

A PARENT'S GUIDE TO THE... CLARINET

LIGATURE

MOUTH
PIECE

BARREL

UPPER
JOINT

LOWER
JOINT

BELL



REED

ASSEMBLY

- 1 Start by assembling the mouthpiece and ligature, and attaching it to the barrel.
- 2 Moisten reeds with saliva or water before attaching to mouthpiece.
- 3 Line up the flat parts of both the reed and the mouthpiece.
- 4 The wide part of the ligature goes on first. The ligature should go farther than the curved part of the reed. On a metal ligature, the screws should be against the reed. Tighten just enough so the reed doesn't move when the mouthpiece is shaken. Don't over-tighten the ligature.
- 5 Don't hold onto the small, delicate keys at the top or bottom of the upper joint, as they are easily damaged. Instead, hold onto the area with fewer keys on the top. On the lower joint, hold onto the area at the bottom with fewer keys.
- 6 Always apply cork grease and wiggle the pieces back and forth to assemble.
- 7 Line up the bridge keys that cross the upper and lower joints (just like puzzle pieces) without clashing the keys on the sides.
- 8 If your student needs to leave their clarinet during band they should separate the upper portion from the lower. Avoid leaving it on the floor so it doesn't get knocked over.

CLEANING AND STORAGE

- 1 Take the mouthpiece and barrel unit off. Invert the instrument and drop the weighted end of a pull-through swab into the bell end. Pull the swab up through the instrument so that it doesn't catch on anything. Do this two or three times.
- 2 Always take the reed off of the mouthpiece and dry it off before storage. Store reeds in a flat case to keep from warping.
- 3 Practice good reed rotation. Use a different reed each day for four days, then start over with the first reed. This allows them to strengthen between uses. To help with the rotation, you may also number your reeds on the flat or back side.
- 4 If reeds show signs of mold, or have any cracks or chips, they are trash. Throw them away immediately so they don't get confused with good reeds.

TROUBLESHOOTING

- 1 **PROBLEM:** The swab got stuck.
SOLUTION: Stop pulling immediately to avoid damaging anything. Bring it in so we can extract the swab.
- 2 **PROBLEM:** The bridge keys are bent.
SOLUTION: These are the keys that stick down below the upper joint and above the lower joint to connect the two pieces and allow you to play notes across the body of the instrument. Since they stick out, they are easily bent if the pieces are dropped or knocked against something. Bring the instrument in so we can have the keys adjusted. On Buffet clarinets, this area also has a small nylon pin that can be snapped off if dropped.
- 3 **PROBLEM:** Some notes won't play properly.
SOLUTION: This is most often caused by air leaks, which are attributed to bent keys, which are mainly caused by dropping the instrument or gripping it in the wrong place during assembly. Bring it in so we can have the keys regulated and adjusted.