

# Recorder Karate

A Highly Motivational Method For Young Players  
by Barb Philipak



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\* *Reproducible pages do not have page numbers on them.*

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# Introduction

Before I began teaching I had never played the recorder. In my first teaching job, I found out that recorders were in the curriculum for fourth and fifth grades. So, needless to say, I was a little frightened by the fact that I had to teach them. However, after creating and using “Recorder by Karate,” it is now one of my favorite things to teach.

I wanted to find a really great way of teaching recorders to the kids – all kids, including the special education kids and the hard to reach kids. I wanted a way to get them playing at home and keep them really motivated through the whole unit. I also wanted to find a way to let the kids work at their own pace, because I felt that if I tried to keep all of the kids together, the ones who were behind would just quit altogether, and the ones who were ahead would get frustrated for moving too slow.

So, I did a lot of research, reading, and reflection. I remembered something that I had learned through my own experience with piano lessons as a child and also in my own experience with teaching piano. When students practice a new song and they know how it is supposed to sound, they will practice it more and will work harder to make it sound correct. So, I decided to base this book on folk songs and tunes that most kids are familiar with. Then, I added the motivation of receiving “karate belts” to get the students excited.

I tried this idea and it worked even better than I imagined. The kids LOVED it! I had kids lined up outside my door during my planning times and before and after school. The response was tremendous! The first year I had 74% of all my students who went on beyond the required purple belt. And, I had 56 students who received their black belt. (At our end of the year awards assembly, I made special awards and gave them to the black belts. They loved this!)

I had classroom teachers tell me how great they thought this idea was and how the kids wouldn't stop talking about it! I had special education teachers who were in shock at how well their students were doing and how excited they were. One boy who is ADHD, manic-depressive, and very defiant ended up getting

his black belt. It was really a turning point for him.

Another special education student who is LD was getting frustrated and upset, so I created an iconic version of the songs. After he got his 4th belt, he told me he was ready to try “normal” music with the letter names written in, and he also got all the way to black belt.

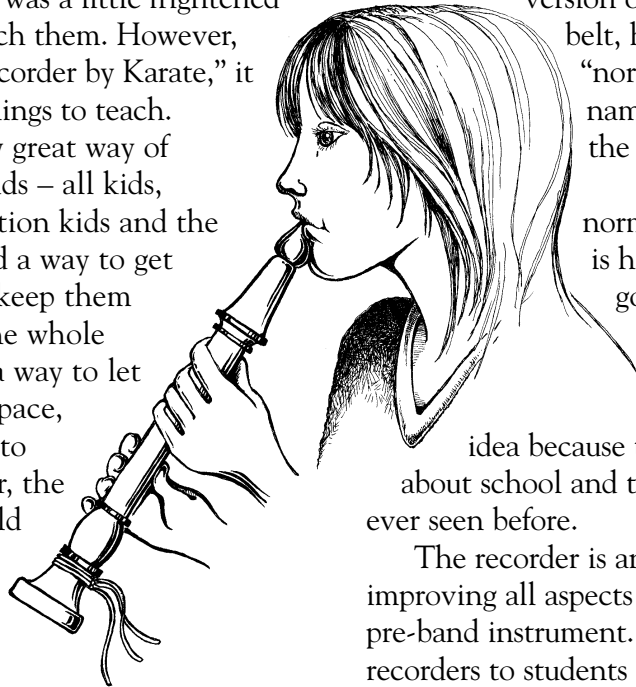
Yet another student who is normally not on task and believes it is his job to entertain the class also got his black belt. I received a wonderful note from his parents telling me how much they loved the *Recorder Karate*

idea because their son was more motivated about school and this assignment than they had ever seen before.

The recorder is an invaluable instrument for improving all aspects of musicality and is an excellent pre-band instrument. The hard part about teaching recorders to students is to get them to enjoy it enough to keep practicing on their own. *Recorder Karate* makes this easy because kids love it! They will come to you begging to test for their next belt. The results have been truly amazing. Students are practicing considerably more than they normally would.

Everything that we have taught them about music up until this point (rhythm, notes, staff, symbols, etc.) just “clicks” and makes sense. I have all my kids who aren't testing work in groups with specific jobs. Each group is working on a certain song. Some days there are many groups working on the same song, but it varies. Also, my kids who are really advanced help out others a lot. I have never had this much enthusiasm about anything else. I have had many more kids sign up for band these last few years than ever before. Our job isn't always about “teaching a lesson,” it is also to help the kids learn to love music. Learning these songs, getting them right, and getting the recorder belts make it more exciting. It motivates them to keep playing, and they learn to love it!

I hope that this method works as well with your students as it has with mine and with the many other schools that have used it.



Barb Philipak

# How Recorder Karate Works

*The first step is to pick nine pieces of recorder music that get progressively harder.*

We have provided nine songs for your convenience. We give you the rights to reproduce them for all of your students. We have even supplied artwork so that you can make your students their very own Recorder Karate packet. (I require my students to have a three-ring binder or a folder with three prongs to keep their packet in. This really cuts down on lost copies and wasted paper.)

However, you can certainly use the music from any legally reproducible recorder books or methods that you already own. This will allow you to tailor this unit to meet your goals for any level of students. If you start recorders in 2nd or 3rd grade, you might want to choose easier songs. Also, you might need to adapt this unit to the special needs of some children. An example of this would be a student in my school who has muscular disabilities with his hands. He has strong use of his left hand but not with his right hand. His packet (with the same cover as all the other packets) contains songs with only BAG C'D' but with increasingly difficult rhythmic patterns, meters, and other parameters. This way he can still have the motivation of achieving Recorder Karate belts.

By the way, for your students with reading disabilities and other disabilities, you can make iconic versions of the Recorder Karate songs. We have included an iconic sample of "Merrily We Roll Along" in the *Worksheets & Reproducibles* section later in the book. A tip that I have found useful in working with Special Education students is that the student can blow into the recorder, and the teacher or assistant can reach

around the student and finger the notes for him or her. You could also do much easier songs. The most important thing is that each student feel motivated enough to practice on their own and to feel successful with what they accomplish.

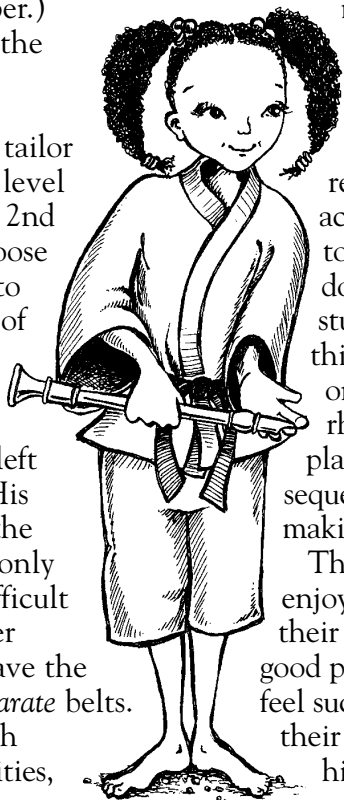
*If you choose to make your own Recorder Karate song list, the following tips should be helpful to you:*

First, be careful to use only reproducible sources if you copy songs for your students. Many beginning methods expect you to buy a separate book for each student.

