

Teacher/Pupil Handbook

How to play the recorder



St Alban's CE Primary School

‘Educating for Life in all its fullness’

John 10:10

Recorder Playing

It is important that we adopt the correct posture for playing any instrument or singing from early on. Later on, if we do not have the correct posture, it will limit the children on how far they can go.

1. Basic recorder information.

There are three parts to a recorder the head, body and foot joint.

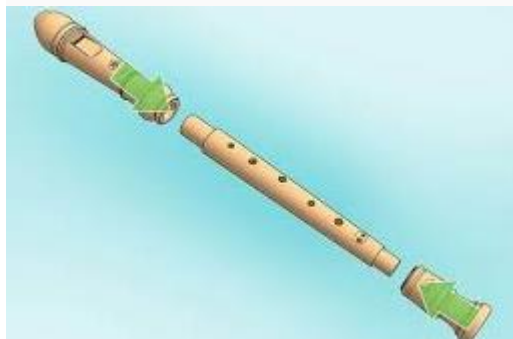
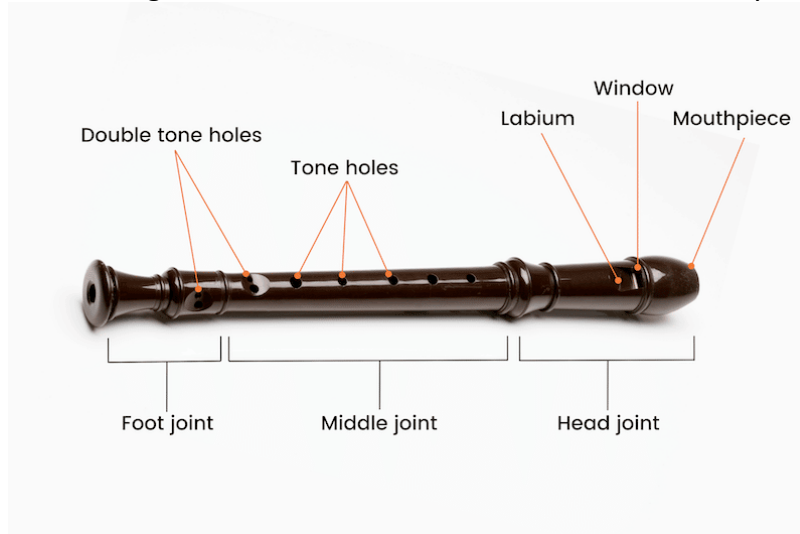
The head joint has a rectangular hole where the sound comes out and a thin hole for blowing into.

The body joint has most of the holes at the front and one singular hole on the back for the thumb.

The foot is short and has doubled holes for performing accidentals.

The head joint should be facing towards your lips.

The rectangular hole and the first of the holes on the body should be in line.



2. Thumb hole

The thumb hole should face directly back towards you. The holes, including the rectangular hole should face directly away from the player. Important the children don't have the recorder twisted when playing.

3. Recorder angle

When bring the recorder to your lips, your body and the recorder should form a 45 degree angle or gentle slope towards the ground.

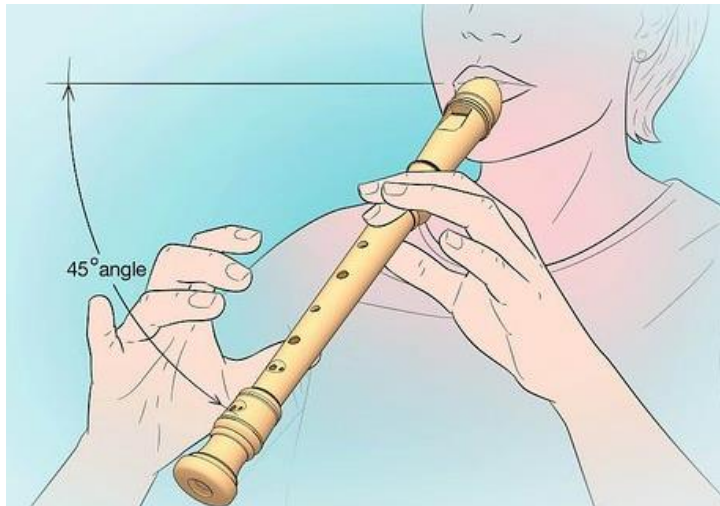
4 Lips around the mouthpiece

Your lips should make a circle shape and seal around the tip only of the mouth piece.

