

ABSOLUTE FLUTE

VICTORIA HEATH

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Loud and Proud

It has been an exciting and transitional period for me, I have had a handful of new students starting this half term, shifted students online and also moved to Bristol. With everything going on, I have realised the importance of going back to the basics.

I have been revisiting flute care tips and fixing up a fair few flutes as it is coming towards the end of the academic year. If you would like to refresh on the best ways to care for your flute and even learn a little about the parts of your beloved instrument then I have included some of this for you! I have also included a horror story about a mishap with my own flute!

As well as looking at the intricacies of the flute itself, I have been pondering the minute details within our embouchure. It is fascinating how varied embouchure is as everyone's lip shapes and teeth placement are different.

The flexibility of these muscles are so important for control, not just of tone (as we mentioned last time), but of dynamics as well.

As I delve deeper into how to change your embouchure to increase your dynamic range, hopefully your sound and confidence will develop too!

I hope you find some useful tips and tricks in the newsletter today and also do have a listen to the recommended pieces, there's some amazing ones this time!

Oh, and just one more thing, I will have time over the summer for lessons so if you are available it'd be great to see you (or even some of your friends as I have some term time slots available on recorder, flute, theory or beginner piano if you know of anyone looking for lessons).

Victoria Heath

In this newsletter you can expect:

Overview

Caring for your
Flute

Exam Details

Dynamics

Monthly Music

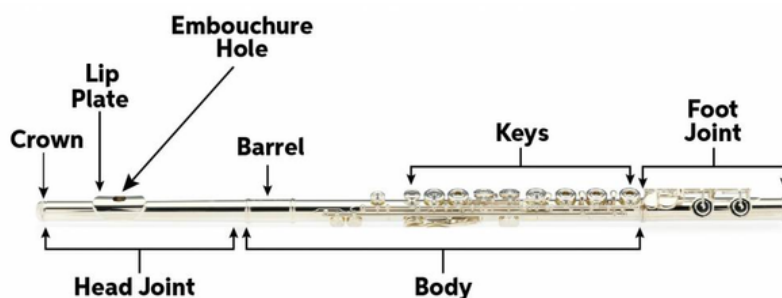
Events

Tips, Tricks and Information

Caring for your Flute

Flutes are delicate things as I am sure you are aware and we tend to treat them like glass when we first get a flute. After a while, this feeling disappears and we may start to treat the flute, well, a bit rough. This is your signal to give your flute a little TLC, a bit of a pamper. I promise you, you will be rewarded with a happy flute, lower repair bills and often it will even help you along with some problem areas of playing.

Now, to get acquainted with the flute parts. These parts below are your most commonly known but you also have a number of other important parts. For example, you have the rods which the keys are attached to, the pads on the inside of the keys and the springs and screws coming off the rods. All of these parts need caring for.



When getting out and putting away your flute -

- Do not squeeze the keys as this can cause bending of the mechanisms. Instead, hold the flute by the barrel and any areas where there are no keys.
- Make sure your flute sits nicely in your case - the G# key should rest on a pillow pointing towards the other parts of your flute.
- Your crown should be on tightly and not moving. The crown position is key to tuning your upper register. If you would like to check it is in the right place, I can show you an easy trick in your next lesson.
- Make sure you clean the flute after each practice - a soft cotton cloth through each part and a quick wipe down of the lip plate with a microfiber cloth will keep it working nicely.
- If your keys are clicking, you may be blowing too much sugar down your flute. To stop this sound, use blotting paper and blot the key pads gently (do not pull while it is closed). You can also drink water or brush your teeth before playing.
- Keep an eye that all your screws are flush with the rods and posts and your springs are not unhooked (this will stop notes sounding).

A Mishap...

Story time!

When I was learning, I had a heart-stopping moment with my flute. It was a week before my grade 8 exam and I was in a rehearsal with friends. We were having a lovely time preparing for a performance but I had forgotten a pencil. Not to worry, my friend across the living room had one! So, I put my flute down to grab the pencil. When I spun around, a horror story was unfolding.

Where had I put my flute? On the sofa I was sitting on.

Where had my friend decided to sit? On... that... seat...

Oh, the sheer panic!

With shaking hands, I picked up my beloved flute. The foot joint resembled a banana and I was full of dread. Did I mention I was a week out from my grade 8?!