The songs shouldn't be too easy. The students should have to work for the belts, but, at the same time, the black belt should be reasonably attainable. Not all students will achieve the black belt, but you want the students to feel challenged and successful. However, you don't want the songs to be so hard that a lot of students get discouraged and quit early on. One thing to remember is that new notes aren't the only things that make a song harder. The rhythms, length of note values, and meter all play a huge part. Playing through the songs in sequential order yourself can greatly aid you in making sure that they get progressively harder.

The most important goal here is that the kids enjoy playing enough that they actually practice on their own and that they have fun while they acquire good playing skills. I believe that if they have fun and feel successful at playing the recorder, the chance of their continuing with band and choir in middle and high school will be greatly increased. What a great reward that is.

The following is a list of the different color Recorder Karate belts, the names of the nine songs included in this book, and the notes that are in each song. If you choose to make up your own song list, this will show you how the songs get progressively more difficult.



White -	Hot Cross Buns	GAB
Yellow -	Gently Sleep	GAB
Orange -	Merrily We Roll Along	GAB
Green -	It's Raining	E GA
Purple -	Old MacDonald Had A Farm	DE GAB
Blue -	When The Saints Go Marching In	GABC'D'
Red -	Twinkle, Twinkle Little Star	DEF#GAB
Brown -	Amazing Grace	DE GAB D'
Black -	Ode To Joy	D GABC'D'

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## **How I Work Recorder Karate Into My Recorder Unit**

During the first class of this unit, I go through some of the basics. (Since we usually have to hand out recorders on this first day, there isn't time for a lot and also you don't want to overwhelm students with too much information on the first day.) I include how to hold the recorder; how to blow with warm, gentle air; how to avoid squeaks; and a little information about tonguing. I also cover some of my *Recorder Karate* rules, including rest position and ready position and what will happen to them if they blow into their recorder when they are not supposed to.

### **How To Hold And Play The Recorder**

Hand out the worksheets "How To Care For The Recorder" and "How To Play The Recorder." Go over these worksheets with the students. Have each student hold their recorder with the proper hand position for B while you check to make sure that everyone has their left hand at the top and that the fingering for B is correct. Next, instruct them to blow into their recorder very gently until they see you cutting them off. I always use a conducting gesture and tell them that whenever they see this that they are to stop immediately.

### **Use Warm, Gentle Air**

Ask your students to hold their hand in front of their mouths (palm facing the mouth) and to gently blow onto it as if they are going to steam up the car window without their parents hearing them. (Saying it this way helps kids to not over blow.)

Next, have your students blow as if they were blowing out candles on a birthday cake. Ask them to notice that it was cool air and was much stronger. Tell them that this is the wrong way to blow into their recorder. At this point, I usually demonstrate this type of blowing for them. I make it loud and squeaky, and they all *quickly agree* that this does NOT sound good.

### **The Steamy Window Trick**

Later on, when I hear them blowing too hard, I don't even say a word. I just motion for them to stop playing and "do the Steamy Window Trick." (The first time you might need to tell your students that every time they see you doing this, they should also "do the Steamy Window Trick" and focus on playing with warm, gentle air.) It really helps my students!

We again "steam up the window" and then try playing B again. The goal here is that the sound should improve some since the first time. It will take some kids a while to get this though, so don't be too discouraged. Just keep reminding them to "do the

steam window trick." Also, model good recorder sounds for them. You can play for them, and you could have them listen to various songs with recorder in them.

### **How To Avoid Squeaks**

Instruct students that if they hear a squeak, it is usually caused by one of two things. First, they could be blowing too hard or with cool air. The "steam window" trick fixes this. Secondly, they could have leaks. I instruct them to use the "flat, fleshy part" of their finger pad – not the tip of their finger – to cover the finger hole. I also tell them that when they are pushing in the correct spot on their fingers, they will see "warts" on their fingers in the same place as they are on mine. I have students compare their "warts" with mine. ("Warts" are the round indentations caused by pushing hard on the holes.)

### **Tonguing/Articulation**

On the first day, all I say about tonguing is that there should be a slight separation between each note. I demonstrate the difference for them by playing two passages – one with tonguing and one with all of the notes slurred together. I have them all say "tu." I ask them what happens when they say "tu." I am looking for the answer that their tongue touches the roof of their mouth right behind their two front teeth. We say "tu" several times while they get the feeling of their tongue touching the roof of their mouths. I now tell them that the correct way of playing is to separate the notes by saying "tu" (causing the tongue to touch the roof of the mouth and to cut off the airflow which makes the sound) each time they switch to another note or just to simply stop a note.

In future lessons, we discuss tonguing more in-depth. See the information on tonguing in the Teacher's section later in this book.

I also tell them that I can tell the difference when they play for me and that after the first couple of *Recorder Karate* belts, they will not pass and receive their belt until they are able to tongue properly.

### **Discuss Some Rules**

Next, I discuss some of my *Recorder Karate* rules. (See the end of this section for more Classroom Management tips.)

**Ready position** – Instrument is poised on their chin and their fingers are ready to play. *No sounds are made!*

**Rest position** – Instrument is in lap or hanging from the Recorder Necklace around their neck. *Again, no sounds are made!*

I train the students to respond VERY quickly to rest/ready positions from the very beginning. (I give points for their quick responses to these verbal cues towards the competition for an extra Super Day. See the Classroom Management tips at the end of this section for more information.)

Also, I explain to them that if anyone plays their recorder when they are NOT supposed to, that I will say “first warning.” If I have to say, “second warning” – they have to take the mouthpiece off of their recorder, and they lose the right to test for belts that day (if we are testing).

Just these two simple rules seem to avoid MOST problems with recorders.

After covering the basics, I teach B, A, and G, one at a time. The kids can't wait to play so this is what we do. (Yes, I teach all three in the first class period. I know that if I were a student learning to play the recorder, I would be bored to tears if I didn't get to play more than just – B, B, B, B. I still remember my first piano lesson. My assignment was to play middle C over and over with both my thumbs. I HATED that!)

Depending on the time available here, you can do as little or as much drilling as you like. Just make sure to allow about five minutes for the closing activity. Some things you can do here to get them comfortable with switching among B, A, and G might include:

- Have large pictures made up of the fingering for B, A, and G (or just the letters B, A, and G). Have the students play each letter as you point back and forth amongst them. (Norm Sands' *Recorder Fingering Posters* work well for this.)

- Play patterns on B, A, and G and have the students echo you.

- Turn your back to them, and play patterns on B, A, and G and have the students echo you. (This helps to train their ears, and may even help them sing tunefully.)

### **Closing Activity For The First Day**

Without telling the students what you are doing, play each phrase of “Hot Cross Buns,” while the students echo you one phrase at a time. Ask them to identify the name of the song. Then, ask them to play the whole song with you. Obviously, this will not be perfect, but they will love it and will leave the class feeling very successful and looking forward to learning more about the recorder!

Note: Prior exposure to and familiarity with

letter names, common rhythms, and most music symbols will be very helpful in this unit. The pace that is given in these examples is based on students who have this prior knowledge. If your students are not familiar with these items, they can still take part in *Recorder Karate*. You will just have to slow down the pace. Reproducible masters of a rhythm and letter name review worksheets are included in the *Reproducible Masters* section of this book. They are titled “How We Count Music” and “How We Name The Notes.”

