

Long Tone Exercises

Set the metronome to 60. Using just the headjoint, including the curved section if you are playing a low flute with a curved head, take a deep breath through your nose or mouth and see how long you can produce a headjoint sound. Play as softly as possible. Check in a mirror to see how small the opening is. Write that time below.

Put your instrument together, take a deep powerful breath and play any note in the staff. Play as softly as possible. If you can see the opening in a mirror, it is too big. Write that time below.

Try the same note a second time. Ask yourself if you are filling up every possible part of your lungs. Are you playing as softly as possible? Write that time below.

Play a note just above the staff. Write the time below.

Write the names of the two pitches you just played in the far left hand column of chart below. Then pick four different pitches in a variety of octaves and enter them into the left column. Set the metronome to 60. Try each note at least twice and enter the time of the longer of the two under the corresponding day. Play as softly as possible. Keep a log of your progress for two weeks. C flutes – goal 35 seconds, alto 30, bass 25, contra 15.

Long Tone Chart

To establish better breaths in pieces as an automatic action, we start slowly and breathe as correctly as possible.

You will notice that *Spanish Love Song* below has fermatas over the breath marks. One goal is to only take breaths in the marked places. Add two or more beats into the bars at the breath marks and take a luxurious, generous breath. Adding more beats is harder than you think! Leave out the dynamics for the time being. Gradually cut back on the amount of time you add into the bar for your breath until you are taking only the notated time. When you reach the point you are not adding extra time, try holding out the last note of each phrase to see how many extra beats you can go.

Next, add in the dynamics and extra time for breaths if needed. Be sure to start the phrases softly, this saves air and gives you more room to make a crescendo.

For the greatest chance of success making the lengths of phrases you want and arriving at the end within your comfort zone, make a plan for the breaths and then practice the plan.

Spanish Love Song

Tristemente ♩ = 72

The body learns to be more efficient when taking big breaths, but only if the correct action has been repeated many times. We want breathing to go on automatic pilot, but it takes many correct repetitions for that to occur.

As you get more efficient at inhaling and using your air, you will have more air left at the ends of phrases and you will feel less stressed. If you are less stressed, the piece will sound better.

If you are having trouble making it through any phrase, here are some things to try: 1) play the phrase faster than the marked tempo, then slow the metronome down one notch at a time. 2) play the phrase as softly as possible with no vibrato. 3) make sure you are starting the phrase softly, don't get too loud too soon. Many people waste air at the beginning of a phrase by starting too loudly.