

# Teaching Flute Sectionals: Ten Activities for Success

Phyllis Avidan Louke, [www.phyllislouke.com](http://www.phyllislouke.com), [www.fabulousflute.com](http://www.fabulousflute.com)

Email: [palouke@comcast.net](mailto:palouke@comcast.net)

Flutists are often asked to teach flute sectionals or flute clinics in conjunction with the band programs in local schools. Whether you are working with a group weekly, monthly, or just once a year, learn at least ten activities that will improve the students' intonation, tone, tonguing, and technique. The activities can be adapted to the playing level of the students. *The Flute Scale Book: A Path to Artistry*, George & Louke (pub. Theodore Presser) is a great source of material.

## 1. Fast Air Stream (Birthday candle air) on headjoint only

- a. Spit-rice tonguing (promotes fast air stream); use **pinwheel** for visual aid
- b. Place edge of embouchure hole where *lip skin and chin skin meet* (Patricia George)—lower lip covers  $\frac{1}{4}$  to  $\frac{1}{3}$  of the tone hole;
  - i. Students with very full lower lip need to place edge ON the lower lip.
  - ii. Students with braces—layers of **masking tape** on embouchure plate (P. George)
- c. Tonguing rhythms—"echoing rhythms", "follow the leader"; "Telephone"
  - i. Can also introduce tapping toe to reinforce beat
  - ii. Can write simple rhythms on board
- d. Low & High Octaves—vary patterns and rhythms: students echo
- e. Low, High, Higher—cover end with headjoint with palm, can get 3 pitches—vary patterns and rhythms: students echo (the highest note may be difficult to attain for many younger students), TFSB, page 39 (3.01)
  - i. For young students, play headjoint songs: Hot Cross Buns, Mary Had a Little Lamb, Go Tell Aunt Rhody, Au Claire de la Lune

## 2. Fast Air Stream Part 2--Put flutes together

- a. Show students how to check headcork position and show them how to adjust it
- b. Show students how to align headjoint; check alignment; mark alignment marks, if necessary
  - i. Have students pull out headjoint approx.  $\frac{1}{4}$ " (**use strips of paper  $\frac{1}{4}$ " wide**)
- c. Low, High, Higher with right hand on barrel (see *Left-Hand Harmonics* on page 40 (3.02), *The Flute Scale Book: A Path to Artistry*, George & Louke)
  - i. Remind students to play with fast air
  - ii. Finger G: play  $\frac{1}{2}$  notes on low G, high G, play first harmonic (D3)
  - iii. Repeat pattern, fingering Ab, then A, Bb, B, C, Db
- d. Tune: With **tuner**, check each student's pitch on D2, A2, A1 and adjust headjoint position; make a small mark on headjoint with a **sharpie**, so the student knows how far to pull out
  - i. Explain the tuner, if necessary
- e. Repeat Low, High, Higher exercise (b)
- f. Keep keys of flute level; LH thumb straight and pointing to ceiling

## 3. Fast Air Stream Part 3--Playing Octaves

- a. Harmonic Warm-up in #2 above
- b. Double-check intonation, remark tuning mark on flutes, if necessary
- c. Reinforce angle of air stream to change octaves
- d. Remind students to use spit rice tonguing for clean attacks and fast air stream
- e. Remind students to use fast air
- f. Gauge level to advancement of students
  - i. Octaves with same fingering (E to C#)
    1. embouchure development/flexibility
    2. chromatic sequence

- ii. Same as (i) plus D1-2; Eb1-2 (talk about LH index finger as an “octave key” to reinforce keeping LH1 up when playing D2 & Eb2 (see p. 45 (3.07), TFSB)
- iii. Same as (ii) plus continuing chromatically through F3 or G3
- iv. For more advanced students, use full range to C4 or D4; vary articulation
- v. Eb Major Scale in Octaves: Eb1-2, F1-2, etc... to Eb2-3
- vi. F Major Scale in Octaves; also G, Ab, Bb, depending on level.
- g. Activities
  - i. Low-High tongued, slurred
  - ii. Use various tonguing and rhythmic patterns, including
    - 1. Snake Charmer (♩♩: LHH x 4 or HLL x 4
    - 2. Donkey (♩♩: LH x 4 or HL x 4)
    - 3. Slurred
    - 4. Fluttersong
    - 5. Various rhythmic patterns or double-tonguing
    - 6. “Echoing Rhythms”, “Follow the Leader”, “Telephone”
  - iii. Left-Hand Scales- G Major & Ab Major (TFSB p. 42 (3.04) – Left-Hand Scales)