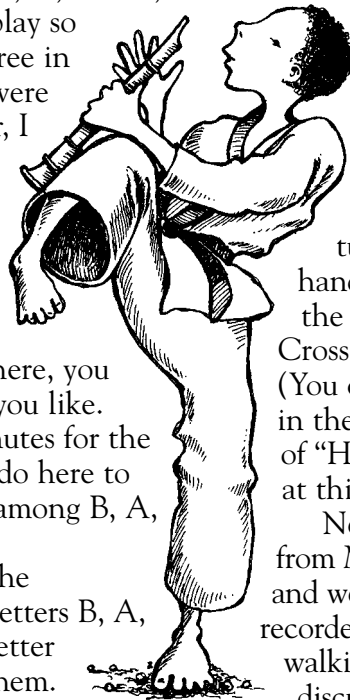
### **Subsequent Class Periods**

During the next class period, I hand out the “History Of The Recorder” worksheet and discuss this with them. We also do several activities with “Hot Cross Buns.” (You want your students to get the basics down before moving on.) I have them echo me phrase by phrase and then play the whole song. Next, we add Orff parts (a master is provided for your use) and take turns. During this time, I continually check hand positions and tone. (Remind them about the steamy window as needed.) We play “Hot Cross Buns” using real notation on an overhead. (You can make a transparency from the master in the Songs section.) If you have a duet version of “Hot Cross Buns,” that would be fun to add at this time.

Next, I put on a simple BAG song such as one from *MUSIC K-8*, John Riggio, or Norm Sands, and we “walk through the piece” while their recorders are in rest position. (Later on, they start walking me through new pieces.) I point out and discuss all musical aspects of the piece, including notes (later on – just the new notes), letter names, rhythms, symbols, repeat signs, difficult spots, etc. First, we play through it without the CD. Before they leave, we try it with the CD. I tell them to just try their best and to jump back in if they get lost. They love playing with the wonderful accompaniment CDs. I give them a copy of the new piece to take home and practice.

We also practice the song according to the “Practice Directions” that are located on the bottom of the “How To Play The Recorder” worksheet for students. First, we clap and count the rhythm, and then we clap and speak the letter names in rhythm. Next, we finger the notes and speak or sing the letter names in rhythm. Finally, we play the notes in rhythm. I instruct my students to start slow and increase in speed later.

In future class periods, I typically start by



reviewing hand positions, new notes/symbols learned during the last class, and other such information. Then, I play echo patterns (usually with my back turned for part of the time to help train their ears).

Next, we usually sight-read a new piece of music. In the beginning, this can be *MUSIC K-8*, John Riggio, or Norm Sands' pieces (or anything reproducible). We will sometimes play these songs with the CD just for fun. It seems like they each have a favorite!

Then, in addition (or maybe in place of the sight-reading), we talk and play through the next note and/or song from the *Recorder Karate* song list. (I usually start allowing them to test for *Recorder Karate* belts during the second week.) Some days, we play through several *Recorder Karate* songs. I constantly adapt this part based on where my students are and what they need to work on. This depends on time. Some days, we don't need to do a new note or song yet, so we skip it. Other days, if we're running behind on time, I skip the sight-reading part, and do a new note or *Recorder Karate* song instead. My class periods are for 30 minutes. If yours are for more or less, you will have to adjust these plans accordingly.

### **Time To Test For Belts**

For the last 10-15 minutes, we **test for belts** and work in groups. They are so excited by this. I usually try to stick closer to 15 minutes for this. (I also test during specific planning times and after school on some days. I tell them in advance when I'll be staying late, so they can plan it with their parents.)

If I have 15 minutes, I can usually get through all or most of the class for one color belt. Sometimes, this gets slowed down because I may spend some time helping one particular student. (That is one of the things that I love about this – that I do get to hear each kid individually many times throughout this unit, and I can give that child pointers specifically to help him or her.)

If I spent the whole half hour, I'd definitely get through one whole class. Later on, when you have kids moving up in the higher colors of belts, this process can slow down some as the songs start to get a little longer. Also, towards the very end of the unit I will test for the whole time for a few class periods. This is usually a nine or ten week long unit for me.

### **How To Work In Groups**

Students should break up into groups of four. Each person has a job. I have the following jobs listed on a poster in my room:

- Job #1 (Starter) - Starts group by saying, "1, 2, ready go."
- Job #2 (Stopper) - Stops group if they hear a problem.
- Job #3 (Fixer) - Corrects the mistake.
- Job #4 (Checker) - Makes sure mistake was fixed.

I give them examples of mistakes that they should listen for: wrong notes, wrong hand position, wrong fingering, bad tone, squeaks, and lack of tonguing/articulation.

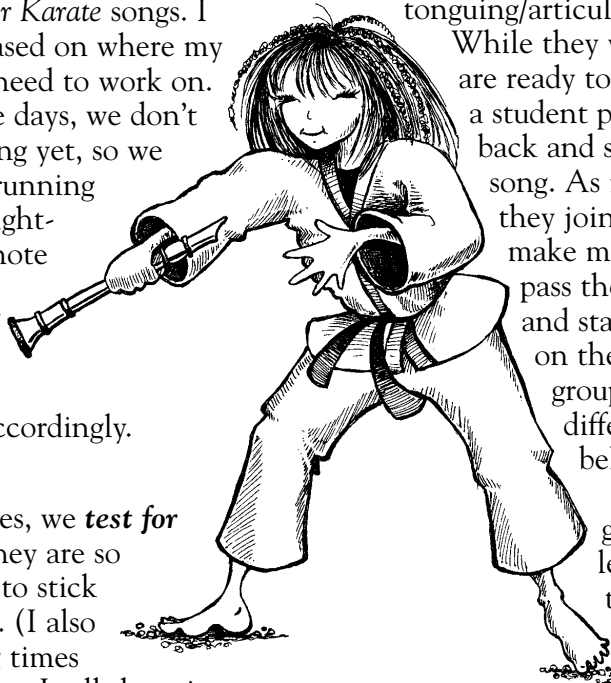
While they work in groups, I hear those who are ready to test for *Recorder Karate* belts. As a student passes the white belt, they go back and start working on their yellow belt song. As more students pass white belt, they join the yellow belt group (and make more groups). If a student doesn't pass the white belt, he or she goes back and starts a group that keeps working on the white belt. Eventually, different groups will be working on many different songs depending on what belt they are working for.

Also, during this time, it is great to see all of the cooperative learning that takes place. Some of this happens when I direct a certain student to help another student. But, many times this happens

spontaneously among the students!

I usually try to go all the way through a class list before I let anyone test for the next belt (unless they come to see me outside of class time). Sometimes I start at the beginning of the class list and at other times I start at the end or the middle of the list to be a little more fair to all students.

Later on, when I have students at all different belt colors, I go through the class list and let them test for whatever color belt is next for them. I use a checklist to record the grade (see rubric on next page) the student received on each song and all necessary information. (A blank checklist has been provided for your use.) Using this type of checklist, you can quickly write a score for the child who is testing and can also quickly tell what belts each student has gotten so far.



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## Rubric

I use the following grading rubric:

5 - Plays with very few mistakes and good tone and rhythm.

4 - Plays with a few mistakes in pitches or rhythm.

3 - Plays with several mistakes in pitches or rhythm.

