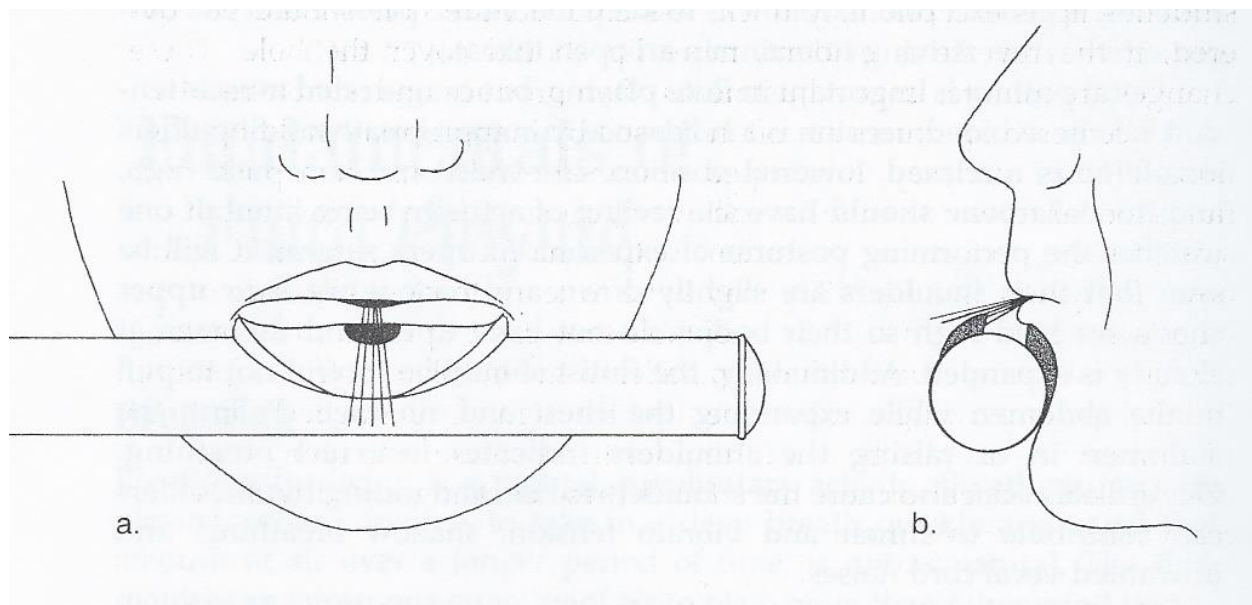


Flute Troubleshooting

Embouchure

Here there are several pictures to assist you in addressing problems that should come up. Remember for the flute in order to produce tone, the air is to be directed through small opening in the head joint. To make sure your embouchure is correct hold to the head joint alone with the open end to the right; the plate should rest gently in the cradle of your chin. (See figure below)

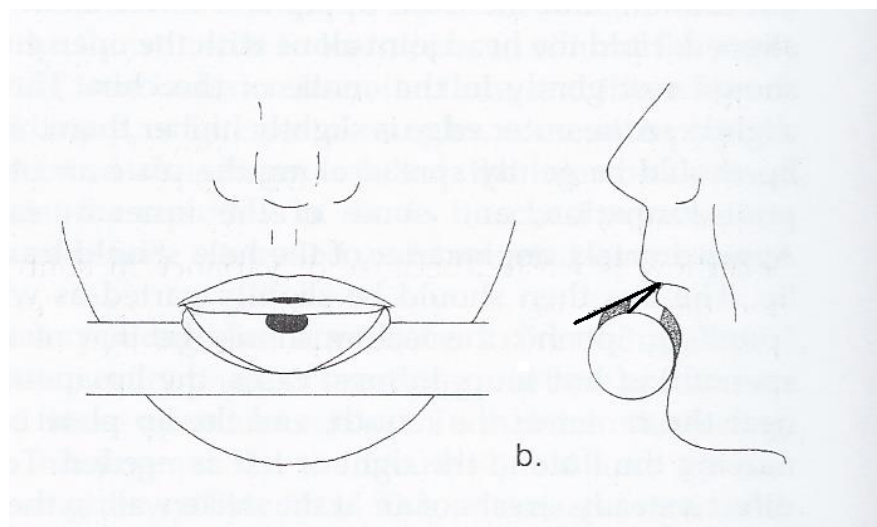
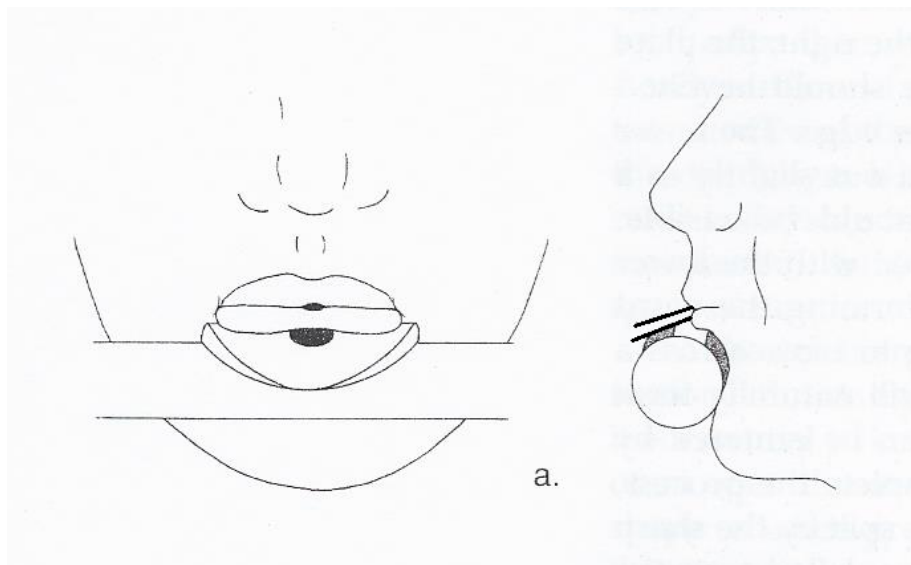


