

Pitch (Not-So) Perfect: A Guide to Better Flute Intonation

This workshop will provide flutists of all levels tips for reinforcing the fundamentals of tone development to build better intonation, along with practical exercises for improving intonation in their own playing and within flute sections.

I. Intro: “Flutes! Roll-In!” “Flutes! Roll-Out!” Pathways to Better Flute Intonation

A. Importance of Critical Ears, Flute in Good Condition, Consistent Work, Time, and Patience

II. Develop Better Intonation: Reinforce Fundamentals of Tone Development

A. Centered Body Posture & Balanced Hand Position for Resonance and Stability

B. Benefits and Impact on Intonation

1. Flute Alignment & Three Points of Balance
2. Stable, Balanced Base in Seated & Standing Position, Seating Arrangements
3. Alignment of Head, Neck, Upper Torso, Arms
4. Balanced Hand Position

C. Embouchure: Relaxed Corners, Low Lip Placement for Resonance and Flexibility

1. Benefits of a Relaxed Embouchure vs. “Kiss-and-Roll”
2. Exercises to Improve Embouchure and Lip Flexibility
 - a. Exercise: Two Lips-Independent Movement
 - b. Exercise: Pneumo Pro Visualize & Develop Flexible Angle of Air/Air Speed
 - c. Exercise: Pitch Bends with Tuner for Lip Flexibility & Ear Training
 - d. Exercise: Cheek Puffing for Relaxing Muscles in Face and Embouchure

D. Free Breathing, Open Throat and Oral Cavity for Resonance/Consistency

1. Benefits of the Three Dimensional Breath: Length, Width, Depth
 - a. Exercise: Using Breath Builder & Breathing Bags
2. Shape of the Oral Cavity & Impact on Tone, Dynamics, & Intonation
 - b. Exercise: Long Tones Experiment with Vowel Shapes (ah, ay, i, eee, oh, oo)
 - c. Exercise: Using Vowel Shapes in Cresc/Dim Exercises to Maintain Pitch

E. Consistent Air Speed and Flexible Angle of Air

1. Exercise: Pinwheels/Breath Builder to Visualize/Develop Consistent Airspeed
2. Exercise: Stick the Needle Exercise with Tuner to Maintain Consistent Airspeed
3. Exercise: Octaves to Develop Consistent Air Speed, Flexibility, Ears
4. Exercise: Harmonics to Develop Consistent Air Speed, Resonance, Flexibility

III. Critical Ears and Listening: Improving Intonation Within Flute Section

A. Pitch Tendencies: Know the Tendencies of Own Instrument in Each Register

1. Exercise: Pitch Partners and Pitch Charts
2. Exercise: Use Concept of “Harmonic Ladder” to Improve Pitch in All Registers and Dynamic Levels

B. Sing! Listen to Develop the Ear & Improved Pitch Will Follow

1. Exercise: Sing Intervals, Scales, Simple Melodies with Solfeggio
2. Exercise: Play Intervals Against Drone: Unison, Octaves, Fifths, Major Thirds
3. Exercise: Pitch Partner Duets: Listening for Difference Tones
4. Exercise: Pitch Partner Duets: Playing Intervals for Just Intonation

C. Flat or Sharp? That is the Question

1. Exercise: InTune App
2. Exercise: Experiment with Extremes to Listen for “Beats”

D. Alternate Fingerings: Make Life Easier

IV. Resources for Flutists

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Pitch Bending to Improve Lip Flexibility & Intonation

Example 1

Kathy Blocki's *Pitch Bending Gymnastics* from *Planning to Play in Tune for Flute* (Blocki)

Musical notation for Example 1, showing Finger and Pitch staves. The notation is in 8/4 time and features a sequence of notes with slurs and accents, illustrating pitch bending exercises.

Example 2

Excerpted from Roderick Seed's *Mastering the Flute with William Bennett* (IU Press)

Musical notation for Example 2, showing a single staff with slurs and accents, illustrating pitch bending exercises.

Exploring Vowel Shapes to Maintain Pitch through Dynamics

Example 3

Kathy Blocki's *Full Spectrum Tone Exercise* from *Planning to Play in Tune for Flute* (Blocki)

Musical notation for Example 3, showing a single staff with slurs and accents, illustrating pitch bending exercises.