2 - Plays with many mistakes in pitches, rhythm, or in fingering a particular note.

1 - Plays with many mistakes in pitches and rhythm, poor tone, many starts and stops, and/or seems very unsure of fingerings.

If the students get a 5, 4, or a 3, they get a belt. If they get a 2 or a 1, they have to try again on another day. Also, I usually only let them test for one belt per day. I make exceptions to this when they come to see me outside of class time or if no one else is ready to test (which rarely, if ever, happens).

If a student is *not* ready to test for a particular song when I call their name, they may say “Pass.” They may only pass two times, however, and then on the next time, they *must* play for me. (I keep track of this on my checklist by writing P1, P2, etc. in the box.)

Also, students must earn every belt in succession. They are not allowed to skip a belt – just like in real martial arts karate.

I do not require the kids to memorize the songs, although a lot of them will anyway.

Lastly, I do require all students to test through the purple belt song for a grade, although I don’t tell them this for quite a while so that all of them keep working as long as possible.

## What To Use For The Recorder Karate Belts

I use embroidery thread for the belts (all six strands – I do not separate the thread). I cut the string about 7 inches long and tie it around the bell of the recorder. (If you are using the Peripole Angel recorders or other recorders without a flared bell, you can tie them tightly up on the head joint right below the window of the recorder.) Thread should dangle down about 2 - 2.5 inches from the recorder.

These “belts” are not the same thing as Recorder Necklaces. Necklaces are usually fastened on the head joint below the window and provide a way for the recorder to dangle from one’s neck. Recorder belts are short pieces of embroidery thread. (If you wish to leave them longer, the kids could braid the threads after they receive their black belt. However, one disadvantage to having longer belts is that the kids may want to swing their recorders with these belts.)

*Editor’s Note: There are many other approaches as to how to implement these belts. The hundreds of teachers using this method have shared many options. To read these and other interesting ideas contributed by other teachers, visit MusicK8.com and look for the **Idea Bank**. Also visit the Archive section for the MUSIC K-8 Mailing List, a constant source of inspiration and great ideas on many subjects.*

## Some Thoughts On Classroom Management

### Recorder Attendance

I give two points per day for “Recorder Attendance” – bringing their recorder to class. At the beginning of class, I have the kids hold up their recorders, and I quickly make a checkmark next to the names of those who didn’t bring their recorder under that date. I use a separate checklist for recording their song test scores. I record this as part of their grade for this unit. (Use the same master checklist for this.) When the whole class has “Perfect Recorder Attendance,” they earn two points towards the Super Day Competition.

When I send the letter home to parents regarding the purchase of a recorder for their student, I strongly suggest that they buy two recorders so that their child can leave one in my room and one at home. Many of my students do this and it really helps with recorder attendance. Also, if the student only has one recorder, I tell them to always put it back in their backpacks immediately after they practice at home. This usually helps cut down on recorder absences.

### Noise Control

I have the kids sit in groups around the room. I am in one corner. Standing right outside your room (if this would be possible without other classrooms screaming) would be a much better solution for testing. Most of us do not have this luxury. So, I have a music stand right by my chair, and I don’t let any of the other groups sit too near us. They must sit towards the other side of the room. Then, I have the student who is testing stand right by me and play. This way, I am able to hear them well enough. I also have asked the other kids not to play too loudly. I don’t ever test in groups. Once in awhile, though, I have kids play for the whole class together just for fun. They usually beg me to do this, so I let them do it when we have time.

When I do the testing, I call kids up about four at a time. To do this, I have a bell on my desk. When I ring it, if they get quiet right away, they earn two points towards their competition for an extra Super

Day. (They get to compete with the other 4th and 5th grades on this extra day, and they can earn points for many things: solos played in front of class, getting quiet when I ring the bell, quickly going to rest position (recorder in lap), or to ready position (recorder on chin with fingers ready), working really well in their groups, perfect recorder attendance, and anything else that provides a teachable moment.

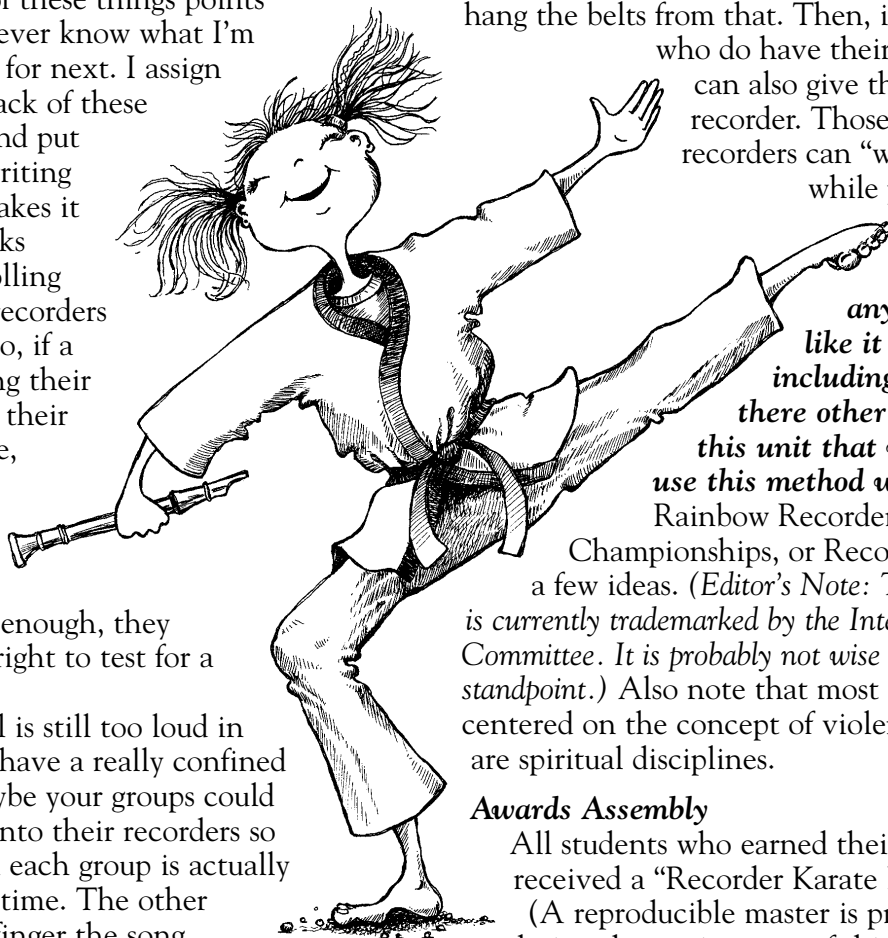
I don't give all of these things points every day, so they never know what I'm going to give points for next. I assign a student to keep track of these points each week, and put them in charge of writing them down. This makes it easy for me and works really well in controlling the chaos of 25-30 recorders playing at once. Also, if a student is not playing their recorder properly in their groups – for example, squeaking on purpose, I make them take off their mouthpiece. If the infraction is serious enough, they might also lose the right to test for a belt that day.

If the noise level is still too loud in your room or if you have a really confined area to work in, maybe your groups could take turns blowing into their recorders so that only one kid in each group is actually playing at the same time. The other students could still finger the song. Another alternative would be to have each person in the group play two measures (or some other predetermined amount) without any pauses in the song. Yet another alternative would be to let students practice only in between “test” performances while I am scoring and handing out the *Recorder Karate* belt.

