

Some of the key things to work on are your breathing, dexterity, sound quality and rhythm. The following tips will help you improve your skills:

1. Breathing Exercises

It is always best to begin by doing some breathing exercises. Breathe in and out slowly, and see how long you can breathe out. Form your embouchure as you breathe in and out to simulate playing the clarinet. Always breathe in through your nose and out through your mouth.

Your tummy should rise as you breathe in, to allow more space for your lungs to expand, therefore holding more air and allowing you to breathe out longer. Beginners usually take a breath after every four measures in a musical piece; advanced players can usually wait longer.

2. Holding Your Clarinet Correctly

Curve your hands slightly and place the soft pads of your fingers over the holes. Keep your left thumb close to the register key as it covers the hole underneath it completely.

Most of the weight of your clarinet should be supported by your right thumb. It is important that your right thumb supports most of the weight otherwise you will not be able to place the pads of your fingers into the holes correctly.

Keep your body relaxed, don't tighten up your shoulders, and keep your elbows to the sides.

3. Your Embouchure

Fold your bottom lip over your bottom teeth, with the reed downwards inside your mouth. Gently place your top teeth on the top of your mouthpiece. Keep your lips firmly around the mouthpiece. Do not bite on the mouthpiece.

Keep the corners of your mouth tight. Practice this until you can obtain a steady sound. Try to find a comfortable position as you play. Try out different lip pressures, teeth positions until you obtain a clear steady tone.

Always moisten the reed before you begin to play.

4. Troubleshooting

a) If you are having problems with your sound, check to make sure your reed is not damaged. If so, replace it.

b) If you are having trouble placing your fingers on the clarinet, make sure all the parts of your clarinet are positioned correctly.

c) If the sound is muffled or air doesn't seem to flow through your clarinet, make sure there is nothing trapped inside your clarinet such as your cleaning rod.

d) If it becomes difficult to assemble your clarinet, then apply some cork and neck grease to the clarinet.

5. Take Care Of Your Clarinet

Clean your clarinet after each use, inside and out. Beginners may have to clean the inside of their clarinet several times during a practice session.

Check to make sure all the keys are functioning properly and that none are loose. keep the screws on the keys tight, but not so tight that they won't work.

When assembling your mouthpiece, avoid touching the tip of the reed as it is very delicate.

6. Miscellaneous Tips

Keep working on your skills even if it seems difficult. You will eventually notice a difference even if you sound like a bus at first.

Listen to recordings of clarinet music to give you inspiration and an idea of what it should sound like.

Work on difficult passages until you can play them with ease. If you become too frustrated, take a break and play something easier. Remember to always go back to the difficult passages.

Practice at least one or two hours a day if possible.

Record yourself playing your clarinet and play it back to check your sound quality, and your rhythm.

Have a fellow clarinet player practice with you. This way you can offer encouragement to and receive feedback from him/her.

If you can afford to, take some private lessons. It often helps to have some guidance, feedback and encouragement from an experienced teacher.