpiece 115 Medium/Medium (~ \$240)

Ligature

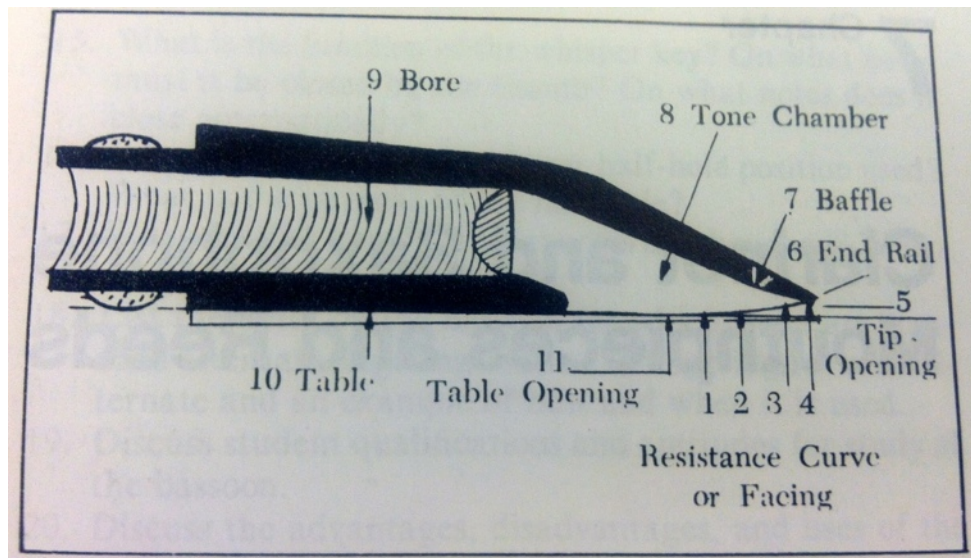
- Rovner Dark Bb Bass Clarinet Ligature & Cap (~ \$18)

Mouthpieces

A quality mouthpiece can dramatically improve your sound on any instrument.

Criteria for a Good Mouthpiece

- Produces a tone that has good body, is characteristic of the instrument, and is matching in quality in all registers.
- Plays perfectly in tune in all registers, with no more than normal embouchure adjustments.
- Allows for easy production of all types of articulations from hard short staccato to broad legato at all dynamic ranges.
- Has a wide dynamic range over which the tone quality remains constant.
- Does not require too much or too little mouthpiece in the mouth so that a standard embouchure may be formed.
- Is not too demanding of the reeds, but is one for which it is fairly easy to find and adjust a satisfactory reed of medium strength.



Parts of the Mouthpiece

- Facing: a.k.a. resistance curve or lay, is the portion of the flat side that slants away from the reed. It varies greatly in both length and amount of curvature.
 - A short lay requires less mouthpiece in the mouth and frequently produces a stuffy tone quality with little volume or projection. Needs a stiff reed.
 - An excessively long lay requires more than the normal amount of mouthpiece in the mouth with results in greater length of the reed vibrating, less control, necessitates more than normal breath pressure, is tiring to play and often produces a rough tone. Needs a soft reed.
- Tip Opening: distance between the mouthpiece and the reed at the tip. This opening provides the resistance to the flow of breath into the instrument.
 - Close opening: offers great resistance, requires a stiff reed, produces a small, stuffy tone quality.
 - Wide opening: offers little resistance, requires a soft reed, a strong embouchure, and is difficult to control.
 - Medium tip opening is recommended for all students at all levels.*
- 3. End Rail: the edge of the mouthpiece tip against which the tip of the reed beats. If the end rail is too wide, the reed responds more slowly (the reed may stick making it difficult to articulate properly). The shape of the end rail should correspond exactly with the shape of the reed.
- 4. Baffle: If it is too high, the mouthpiece squeaks, if it is too low, it is difficult to produce and control notes in upper register.
- 5. Tone Chamber: the interior of the mouthpiece under the facing. Its proportions determine quality of the tone and response. Avoid radical variations from the standard.
- 6. Bore: the portion which fits on the barrel joint. The size and shape of the bore must be a continuation of the bore of the instrument upon which it is used. If the tone is uneven, or if there are serious intonation problems that cannot be identified, you may need to find a different brand with a different bore.

How do I Choose a Mouthpiece that is Right for Me?

- There are numerous combinations of facings and tip openings, but regardless of brand, the most popular facings are of a medium length with a medium tip opening.
- Despite what the model numbers may indicate, no two mouthpieces are identical. Do a playing test before purchasing your mouthpiece.

Reeds

Reeds are the “soul” of your instrument! Clarinet and sax reeds are machine made and are not pre-tested. Expect that within any box you buy there will be some that work, some that need small adjustments, and some that need to be discarded. You should have a rotation of 4 reeds that you use to preserve the quality and longevity of your reeds. Keep them in a proper reed case (not what they come in the boxes) so that they dry properly, are well protected, and last longer.

Criteria for a Good Reed

- Responds freely and easily over the entire range of the instrument.
- Plays all octaves of the instrument well in tune without undue adjustments in embouchure or lip pressure.
- May be controlled throughout the full dynamic range in all octaves of the instrument.
- Produces the correct resistance to wind pressure.
- Allows the complete scope of articulations from hard staccato to soft legato to be played in all octaves.

Reed Recommendations

It is important to try a variety of reeds to find the one that works best for you. We recommend Vandoren V12 and “Blue Box” reeds, or Rico Reserve Classic.

- A harder reed gives a heavier, thicker, and fuller sound. It's more difficult to correct the pitch with a harder reed, but changing dynamics won't result in pitch variations as easily. It's also more difficult to play low pitches softly with a hard reed, but altissimo notes are easier to reach. If a reed is offering so much resistance that it is hard to blow, it is too stiff for you.
- A softer reed makes playing easier - the reed speaks more easily, and gives a lighter, brighter sound. However, there is a greater chance for pitch variations as you play, though it is easier to correct the pitch with your embouchure. High notes can be difficult to achieve with a soft reed. If you have a thin, reedy tone quality, your clarion register is difficult to play in tune, lower notes in the chalumeau register buzz, or less than normal breath pressure produces a tone, this reed is too soft for you.
- The more mature the player, the harder the reed strength they should be playing on. Most high school musicians are playing on 2.5-3.5 strength reeds. Remember, there will be some variation in the strength and quality of reeds within any box, and also among brands. One brand's 2.5 could be equal to another's 3.

Ready to Evaluate a Reed?

- Hold it up to the light - if you can see a symmetrical, inverted V shape, that's the sign of a good reed. "Crooked" V's can lead to squeaking.
- If there is an uneven grain to the reed, chances are it will not play well.
- If there are knots in the reed, it will not vibrate evenly. (note: irregular brown or dark colored marks in the bark will not affect its quality)
- If the reed is greenish in color, the cane is too young - leave it somewhere a few months to see if it will mature to the yellow or golden-brown color you're looking for.
- Fingernail test: The most accurate way of testing the flexibility of a reed is to gently move the tip across the thumbnail to determine how much pressure is necessary to flex it back. The more pressure, the harder the reed. It should flex evenly across the width of the tip. Flexing will also reveal any splits that may be present. If the tip is split, discard the reed.