#### 4. Balancing the Flute (Patricia George)/Hand Position

- a. Always keep keys level
- b. Support point: LH index finger above knuckle on the “flute shelf” (not on bone)
- c. Support point: embouchure plate *in* chin (Patricia George)
- d. Support point: RH thumb on back of tube with fingers in their natural arched position (pads of fingers on the keys, not fingertips); “pulling book off shelf” (Michel Debost)
- e. RH thumb is a counterbalance to LH index finger, stabilizing flute so it won’t roll toward the player when lifting the LH thumb for notes such as C (Patricia George)
- f. “Pizza Slice” (Patricia George): end of flute should be in front of your nose
- g. Activity: Play B to C; and other notes to C
  - i. Keep LH still—watch for movement in the elbow and hand
  - ii. Move fingers from the knuckles and keep elbows quiet (Patricia George)
  - iii. Eventually use the “*I am going home*” rhythm (P. George)
- h. Aurally (not written): Use note pairs in page 44 *Balancing the Flute* and *Trills for Balance* from *The Flute Scale Book*

#### 5. Body Alignment and Music Stands


- a. Body is aligned with shoulders above hips—no twisting at waist
- b. Stand or sit at 45° angle (1/4 turn to the right) to music stand
- c. Standing: feet shoulder width apart with left foot at 12:00, and right at approx. 3:00
- d. Shoulders should be down, arms & elbows should hang from shoulders in a natural position—no tension
- e. Head should be balanced on neck with chin “level” (looking straight ahead, not looking down or up)—exercise to find this balanced spot.

#### 6. Vibrato—with Headjoint only (Patricia George), TFSB, p. 13 (1.01)

- a. Using HAH and HAH slurred in chunks
- b. 2:1 pattern ♩ ♩ HAH HAH HAH x 4, then slurred HAHs (vibrato) x 4
- c. 3:1 pattern ♩ ♩ ♩
- d. 4:1 pattern ♩ ♩ ♩ ♩
- e. Put flute together and apply these patterns to various scales

#### 7. Double-tonguing—with headjoint only

- a. 2:1 pattern ♩ ♩
- b. 4:1 pattern ♩ ♩ ♩ ♩

- c. Triple tonguing: 3:1 pattern 
- d. Put flute together and apply these patterns to various scales

### 8. Third Octave Fingerings

- a. Play octaves starting with D2-D3, to reinforce 3<sup>rd</sup> octave fingerings (see chart on page 45 of TFSB); reinforce correct fingerings with which fingers change in the higher octave
- b. Play scales in octaves (Eb Major, F, G, Ab, Bb, etc.)
- c. Check pitch on E3, F3, F#3, Ab3 and teach useful alternate fingerings to lower pitch, if notes are sharp
  - i. E3: no right pinky
  - ii. F3: add right ring finger
  - iii. F#3: use middle right finger, instead of ring finger (this is the preferred fingering for many “new scale” flutes)
  - iv. Ab3: add right middle and ring fingers (this also helps reduce the note’s resistance, and should be used as the primary fingering for those students playing piccolo)
- d. Wiggles (I am going home) adjacent notes of the higher octave scales (Patricia George)
  - i. Also do this with trill fingerings—Free fingering charts
    - 1. <http://www.portsmouthmusic.org/PDF/Fingering%20charts/FluteTrillChart.pdf>
    - 2. [http://www.wfg.woodwind.org/flute/fl\\_tr2\\_3.html](http://www.wfg.woodwind.org/flute/fl_tr2_3.html)
- e. Aurally: Third Octave Wiggles (page 46 of *The Flute Scale Book*)
- f. Aurally: Short Scales (page 46 of *The Flute Scale Book*)—for more advanced students

### 9. Dynamics (Kazuo Tokito)

- a. Maintain fast air speed; change angle of air to change dynamics and keep pitch stable
- b. Soft: lower lip forward, upper lip back, “pooh” position; *p* = *pooh*
- c. Loud: upper lip forward, lower lip back
- d. Activities: soft, loud, crescendo, diminuendo, hairpins on individual notes
  - i. Scale, practice diminuendo at the end of a phrase, dynamics in simple melodies

### 10. More on intonation

- a. Tune carefully to D2, A2, A1; keep keys level; use fast consistent airstream
- b. Air speed: slow = flatter; fast = sharper
- c. Embouchure hole should be covered ¼ to 1/3
  - i. How to check how much is covered
  - ii. Covered too much = flat and muffled tone; covered too little = sharp and strident tone
- d. Airstream angle: lower angle = flatter; higher angle = sharper
- e. Posture (chin level): chin lower = flatter; chin higher = sharper

### 11. Rhythm exercises—working on division of the beat, TFSB, p. 14 (1.02), simple and compound meter

- a. Put each of the rhythms on a large flashcard (tag board or cardboard)
  - i. Can mix and match putting them on the pen tray of a classroom white board or tape to a wall with masking tape
- b. Practice counting and/or clapping rhythms, work on accuracy of subdivisions
- c. Scale practice with rhythm #1, 2, etc., or can alternate two rhythms

### 12. Articulations and more advanced rhythm patterns

- a. Practice scales using ideas in TFSB, p. 141-144 (Appendices)