(a) Front view (b) Side View.

In general, the lips should push in an outward direction so the airstream is formed by the inner surface of the lips. To practice this, your lips should be slightly parted as if saying the word “pure”. Another form is to create the feeling that you should be trying to blow across a spoonful of hot soup or to create sound on a bottle. In most cases, the lip aperture will naturally form in the center of the mouth. The lip plate should be centered as the picture shows, move slightly left or right until it can be centered. Remember though, tightness, firmness, rigidity, and the use of the smiling muscles when playing should be avoided. The embouchure must remain flexible and supple at all times, permitting each note have slightly different formation in order to adjust intonation, facilitate in register changes, and aid in total color changes. Remember to practice in front of the mirror.

Playing higher or lower notes

When attempting to play higher notes, remember that the air stream needs to be more focused, faster, and cooler. Typically, the Amish are is pushed forward in a child is raised for softer and higher passage work. For lower notes, the airstream needs to be slower, warmer, but still focused. Your embouchure should be in a more natural position with the jaw dropped slightly for the lower notes and louder notes. The figure below demonstrates this. Pay special attention to the airstream notated in the side views. Similar to forming embouchure, remember to practice in front of the mirror.



(a) Soft and higher-register embouchure

(b) loud and lower-register embouchure

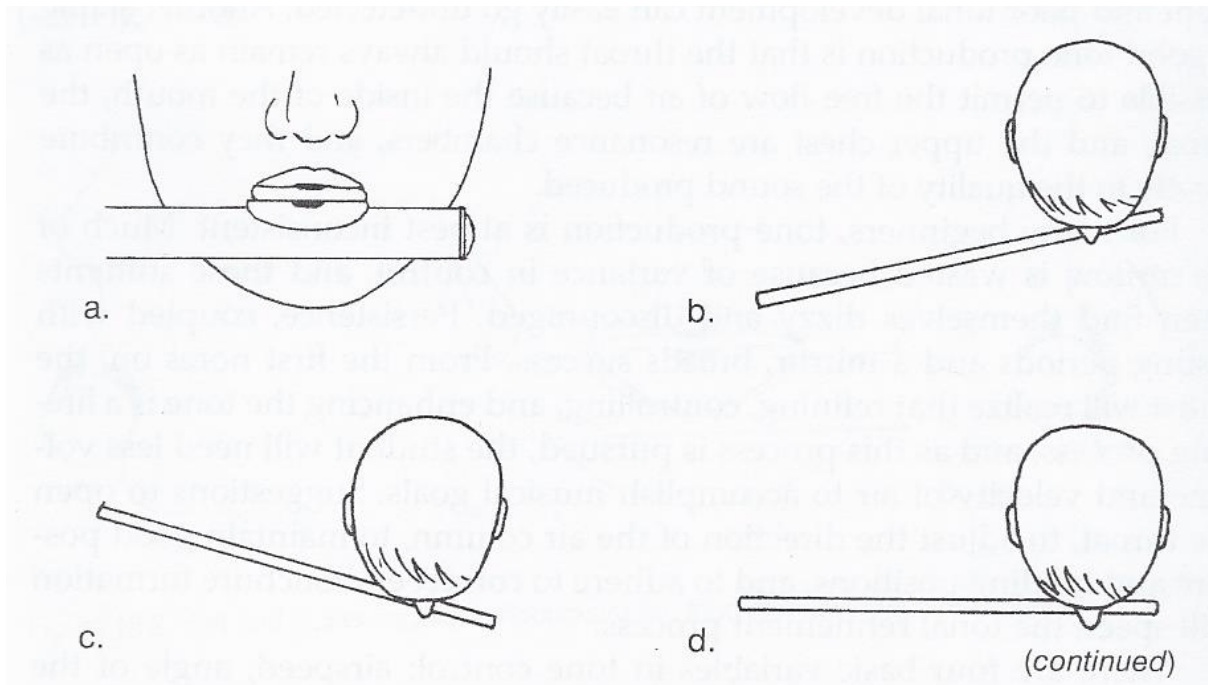
Tone production

1.) There are four basic variables in tone control: airspeed, angle of the airstream, aperture size, and head joint placement. A different airspeed is required to produce each note on the flute. The lower registers require a slower moving airstream than higher ones. Moving from register to register by blowing harder or softer produces loud, sharp high notes and flat, soft lower notes. Remember it is vital to be able to control the speed of the air for proper tone production. You can do this by altering the size of the lip aperture through forward and backward movements in relation to the strike edge of the embouchure hole. (Use the pictures above you to assist)

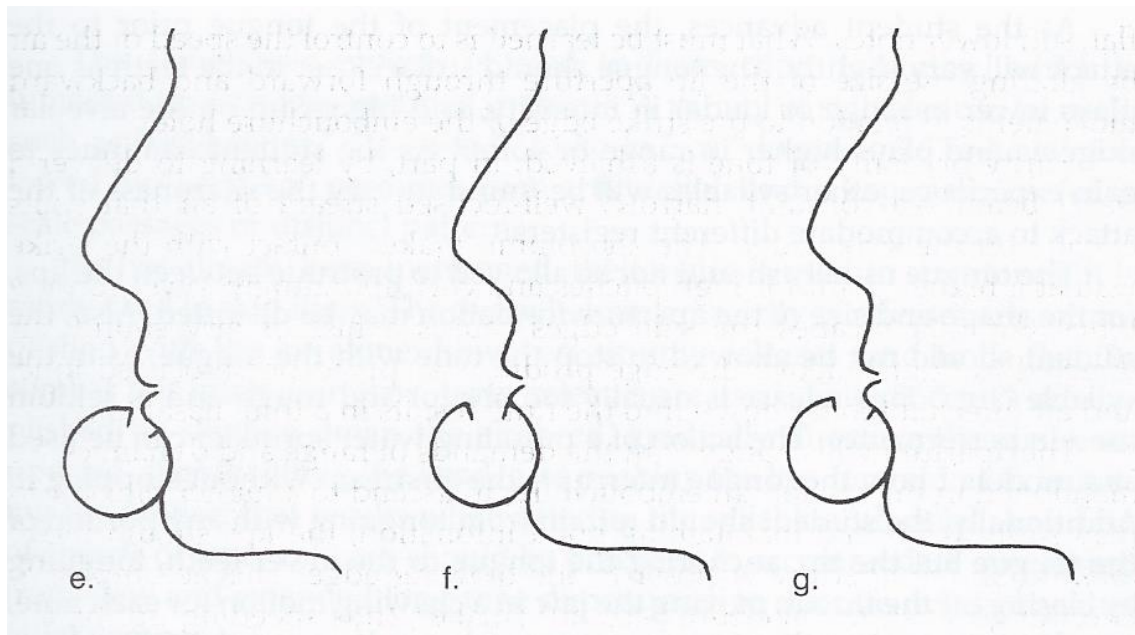
2.) Purity or clarity of tone is achieved, in part, by learning to deliver a “laser beam” (a constant, narrow, well-focused stream of air that splits equally on the strike edge) the air column makes contact with the strike wall at higher points for high pitches and correspondingly lower for lower tones. Air that escapes the sides of the edge causes a hiss or an airy sound. Air directed too much above the edge produces a spread or unfocused tone. Air directed too far down into the flute results in a thin, nasal tone.

