INTONATION & DYNAMICS

Step One: Alignment Intonation Basics

- Assuming the cork is placed correctly, headjoints should be pulled out only approx. 1/4 inch.
- Pulling out or pushing in too far will disrupt the intonation of the instrument with itself.
- Make sure headjoints are not pulled out or pushed in too much before proceeding to the next steps.

Step Two: Oral Cavity and Airstream Direction

- Ensure students are releasing their jaws and allowing their tongue to stay relaxed and low in their mouths.
- Ensure that students are blowing down into the flute by utilizing rabbit attacks.
- Ensure that students are "arc-ing" the air down into the flute by imagining the air blowing to the roof of their mouths and then down into the flute guided by the upper lip and top teeth.

Step Three: Listening & Fingerings

- Don't assume your students cannot hear bad intonation before addressing the above issues.
- Make sure students are playing with the correct fingerings. Some notes on the flute will naturally be sharper or flatter than others. (See below.)
- Teach students how to hear "in tune" and "out of tune."
- Teach students how to hum or sing the pitch.

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Soft = Usually Flat

- Problem: students are not supporting the sound
- Solution: "Remember to engage your core abdominal muscles to support the sound." - Try ab exercises and/or lifting one leg high while playing to teach students to engage the core.

- Problem: students are not blowing the air stream high enough
- Solution: "Bring out your bottom lip to blow the air up higher. Keep your core engaged."

Loud = Usually Sharp

- Problem: students are not blowing down
- Solution: "Bring your upper lip out like a rabbit attack and allow your tongue to stay low in your mouth."

- Problem: students are "pinching" out the high notes
- Solution: "Let your abdominal muscles support the sound and use lots of air instead of your lips. High notes don't need to be squeezed out."

Intelligent Intonation

Part of good intonation on the flute is understanding pitch tendencies on the instrument. If flutists play with good fundamental tone and listen well, these pitch problems might be mitigated without much more intervention. For most flutes, the following pitch tendencies will be true:

C#5 = very sharp
D5 = sharp
D#/E-flat 5 = sharp

D6 = flat
D#/E-flat 6 = sharp
E6 = very sharp

F#6 = very sharp
A#6 = very sharp
B6 = sharp
C7 = very, very, very sharp

In general, low register tends to be flatter, high register tends to be sharper.