

Problem Solving for Clarinet Sounds

One of the most frustrating parts of playing clarinet is figuring out what to change when we don't like the sounds our clarinet is making. It may seem like we are doing everything we are supposed to do, and there are still squeaks, strange sounds, or no sound at all! Hopefully these two pages will offer some help.

The pictures on the attached page address two main causes of problems with sound: the rolling of the bottom lip and the positions of our fingers. Take a look and think about where your lip and fingers are compared to the pictures. A mirror can help here, especially with our fingers; we may think we know where they are but often the reality is something else!

One extra possible solution is not shown, called "bite depth". This is how much mouthpiece we have in our mouth, or how far down or back we are on the mouthpiece, if you would rather think of it that way. Try sliding forward and backward on the mouthpiece to see if that helps solve issues you may be having with sound.

Most of all, try not to get too stressed out, as a lot of sound problems come from just developing our mouth and finger muscles, and will get better with time. We all have to deal with squeaks sometimes, so don't let that keep you from practicing!



GOOD:

Bottom lip is rolled partly over bottom teeth



TOO FAR:

Bottom lip is rolled too far over the teeth.



NOT FAR ENOUGH:

Bottom lip is not rolled over teeth and lip surface is not flat



GOOD:

Fingers are across the tone rings so that pads of the fingers, rather than fingertips, are covering the tone holes



NOT COVERED:

Fingertips are in tone holes, leaving room for leaks and making hands tight and clenched