3.) The aperture will change with the demands of the range and dynamics. As mentioned in the section on embouchure, to ascend to a higher pitch or to place softly while still maintaining good intonation, the lips should move forward so the aperture is closer to the blowing edge. This can be demonstrated by forming the same embouchure when you play your flutes and blowing across your index finger. When your finger is moved closer to the lip opening, the airspeed will be perceived as becoming increasingly faster and more intense even though the blowing remains constant. The aperture will enlarge and the airstream will move more slowly as the lips return to a natural position for lower and lower notes.

4.) The head joint should be aligned on two points: parallel to the lips and even on the chin when this alignment occurs, the airstream has optimum chance to make contact with strike wall at the point where tone can be split evenly without any excess wind noise. The flute should not be angle too far forward or backward, and if the head joint is too far out, the sound will be shallow, unfocused, and out of tune with itself. If the head joint is too far in, the sound will be muffled, nasal sounding, out of tune with itself, and apt to crack, and the dynamic range of decreased significantly. Use the pictures below to check yourself.



(a) The head joint is parallel to the opening in the lips. (b) The head joint is too far forward. (c) The head joint is too far back. (d) The head joint is aligned properly.

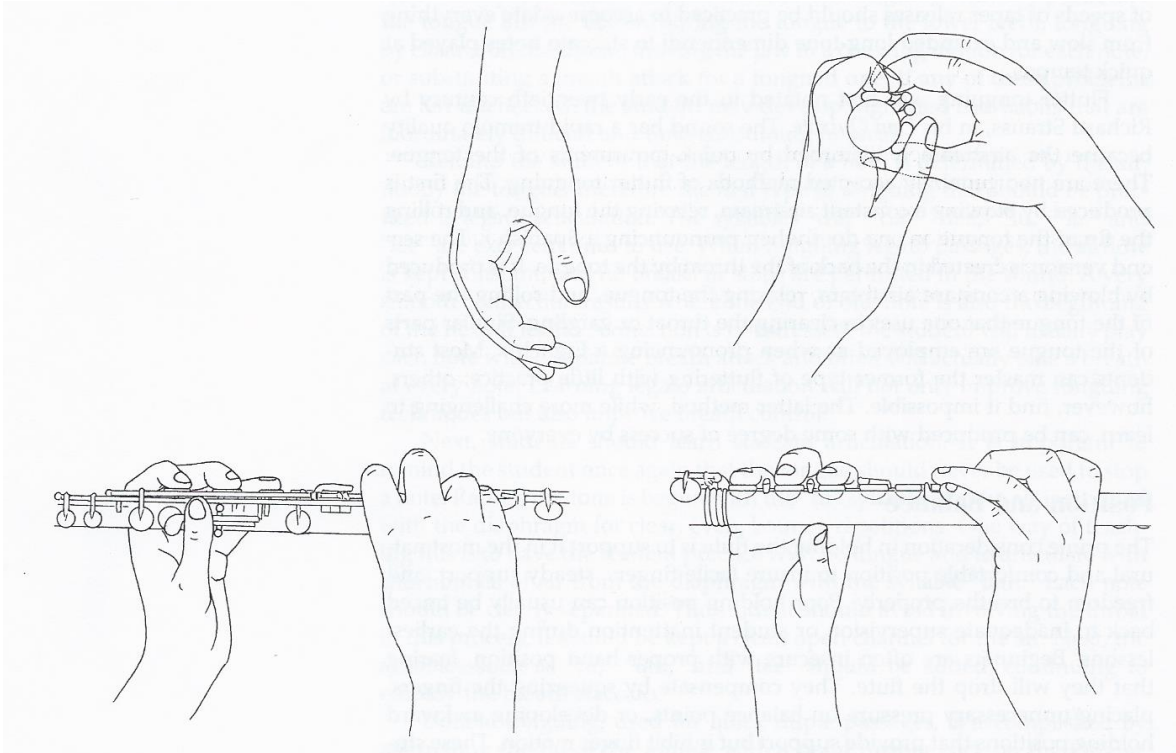


(e) The head joint is rolled in too far. (f) The head joint is rolled out too far. (g) The head joint is in the correct position

Remember to use a mirror when practicing, especially as a new flute player. Note that every professional flute player had to overcome similar obstacles. They became who they are now because of persistence in their practice sessions. You'll get there.

Cramped hands and sore fingers

If, during your practice sessions, you are finding that your hands are starting to cramp or your fingers are becoming very sore, take the time to check your hand position. The pictures below will demonstrate the correct hand position and finger position when playing the flute.



The picture below will demonstrate both correct and incorrect positions. Once again during your practice session use the mirror to correct yourself until it becomes a natural part of motion. This will take time and perseverance but ultimately will set you up for success. Figure A is incorrect. Figure B is the correct hand position.