### **Helpful Hints/Fun Ideas**

It can be really fun to emphasize the “karate” cultural theme by having students bow before playing, and also getting to play a gong after they receive the black belt.

Another idea if you don't have a lot of students, would be to buy some black fabric and actually make black belts for your students who get this far. You could just make a black belt for yourself to help motivate the students at the beginning of the unit.



Look for big packages of generic embroidery thread at local craft stores or online. These usually have 35-40 skeins of thread for less than \$4 and provide approximately three skeins of thread of every color I need.

**“But my students cannot buy their own recorders. How can I use Recorder Karate?”**

You could keep a chart in the classroom and hang the belts from that. Then, if there are a few who do have their own recorder, you can also give them a belt for their recorder. Those who use school recorders can “wear their belts” while performing in class.

**“My school prohibits anything that sounds like it might be violent, including martial arts. Are there other names I could call this unit that would allow me to use this method with my students?”**

Rainbow Recorders, Recorder

Championships, or Recorderlympics are just a few ideas. (*Editor's Note: The word “Olympics” is currently trademarked by the International Olympic Committee. It is probably not wise to use it from a legal standpoint.*) Also note that most martial arts are not centered on the concept of violence. Most of them are spiritual disciplines.

### **Awards Assembly**

All students who earned their black belt received a “Recorder Karate Black Belt” award. (A reproducible master is provided.) Also, during the testing part of this unit, I keep a chart of the names of all students who have achieved their black belt posted on a central bulletin board where everyone can see it. (I have 1st graders who can't wait until they can do *Recorder Karate*.)

### **Summary**

*Recorder Karate* works. Students all around the United States (and around the world) love this method! With the use of this method, your students will practice much more. They will get more excited about playing music. Everything that we have taught them about music up to this point will make more sense to them. I have had many more students sign up for the band in middle school since I have been using this method. And these same students are the ones who get the coveted first and second chair positions. (Many elementary schools go to the same middle school in our district.)

# Songs, Worksheets, & Other Reproducibles

The next 32 pages are filled with reproducibles that we have provided to help you have a successful recorder unit. First you will find the songs, complete with a cover page so that your students can make their own songbooks. Feel free to use the clip art from this book or from other legal sources to customize these pages.

Following the music are a variety of worksheets, charts, reproducible teaching sheets, and other resources. As with all of the reproducibles in this book, these pages are available to you with full permission to copy them or alter them as needed for use with any and all of your students. As always, we encourage you to use recycled paper when possible.

## Using The Recorder Karate Recordings

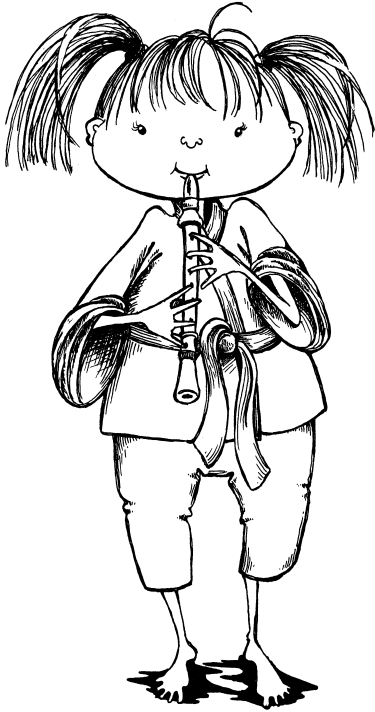
This kit includes a CD with recordings of the nine songs featured in the *Recorder Karate* method. The first 23 tracks feature simple recordings meant to help you in the practice and testing of the tunes. Each tune is first heard as a full recording followed by one or two versions of the accompaniment. Through "Old MacDonald Had A Farm" there are two versions of the accompaniment, first a slow one then a slightly faster one. The full recording is at the tempo of the faster accompaniment. These recordings

are great for group practice, and serve as good models for your players. You may use them for testing, though if you do so, you will need to alert your players to the short introductions for each selection.

The last six tracks on the CD feature special concert versions of three selections with slightly extended arrangements. These fully orchestrated arrangements originally appeared in *MUSIC K-8* magazine. They also occur first as a full recording and then as accompaniment only.

<b>Belt</b>	<b>Song</b>	<b>Notes</b>	<b>Tracks</b>
<i>Practice/Test Versions</i>			
White -	Hot Cross Buns	GAB	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1 Full Performance</li> <li>2 Slow Accompaniment</li> <li>3 Fast Accompaniment</li> </ol>
Yellow -	Gently Sleep	GAB	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>4 Full Performance</li> <li>5 Slow Accompaniment</li> <li>6 Fast Accompaniment</li> </ol>
Orange -	Merrily We Roll Along	GAB	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>7 Full Performance</li> <li>8 Slow Accompaniment</li> <li>9 Fast Accompaniment</li> </ol>
Green -	It's Raining	E GA	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>10 Full Performance</li> <li>11 Slow Accompaniment</li> <li>12 Fast Accompaniment</li> </ol>
Purple -	Old MacDonald Had A Farm	DE GAB	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>13 Full Performance</li> <li>14 Slow Accompaniment</li> <li>15 Fast Accompaniment</li> </ol>
Blue -	When The Saints Go Marching In	GABC'D'	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>16 Full Performance</li> <li>17 Accompaniment</li> </ol>
Red -	Twinkle, Twinkle Little Star	DEF#GAB	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>18 Full Performance</li> <li>19 Accompaniment</li> </ol>
Brown -	Amazing Grace	DE GAB D'	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>20 Full Performance</li> <li>21 Accompaniment</li> </ol>
Black -	Ode To Joy	D GABC'D'	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>22 Full Performance</li> <li>23 Accompaniment</li> </ol>
<i>Concert Versions</i>			
	When The Saints Go Marching In		<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>24 Full Performance</li> <li>25 Accompaniment</li> </ol>
	Amazing Grace		<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>26 Full Performance</li> <li>27 Accompaniment</li> </ol>
	Ode To Joy		<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>28 Full Performance</li> <li>29 Accompaniment</li> </ol>

# Recorder Karate



White -	Hot Cross Buns	GAB
Yellow -	Gently Sleep	GAB
Orange -	Merrily We Roll Along	GAB
Green -	It's Raining	E GA
Purple -	Old MacDonald Had A Farm	DE GAB
Blue -	When The Saints Go Marching In	GABC'D'
Red -	Twinkle, Twinkle Little Star	DEF#GAB
Brown -	Amazing Grace	DE GAB D'
Black -	Ode To Joy	D GABC'D'

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Class \_\_\_\_\_

# 1 - White Belt

Pitches: GAB

# Hot Cross Buns

2 measures (8 beats) introduction  
on recording

Traditional

Hot cross buns! Hot cross buns!

One a pen - ny, two a pen - ny, hot cross buns!

New things to learn for the White Belt song:

half note = 2 beats

quarter note = 1 beat

time signature =  $\frac{4}{4}$   
4 beats in each measure

half rest = 2 beats of silence

new notes:

$\frac{4}{4}$

counting:

o			
-		-	
o	o	-	
o	o	~	~
1	2	3	4

Pitches: GAB

# 2 - Yellow Belt

## Gently Sleep

2 measures (8 beats) introduction  
on recording

Gent - ly sleep, my sweet child. Gent - ly sleep, with that smile.

