

Clarinet

Weekly Focus: Articulation: separating pitches

Articulation is the word we use to describe if a group of notes is played separated or smooth. How do we play notes that sound crisp and clear or smooth and connected? When we understand how our breath, combined with the placement and rhythmic movement of our tongue creates either separated or smooth sounding pitches.

Explanation of Lesson Focus:

Articulation refers to how you **start** a note. For our lesson we will focus on tonguing. Tonguing is when you start or separate the air stream with your tongue. To get us ready to practice tonguing we first need to warm-up our body using the exercise below.

Warm Up:

We will start off by warming up our sound by playing B, C, D, E, F, G, and A using whole notes. That means you will hold each note for 4 beats before switching to the next note. Try to start each note with your tongue and take a big breath for your best sound. Next, try playing each of these notes for the value of a half note (which means only holding for two beats before moving on). And finally, play them each for the value of a quarter note (which means holding for only 1 beat before moving on).

Let's continue warming-up our fingers on B, C, D, E, F, G, and A on the following exercise, (#43).

#43



Standard of Excellence, Book 1 for Clarinet. Neil Kjos Music Company. Page 12.

Tonguing is the articulation we will use to start each note on the clarinet. It is so important that once learned, you will start every note with tonguing unless it has a slur marking which you will learn about later. The four steps below will help us learn how to tongue on the clarinet:

1-Say the syllable "Ta" and focus on where the tongue is touching: the back of the teeth inside your mouth.

2-Now, place your tongue on the reed of your mouthpiece. You don't have to press your tongue hard against the reed, just place it. Now take your breath and release while saying "ta". You should feel and hear the release of air. Here are some of reminders when practicing tonguing:

- It is important that your tongue be on the reed *BEFORE* you blow air through.

- When you start with the tongue on the reed and blow there will not be sound. It is the separation of the tongue from the reed due to the blowing out of the air that causes the "ta" sound.

- How will you know if you are tonguing incorrectly? If your tongue is not on the reed before blowing air through you will hear "ah-ta". The "ah" is the inhalation sound that comes from breathing in before placing your tongue on the reed.

-Remember, it is the explosive sound of the air being released from the reed that gives the "ta" sound.

-And remember to always have your tongue on the reed before you breath to eliminate the "ah" sound and always have the "ta" sound.

3-Now put your instrument together and let's practice tonguing on an open G. Place your tongue on the reed, breath in and "ta" on G. Practice this several times.

4-Next challenge yourself to play multiple "ta's" on an open G in one breath. It is okay if you can't do this yet as it takes time. Consider it a goal to work towards as you practice.

Keep in mind that it takes some patience to get the hang of tonguing. If you lose your sound, which is common, try playing a tone and stopping the sound with the tongue. Try to keep your embouchure steady when you are tonguing and don't stop the air.

Musical Exercises to Practice Tonguing:

Let's continue practicing our tonguing using exercise #45 *Eighth Note Encounter* below. Notice that the music includes quarter notes Γ and paired eighth notes \Box . The first two pitches you know are quarter notes. The other two pitches connected by the horizontal beam are two eighth notes. There are many ways to think about these rhythms, but let's use the syllables "ta" and "ti-ti" because they help you think about what the rhythm sounds like *before* you play. Follow the "speak it, tongue it, play it" directions below for this exercise.





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- **Speak it**: use the "ta" or "ti-ti" syllables and pay attention to how your tongue moves inside your mouth as you say each syllable. **This is important.** You should notice that each syllable is *separated* when the tip of your tongue quickly taps the top of your mouth right behind your two front teeth.
- **Tongue it:** Now take your clarinet and practice tonguing the rhythm on *"ta"* throughout. Your tongue should be moving the same way to separate the syllables. Remember: **your tongue stops and starts the air to create notes that are separated and clear.** Don't stop

and start the air. This will create an unfocused sound. Blow one breath and use your tongue to *ta*, *ta*-*ta* the exercise not HUFF PUFF the rhythm.

• Play it: Now play the exercise. Notes should sound crisp and clear and *separated if your tongue is doing the right movement.*

Musical Excerpts to Practice Tonguing:

Let's play #47 *Eighth Note Explorer* on p. 13 (see below). Follow the same steps of "speak it, tongue it, play it" that you did for the exercise above.

#47 EIGHTH NOTE EXPLORER



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MUSIC VIDEO LESSONS

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https://www.youtube.com/c/SeattlePublicSchoolsTV

Clarinet lesson developed by Alex Dugdale at Green Lake, Wedgwood, Madrona, West Seattle, Sanislo, BF Day, and Queen Anne