Sing: aah oo ee oo aah

Harmonics to Improve Lip Flexibility & Intonation

Example 4

Harmonic Series, Start on C1 continue repeating the patterns through C#2

Musical notation for Example 4, showing a harmonic series exercise starting on C1. The notation is on a single staff in treble clef. It consists of four measures, each containing a pair of notes (a harmonic) with a slur above them. The notes are: C1 (two ledger lines below), C2 (below staff), C3 (below staff), C4 (below staff), C5 (below staff), C6 (below staff), C7 (below staff), and C8 (below staff). The exercise continues through C#2, indicated by "etc." at the end.

Example 5

Leone Buyse's Harmonic Exercise, Continue Exercise to High Ab

Musical notation for Example 5, showing Leone Buyse's Harmonic Exercise. The notation is on two staves in treble clef. The first staff contains six measures of harmonic pairs, starting with a Bb. The second staff contains three measures of harmonic pairs, starting with a C#.

Example 6

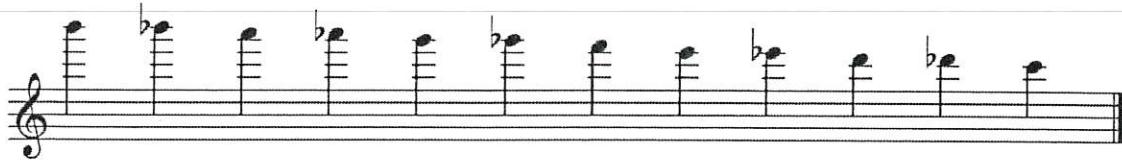
Excerpted from Helen Bledsoe's *Harmonic Studies* (www.helenbledsoe.com)

Musical notation for Example 6, showing an excerpt from Helen Bledsoe's *Harmonic Studies*. The notation is on two staves in treble clef. The first staff contains a series of harmonic pairs, each with a slur above and a '3' below, indicating a triplet. The second staff contains a series of harmonic pairs, each with a slur above and a '3' below, indicating a triplet. The exercise continues through High Ab.

Ghost Notes

Example 7

Ghost Notes: Finger the High Notes, Relaxed Embouchure, Space Between Front Teeth, Blow for the Notes Below



Whistle Tones

Example 8

Finger 3rd Octave Notes, Blow for the Whistle Tones



Example 9

Kathy Blocki's *Harmonic Pitch Matching* from *Planning to Play in Tune for Flute* (Blocki)

IV. Resources for Flutists

PITCH GAMES

InTune App (Apple Store)

A simple game that “tests and improves your pitch discrimination ability; test your ability to hear very close pitches, improve your ability to sing and play in tune, compete with your friends via Game Center.”

DRONES AND TUNERS

The Tuning CD by Richard Schwartz (Youtube.com or

Tonal Energy Tuner/Metronome App

EXERCISES

A wealth of excellent materials for the development of tone and technique on the flute are available to teachers and students. The materials listed below are a small sampling of my favorites:

Planning to Play in Tune for the Flute by Kathy Blocki (Blocki Flute Method)

Mastering the Flute with William Bennett by Roderick Seed (Indiana University Press)

Flute/Theory Workout by Lisa Garner Santa, Matthew Santa, and Thomas Hughes (Self Published)

Long tone/scale workouts with accompanying CD add variety and fun to warm-ups with added benefit of working intonation at the same time.

The Flute Scale Book: A Path to Artistry by Patricia George/ Phyllis Louke (Theodore Presser)

Embouchure Flexibility/Harmonic Exercises: Chapter 3, 3.00-3.10

Flute 101, Flute 102, Flute 103: Mastering the Basics by Patricia George/Phyllis Louke (Theodore Presser)

The Physical Flute by Fiona Wilkinson (Waterloo Music)

Depth of Sound, pp. 20-23; Pitch and Dynamics, pp. 25-44

Practice Book Flute No. 4: Intonation & Vibrato by Trevor Wye (Novello)

Seven Steps to Better Intonation by Chris Potter (Falls House Press)

Tone Development Through Extended Techniques by Robert Dick (Multiple Breath)

ALTERNATE FINGERING GUIDES

Alternate fingerings are useful tools for improving intonation at a variety of dynamics and registers, especially the third octave. The resources listed below are two of the most comprehensive guides to regular fingerings, alternate fingerings, trills, and tremolos. Each of these resources provide detailed information about pitch tendencies of fingerings in each range and dynamic.

Alternate Fingerings for the Flute by Nestor Herzbaum (Self Published)

Modern Guide to Fingerings for the Flute by James Pellerite (Alfred Music)

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