Traditional  
lyrics by Barb Philipak

Gent - ly sleep, lit - tle one. Gent - ly sleep, day is done.

New thing to learn for the Yellow Belt song:

’ **breath mark** When you see this symbol, take a breath.  
Try only to take a breath every two measures.



# 4 - Green Belt

## It's Raining

Pitches: E GA

7 beats introduction  
on recording

Traditional

New things to learn for the Green Belt song:

**new rhythm:**

two eighth notes = 1 beat  
(Each single eighth note gets 1/2 beat.)

**new note:**

E

**counting:**

## 5 - Purple Belt

# Old MacDonald Had A Farm

4 measures (16 beats) introduction  
on recording

Traditional

Old Mac - Don - ald had a farm. E - I - E - I - O. And

on that farm he had some chicks. E - I - E - I - O. With a

chick chick here. And a chick chick there. Here a chick, there a chick. Ev'-ry-where a chick chick.

Old Mac - Don - ald had a farm. E - I - E - I - O.

**New things to learn for the Purple Belt song:**

**quarter rest** = 1 beat of silence

**dotted half note** = 3 beats  
(A dot after a note gets half the value of that note and makes it that much longer.)

**new note:**

D

## 6 - Blue Belt

# When The Saints Go Marching In

5 beats introduction  
on recording

Traditional

Oh, when the saints go march - ing in, oh, when the

saints go march - ing in. Oh, I want to be in that

num - ber, when the saints go march - ing in.

### New things to learn for the Blue Belt song:

A **tie** is a curved line which connects notes of the same pitch.

Only the first note is played and then it is held for the total value of the connected notes.

1 2 3 - 1 2 1 2 3 4 - 1

**new rhythm:** whole note = 4 beats

C'

**new notes:**

D'

## 7 - Red Belt

Pitches: DEF<sup>#</sup>GAB

# Twinkle, Twinkle Little Star

2 measures (8 beats) introduction  
on recording

Traditional

Twin - kle, twin - kle lit - tle star, how I won - der what you are.

Up a - bove the world so high, like a dia - mond in the sky!

Twin - kle, twin - kle lit - tle star, how I won - der what you are.

**New things to learn for the Red Belt song:**

### key signature

These sharps (<sup>#</sup>), when placed at the beginning of a line, are for all C's and F's in the song. This is called a **key signature**. However, since there are no C's in this song, you only have to remember to play every F in this song as F<sup>#</sup>.

### new note:

F<sup>#</sup>

# 8 - Brown Belt

Pitches: DE GAB D'

## Amazing Grace

5 beats introduction  
on recording

Traditional

A - maz - ing— grace, how sweet the sound, that  
 saved a— wretch like me.— I once— was— lost, but  
 now— am— found, was blind, but— now I see.—

### New things to learn for the Brown Belt song:

#### new rhythms:



**single eighth note** = 1/2 beat

Until now, you have seen two eighth notes joined together with a beam (  ). Together, two eighth notes = 1 beat.



**dotted quarter note** = 1 1/2 beats

Again, the dot adds half the value of that note and makes it longer.

$1 + 1/2 = 1 \frac{1}{2}$  beats



A **fermata** placed above a note means that the note is held a little longer than its usual count.



**time signature** The top number tells us that there are only three beats in each measure.

3 4

counting:

# 9 - Black Belt

Pitches: D GABC'D'

# Ode To Joy

2 measures (8 beats) introduction  
on recording

Ludwig van Beethoven

The image displays a musical score for the introduction of 'Ode To Joy' by Ludwig van Beethoven. It consists of four staves of music, each beginning with a treble clef and a key signature of one sharp (F#). The first staff starts with a 4/4 time signature. The melody is written in a single line across all four staves. The first two staves contain the first four measures of the introduction, which are marked as '2 measures (8 beats) introduction on recording'. The third and fourth staves continue the melody for the next four measures. The piece concludes with a double bar line at the end of the fourth staff.

# When The Saints Go Marching In

Traditional  
arr. M. C. Handel/Paul Jennings

MODERATE DIXIELAND (♩=138)  
DRUM FILL - - - - - (OPT.)  
PLAY  
f

1. 2.

(29) "BRING IT HOME"

(37) +AD LIB. OPT. (ON NOTES LEARNED)

POCO RIT.

# Amazing Grace

Traditional  
adapted by M. C. Handel  
arr. Paul Jennings

EXPRESSIVELY ( $\text{♩} = 66$ )

*mf*

RIT.

# Ode To Joy

JOYOUSLY (♩=104-108)

Ludwig van Beethoven  
arr. M. C. Handel/Paul Jennings

2 3 6

9

17

1. 2.

26

(OPT.)

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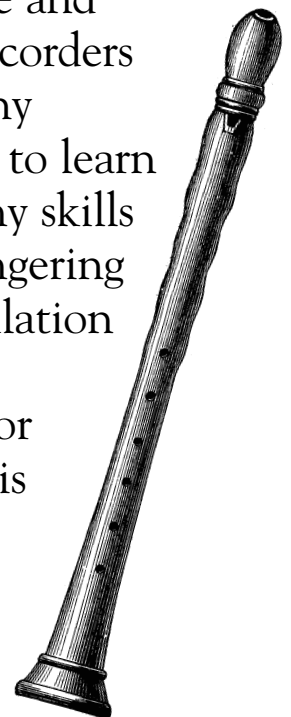
# The History Of The Recorder

The recorder is a whistle-type woodwind instrument that is from an ancient family of instruments called the internal duct flutes. For many centuries, it was the most popular woodwind instrument. It was being used as a folk instrument as early as the 12th century. During the 16th century, several composers were writing solo and ensemble music for the recorder. Two of these were Bach and Handel, probably the best known composers of the Baroque Era. The transverse (side-blown) flute had replaced the recorder by the 18th century, because it had a much broader dynamic range than the recorder and could blend better with the larger, louder orchestras of the day.