Teeth shouldn't touch the mouthpiece at all.

Don't put the whole recorder in your mouth.

Tongue should rest near the back of your top teeth.



4. How to blow

Blowing is very important in the process of learning to play recorder.

Keep in mind that the recorder is not an instrument with a large cavity so if you blow too hard it will block and you will get an unwanted effect.

The blow on the recorder should be soft, placing the lips around the hole or mouthpiece and should never bite or use the teeth.

Keep the tongue behind the upper teeth and blow as when you say the syllable "tu" or "du".

Be careful to cover the holes well if you don't get unwanted whistles or squeaks.

It is important not to blow too much air because the recorder collapses and unwanted sounds are produced, the recorder is a simple instrument for that reason.

That's why we don't need to push a lot of air.

5. left hand on top

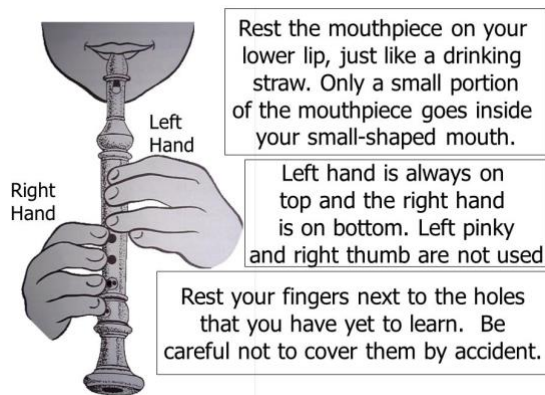
This is tradition – recorders have always been played this way.

Design- it is designed for left hand on top

Preparation- many other wind instruments also use the left hand on top, so prepares for this.

Design is the important reason. The holes on the front are not in a straight line. This is important, because our fingers are different lengths, and these holes line up with the longer and shorter fingers.

They only line up if our left hand is on top.



6. Fingers curved and perpendicular

When we go to cover the holes to play our fingers need to be slightly curved.

Need to cover the holes with the center of our finger pads.

Need to make sure the fingers are perpendicular (forming a perfect T) with the length of the recorder.

Angled fingers are more likely to roll and cover the holes on the side of the finger. This will result in half covered holes which produce weak or squaky sounds.

Don't pull elbows into your body or stick them out, let them relax at a natural position with your body.

7. Good posture

Good posture allows you to breathe more efficiently and without tension.

Recorder playing class management

Using a recorder.

1. Holding position

If you play before I say you make the instrument go away.

Rest position, for when you are showing or demonstrating something.

Practice position, for when they are practicing their hand position, but are not ready to play yet. They hold their instrument the same way as they would when playing, but rest the mouth piece under their chin, instead of under or near their mouth. If a child blows the recorder take the top off, so that they can focus on just the fingering.

Play position, to play the recorder.



2. Proper blowing technique

How to blow into the recorder to produce a pleasant tone.

Play a short melody for the class on your recorder and afterwards point out that the volume level you were playing for them is the maximum volume the instrument can physically produce without sounding awful.

Get the children to echo you as you speak 4-beat rhythm patterns on the number two, using a quiet speaking voice the whole time, then they can echo you on the word 'two' again but using a whisper voice.

Once the children have gotten the feel for how to blow softly, have them echo you again, still whispering two, into their instruments. Have them hold the instrument with their left hand, not covering any holes.

3. First note: G

When showing the class, a new note, always turn around to face the same direction they are and show them that way, holding the recorder up and to the side.

The left thumb should be pointing out to the side when it covers the hole on the back not pointing up towards the mouth piece.

When the children place their fingers over the 2 holes they need to play a B, have them squeeze a little harder until they get marks from the holes on their fingertips. Then tell them to check and make sure they have complete circles, not partial circles, on each finger, not the very tips near the nails.

Remind them of how to blow softly into the instrument. They echo you on 4-beat patterns again, this time on B. While doing this walk around the class and physically move their fingers when they are not covering the holes. Explain this is what you are going to do beforehand.



4. Second note: A

As above but covering 3 holes. Remind them of the thumb position.



5. Cleaning up

Children don't need to clean their recorders with the length of playing time taking place. Children place their recorders upside down (head joint at the bottom) in the draw string bag. This allows the recorder to dry out. Then place their recorder in their draw. Number the recorders and have a list of the names and numbers so can keep a track.