BASSOON BASICS

FOR MIDDLE & HIGH SCHOOL EDUCATORS

By Devin Hawthorne

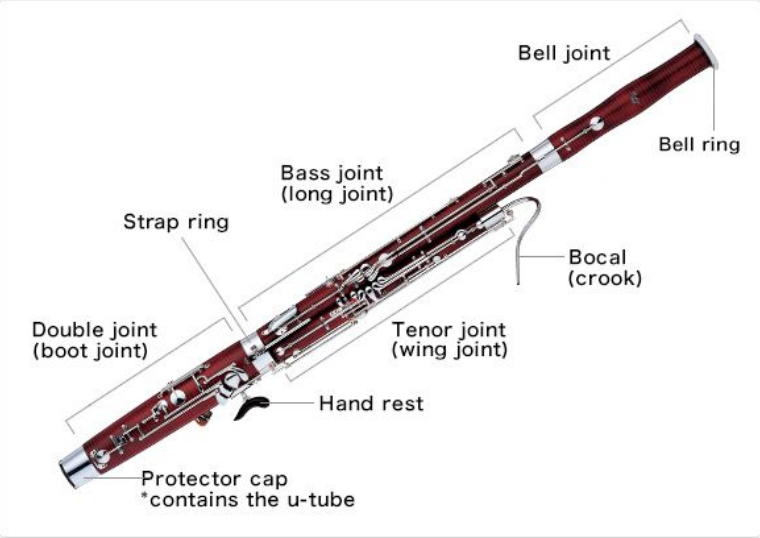
A BIT ABOUT ME

My name is Devin Hawthorne (he/they) and I am from Victoria BC - the unceded traditional territory of the lək̓ʷəŋən-speaking peoples including the Songhees and Xʷsepsəm nations.

I've been playing bassoon for 13 years (since the summer of Grade 6)! I hold Bachelor's degrees in Music and Education from the University of Victoria, which I attended from 2019-2025.

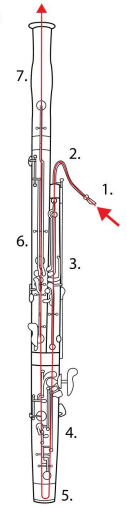
In addition to performing on bassoon in Greater Victoria and on Salt Spring Island, I TTOC for middle and high school music in SD63 (Saanich), conduct the Greater Victoria Junior Concert Band, and teach private bassoon lessons.

BASSOON ANATOMY



The pathway of the airflow:

1. Reed
2. Bocal
3. Boot joint
4. Right boot side through the
5. U-shaped bend to the left boot side
6. Long joint
7. Bell



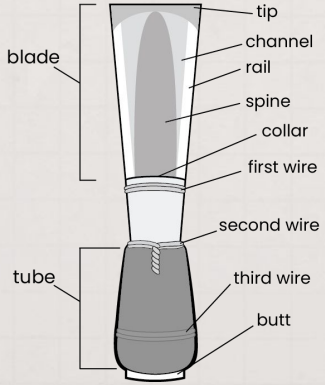
BASSOON ASSEMBLY

REEDS PART 1

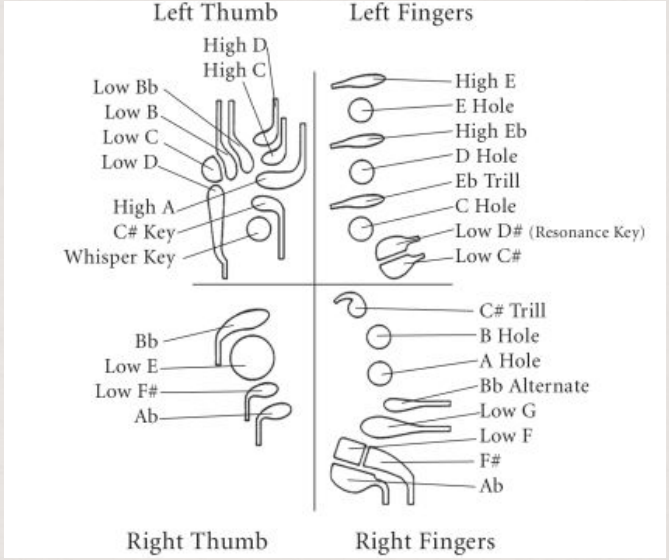
GOOD REED	BAD REED
Typically costs $25-40	Typically costs $15-24
28 mm from the first wire to the tip - use a ruler!	First wire too low or too high relative to the tip
Blades start narrow, get wider, and are thinnest at the tip, thickest at the back	Blades are straight, without much flare, and may be irregularly thick in places
The tip of the reed ‘smiles’ - the opening is symmetrical	The tip of the reed is flat, or very open, or lopsided
The base/butt is circular, free of debris, and flat	The base is misshapen and/or has loose cane fibers inside
The wrapping is clean and strong, with no lumps or gaps	The wrapping is inconsistent, has gaps, may be unspooling

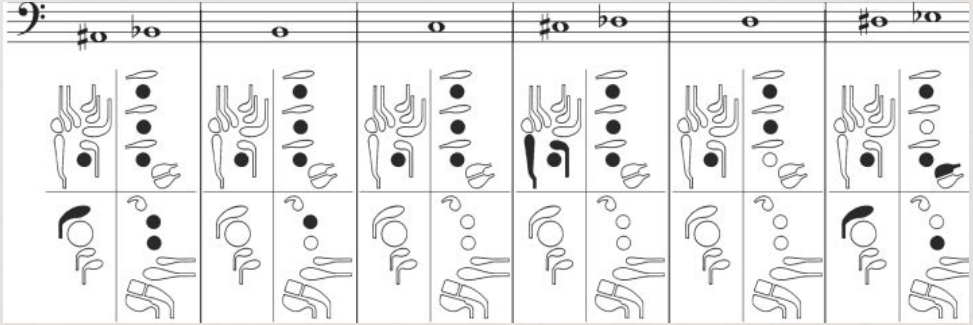
REEDS PART 2

- Eastman, Danzi, and Jones are all generally good brands
- Avoid Carlton, Emerald, Selmer (plastic), Légère (plastic, $$$)
- Reeds should never be bought in a strength below medium - one can always take cane off to make the reed more responsive
- **Come to my second session to learn more about reed purchasing, reed modifying, and reed making!**



FINGERING CHARTS PART 1





FINGERING CHARTS PART 2

[THE Bassoon Fingering Chart](#)

BASSOON PLAYING 101

- Before playing:
  - Soak your reed in warm water (submerge entirely)
  - Set up your seat strap with the cup or hook on the right side
  - Remove your reed and test it (does it seal and ‘crow’ correctly?)
  - Assemble the bassoon, ensuring that the bocal and boot joint are in the right places. Bring the instrument to you without bending forwards or backwards. Fit your reed onto the bocal. **Go!**
- Warming up:
  - Long tones >
  - Chromatic scales to reinforce fingerings (1 octave for middle school, 2-3 for high school)
  - Herzberg scales to improve technique for intermediate/advanced players (start with C Maj)
  - Octaves
  - Focus on articulation, air support, moving between notes smoothly; air control and back pressure are key
  - Weissenborn, Milde etudes depending on the level of the student

RESOURCES FOR BEGINNING, INTERMEDIATE AND ADVANCED PLAYERS

Bassoon Resources of All Kinds!

Q&A

+

LIVE PRACTICE

THANKS!

FOR FURTHER CONVERSATIONS ABOUT ALL THINGS BASSOON AND MUSIC IN GENERAL, YOU CAN CONTACT ME AT:

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