I phoned my flute doctor and thank goodness he had an emergency slot. We rushed my flute in and he assured me he was able to fix her - a lot of soldering and replacing of rods was needed and I got a stern telling off!

Thankfully I got the flute back just in time for my exam and I kept a screwdriver in my back pocket just in case any of the screws moved (and have ever since).

The moral of the story - **do not put your flute anywhere you might sit/it might fall! Please!**



Tips, Tricks and Information Continued...

flutetunes.com

Sally Magee

Traditional Irish



Dynamics

Dynamics can be a challenge for all level of player but that is why I like them - they can *always* be developed and you can *always* do more! It is an easy win in a piece - add dynamics and it will sound more musical.

To start with, we want to practice playing forte (loud). To play loud, you will need to do a few things:

- **Open up your embouchure** (make the hole between your lips bigger). Let more air out in a directed stream.
- **Drop your jaw**, think of a yawn feeling or a gobstopper behind your back teeth. This will allow the air to resonate.
- **Use your diaphragm** for support - push from your core for a large volume of air.
- **Aim down** into the flute to keep the pitch down (otherwise you risk going sharp). I would recommend practicing this up and down movement with note bends.
- You want to produce harmonics to create a full bodied sound. You may need to experiment to find what angle is the best for this. Think of pushing the air off the other side of the lip plate.

Once you have mastered forte, we now need to think about piano (quiet) playing. We will gradually make the following adjustments to get quieter:

- Make the **embouchure hole smaller** and think a soft 'ooh'. Let less air escape and focus it like a laser.
- Make the **inside of the mouth smaller** by lifting the tongue a little.
- **Keep the air fast** through the lips but **aim higher** up this time towards the top of the lip plate.

Exam Details

- ABRSM In Person Exam bookings are currently closed for this term.
- ABRSM Performance (Online) exams can be booked any time and videos submitted within a month.
- Trinity In Person Exam bookings are currently closed for this term!
- Trinity Digital can be booked any time and videos submitted within a month.

Bonus Tips

Quiet playing takes a lot of control so may need practice.

Hold your hand in front of you and practice moving the air up to your fingers and down to your wrist just by moving your jaw.

Start a quiet high note by aiming the air too high so no sound comes out and then drop the direction down slowly to the note. Keep the hole small but the air fast (especially on high notes).



Events

The Conservatoire

Free on Fridays

This is happening every Friday at 1:30pm. Have a check out below for what is next!

<https://www.conservatoire.org.uk/events>

Prepare to Play! Flute (6-9 yrs)

Tuesday 29th July, 09.30 - 16.30 (£78)

I will be leading a day introduction course at the Conservatoire - please let your friends know!

<https://www.conservatoire.org.uk/summerholiday/music>

Just Flutes Festival 2025:

Masterclass with Emily Beynon

16th August 9:00am-4:00pm

https://www.justflutes.com/events/?srltid=AfmBOog2tldgYIVRjISv2tFcAcuS9_iYzCEu1C2zD9slb-v2iLm5DcEe#qref

https://www.justflutes.com/events/?srltid=AfmBOog2tldgYIVRjISv2tFcAcuS9_iYzCEu1C2zD9slb-v2iLm5DcEe#qref

International Student Summer Music School

Fri, Jul 18 - Wed, Jul 23, 2025

Suffolk

flutesenvacances.co.uk/international-student-summer-school/

Oxford Flute Summer School

Mon, Aug 18 - Sat, Aug 23, St

Edward's School Oxford

<https://oxfordflutes.co.uk/>

Monthly Music



See below for a few music listening recommendations:

Something classic:

Duvernoy - Concertino

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZqSsKfHvPro>

Something unknown:

Thomas - Steeples In My Soul for Alto Flute

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CLO18iYTQY4>

Something a bit different:

Bartók - Romanian Folk Dances for Flute and Guitar

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Pn4-4Y4bUco>

Recent Student Music Requests:

Bach - Concerto for two violins in D minor

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ILKJcsET-NM>

Holloway - Trust In Me (Jungle Book)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bJHPfpOnDzg>

Can you Feel the Love Tonight

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=25QyCxVxwQ>

Thank you for reading!

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