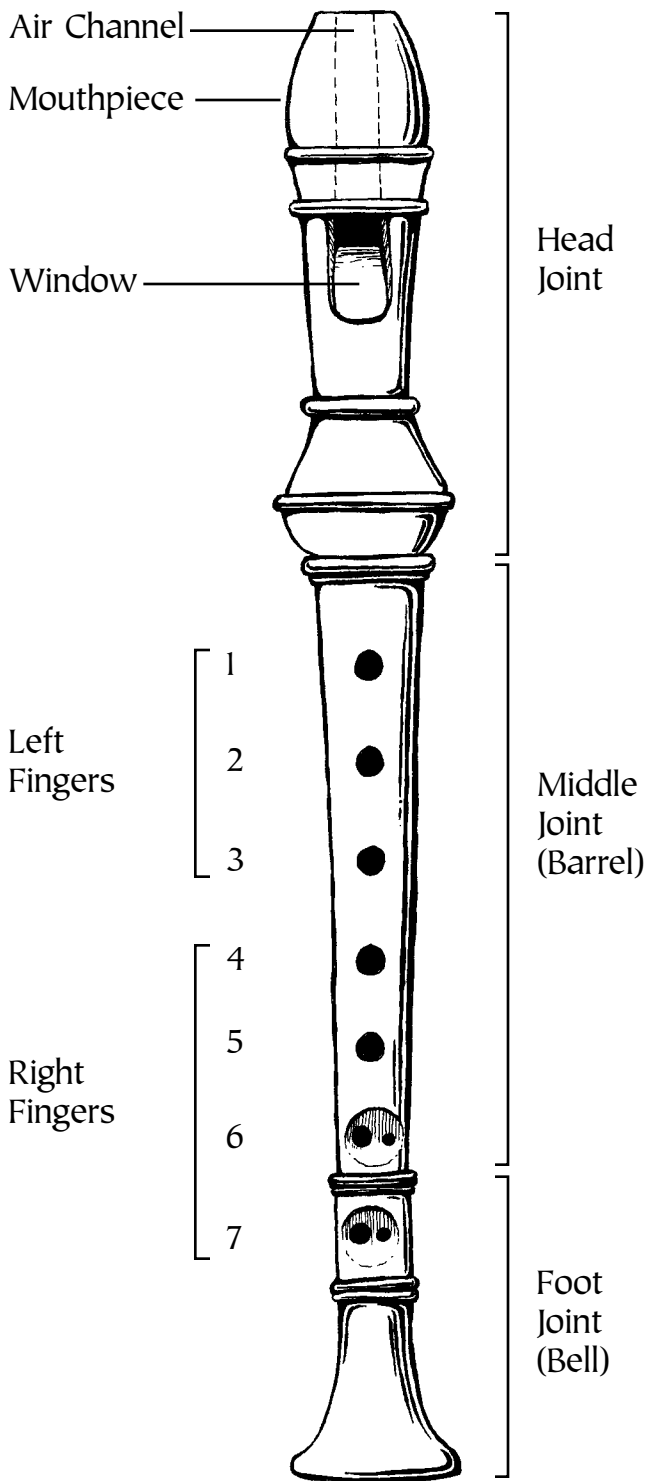


Recorders probably came to America with some of the first settlers. There are as many as 26 recorders listed in the inventories of various plantations in the 1600s. Around 1925, the recorder began to make a comeback in popularity because of a renewed interest in Renaissance and Baroque music. Today, more than 3.5 million plastic recorders are manufactured per year. Recorders are played in many elementary schools and can be a wonderful instrument to learn on its own or as an introductory band instrument. Many skills are learned from the playing of the recorder, such as fingering skills, embouchure development, breath support, articulation skills, and development of the inner ear.

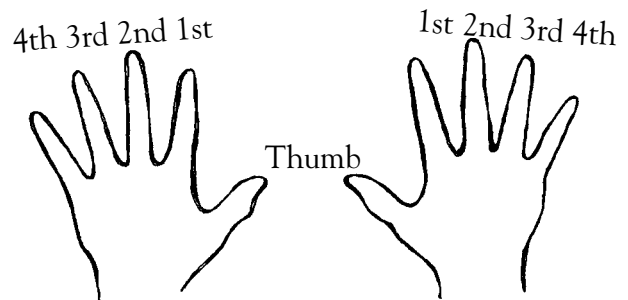
The five most common recorders are: sopranino (or descant), soprano, alto, tenor, and bass. The smallest is the Garklein recorder, which is only four inches long. The largest recorder is called a sub-contra bass and is about ten feet long. The soprano is the recorder that is most often played by beginners. All of these recorders can play together just like a choir. This group is called a consort.



# How To Hold The Recorder



- All recorders have a thumb hole in the back and seven holes down the front. Some recorders have double holes on the bottom two holes.
- The left hand is placed at the top of the recorder, which is by the mouthpiece. The left hand covers the thumb hole in the back of the recorder and the first three holes. The pinkie finger of the left hand is never used and should be held away from the recorder.
- The right hand is placed at the bottom of the recorder. The right thumb is used to balance the recorder and is placed between the 4th and 5th holes on the back. The right hand fingers cover the four holes near the bottom of the recorder.
- Cover the holes completely with the flat, fleshy pad of your fingers, NOT the fingertips.
- Fingers should be slightly curved.
- Fingers that are not being used to cover holes should be held a little distance above their holes so they are ready to quickly play the next note.
- Hold your recorder at a 45-degree angle. Your elbows should be slightly away from your body. Make sure to sit up straight!

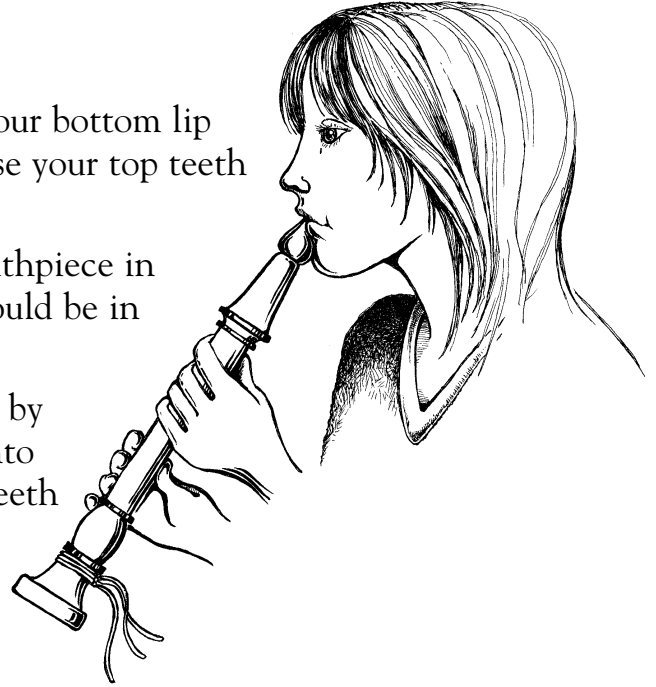


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# How To Play The Recorder

## How To Place The Recorder In Your Mouth

- Place the mouthpiece of the recorder on your bottom lip and in front of your bottom teeth. Do NOT close your top teeth down on to the mouthpiece.
- Make sure not to put too much of the mouthpiece in your mouth. Only the tip of the mouthpiece should be in your mouth.
- Press down very gently with your upper lip by whispering “mmm.” This will put your mouth into the correct position. Be careful not to let your teeth or your tongue touch the mouthpiece.
- Make sure that your lips stay firm around the mouthpiece. Don't open and close your mouth on each note. This will avoid air leaks.



## Breath/Air Pressure

- Blow softly but with a steady air stream. Little air is required. Blowing too hard produces an obnoxious noise.

## Use The “Steamy Window Trick”

- Blow on your hand as if you are steaming up the car window without someone near you hearing. (You don't want them to hear you blow.) The air should be warm and should not be heard. Blow this same way into your recorder.
- As you blow into the recorder, start the breath by whispering “tu.” This is called “tonguing” and your teacher will explain more about this in the future.

## Two Main Causes For Squeaks

- If you squeak, you may be blowing too hard. Try to blow with a very steady air stream.
- Another common reason for squeaks is that your fingers may not be covering the holes completely. Remember: **Leaks Cause Squeaks**. Keep trying!

