

# LEARNING TO PLAY THE FLUTE IN TUNE (PART 2)

🕒 March 1, 2016   🗨 BandDirector   💬 0 Comment   🏷 Concert Band, Woodwind

**This is the continuation of a handout “Learning to Play the Flute in Tune” by Mrs. Barbara Lambrecht. [Be sure you read Part 1 here](#) – Reasons for flute tuning problems and general ways to approach improving flute tuning.**

Here are some suggestions to help you correct tuning problems.

**Volume problems** – Pitch tends to drop in soft passages and rise in loud spots. correct flatness by directing the air up more toward the outer edge of the embouchure hole and sharpness by directing the air downward.

**Extreme ranges** – The lowest notes of the flute are flat. Correct this with greater breath support and by directing the air upward. The high register is quite sharp. Direct air down, but don’t choke off the sound. See Dr. Garner’s venting suggestions for specific notes. Consult a fingering chart to be sure you are using the correct, standard fingerings in the 3rd octave.

**Specific note problems** –

- 3rd space C and C# are sharp. Correct this by directing the air more downward and by adding fingers 4,5, and 6 (three right hand fingers) on C#.
- 4th space E is very flat. Be sure you have your right hand pinky key opened and you may have to vent the second trill key or to leak the tone hole in finger 5 on a French model flute to bring the note up to the correct pitch.
- Despite the fact that most of the top register is quite sharp, D above the staff is generally flat. Lift your head when you play this note. Also the highest Bb is also flat. Do not use the first finger in the left hand (most common fingering error.)

**Dr. Gary Garner, flutist father of Brad Garner and former Director of Bands at West Texas A&M University, suggests a system of venting, closing an open key to lower a sharp note or opening a closed key to raise a flat one, to correct out of tune notes on the flute.** Here are some of his suggestions for troublesome upper register notes.

For C#, add keys 5 and 6 to lower the pitch.

For E natural, pick up the Eb key to lower the pitch.

On high F, add the 6th finger (F# Key) to bring down the pitch.

On high F# substitute the 5th finger for the 6th finger to lower the note.

On high Ab, add fingers 5 and 6 to lower the note.

On high C, add the thumb to lower the pitch.

**One tuning exercise you could do necessitates a tuner and the assistance of a friend.**

After you have warmed up and tuned, turn away so that you cannot see the tuner. Play your chromatic scale slowly, starting with low C. Your friend can check each note to see the amount you play that note sharp or flat. Record that information on a chart like the one pictured below, and study the chart so that you'll know your tuning tendencies.

After you learn how to control the pitch on your flute, remember that you will be playing with other instruments, not only other flutists but with other wind instruments, pianos, and percussionists. The next step of playing *in tune* is knowing the tuning tendencies of those instruments as well.

**Here are a few additional suggestions:**

- Be sure your instrument is in good working order.
- Check to be sure your posture and hand position are correct.
- Key check points for good embouchure include minimal pressure, open oral cavity, lower lip flattened against the lip plate and a small aperture (air hole).
- Use a fast moving air column to produce a clear, focused tone. Know the tendencies of trouble notes.
- And most of all, listen and don't be afraid to make changes to correct tuning discrepancies.

This article is taken directly from an amazing handout by Barbara Lambrecht and used with permission. **Be sure you read Part 1 here – Reasons for flute tuning problems and general ways to approach improving flute tuning.** We highly recommend you share this information with your student flute players.

**Read more about Mrs. Lambrecht's long and distinguished career [here](#).**

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