### Practice Directions:

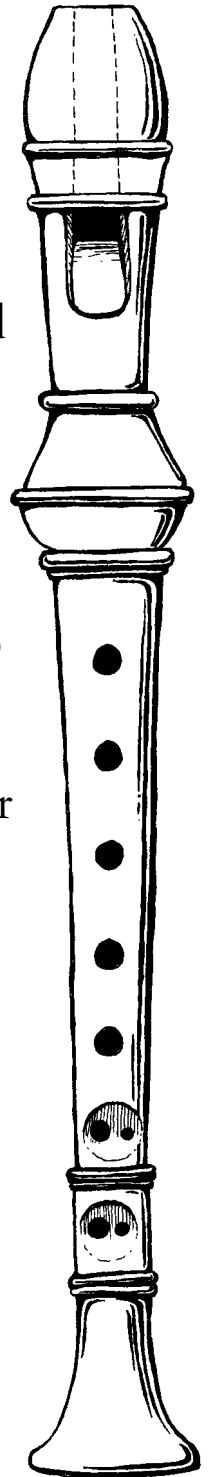
1. Clap and count the rhythm (use 1–2–3–4 or rhythm syllables such as “ta” and “ti-ti”).
2. Clap and speak the letter names in rhythm.
3. Finger the notes and speak or sing the letter names in rhythm.
4. Play the notes in rhythm. Start slow and increase in speed later.

---

# How To Care For Your Recorder

1. Label your recorder and the case with a permanent marker. That way, if you leave it somewhere, it can be returned to you.
2. After playing, wipe the moisture from the inside of your recorder with a small piece of cotton cloth tied onto a cleaning rod. Do NOT use tissue or paper towel because these will fall to pieces inside your recorder and would be very difficult to remove.
3. Clean the mouthpiece of your recorder with an old toothbrush or a pipe cleaner. It is important to keep the mouthpiece clean.
4. Plastic recorders can be washed in the dishwasher or in warm, soapy water once in a while.
5. If your recorder is hard to take apart or put back together, you may use a little joint grease or petroleum jelly on the joints.
6. Keep your recorder in its case when you are not playing it.

*NOTE: If you are playing a wooden recorder, it will need to be cared for in different ways. Talk to your teacher before doing anything to a wooden recorder.*



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## · A Sample Letter To Parents ·

**IMPORTANT NOTE:** This is JUST a sample, as your individual needs will be unique and will change from year to year. For your convenience, though, we have placed a BLANK version of this letter and form as a PDF in the *Recorder Karate Dojo* at our web site: **MusicK8.com**

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Dear Parents:

As a part of the district's music curriculum, we will soon be learning to play the soprano recorder in music class. We will begin the recorder unit in October. If your child does not already have a recorder, purchasing a recorder is fairly inexpensive.

To make it more convenient and more economical, we will be happy to order the recorders for you. We will be ordering a recorder that comes with a storage case, cleaning rod, and fingering chart. The price is \$3.75. *(This is a soprano recorder from MUSIC K-8 Marketplace. This includes \$3.50 for the recorder and \$.25 to help with shipping.)*

**Please consider buying two recorders so that your child may leave one recorder in the classroom and one at home for practicing.** This way your child will not have to remember to bring the recorder back and forth. When our unit is completed, we would like to continue using recorders throughout the rest of the year to supplement other lessons.

Please see the recorder information below. Please read all the options carefully to make sure that you get exactly what you want. **To help us place the order, please return the detachable form to your child's classroom teacher with a CHECK made payable to the School District by Monday, September 7. We really need all money by September 7 so that the recorder shipment will be in by October.**

After we have begun our instructional unit on recorders, please encourage your child to practice! **Your child is responsible for bringing their recorder to every music class (unless you have bought an extra recorder to leave in the classroom).**

Helpful practice hints:

1. Cover all the holes tightly – leaks cause squeaks!
2. The left hand is placed above the right hand
3. Blow gently with “warm” air.
4. Please label the recorder and its storage container with your child's name.

Thanks for your continued support of your child's creativity in music!

Musically yours,

Music Teacher

PLEASE COMPLETE AND RETURN WITH CHECK  
TO THE CLASSROOM TEACHER BY Monday, September 7.

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Classroom Teacher \_\_\_\_\_

Parent/Guardian Signature \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ Yes, please order a recorder for my child at \$3.75 each. I am enclosing a check for \$3.75 (please NO CASH) made out to the School District.

\_\_\_\_\_ Yes, please order TWO recorders so that my child can leave one at school (recorders will be taken home at the end of the year). I am enclosing a check for \$7.50 (please NO CASH) made out to the School District.

\_\_\_\_\_ No, we do not need to order a recorder. We will take full responsibility of furnishing an acceptable soprano recorder for our child by October 1.

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# RECORDER FINGERING CHART

The hole that is outside the box indicates the thumbhole on the back of the recorder.  
When the circle is black, cover that hole with the correct finger.

Diagram for note C: A treble clef staff with a quarter note C on the first line. The fingering chart above shows the thumb hole (outside the box) as a black dot, and all other holes (index, middle, ring, pinky, left hand thumb, right hand thumb) as black dots.

Diagram for note D: A treble clef staff with a quarter note D on the second line. The fingering chart above shows the thumb hole (outside the box) as a black dot, and all other holes as black dots.

Diagram for note E: A treble clef staff with a quarter note E on the third line. The fingering chart above shows the thumb hole (outside the box) as a black dot, and all other holes as black dots.

Diagram for note F: A treble clef staff with a quarter note F on the fourth line. The fingering chart above shows the thumb hole (outside the box) as a black dot, and all other holes as black dots.

Diagram for note F#: A treble clef staff with a quarter note F# on the fourth line. The fingering chart above shows the thumb hole (outside the box) as a black dot, and all other holes as black dots.

Diagram for note G: A treble clef staff with a quarter note G on the second space. The fingering chart above shows the thumb hole (outside the box) as a black dot, and all other holes as white circles.

Diagram for note A: A treble clef staff with a quarter note A on the third space. The fingering chart above shows the thumb hole (outside the box) as a black dot, and all other holes as white circles.

Diagram for note B: A treble clef staff with a quarter note B on the fourth space. The fingering chart above shows the thumb hole (outside the box) as a black dot, and all other holes as white circles.

Diagram for note C': A treble clef staff with a quarter note C' on the first space. The fingering chart above shows the thumb hole (outside the box) as a black dot, and all other holes as white circles.

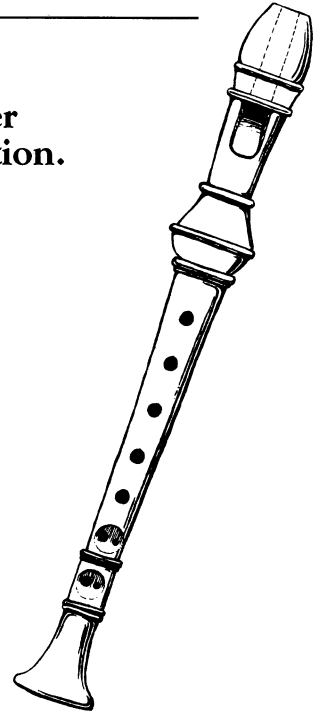
Diagram for note D': A treble clef staff with a quarter note D' on the second line. The fingering chart above shows the thumb hole (outside the box) as a white circle, and all other holes as white circles.

# Recorder Quiz

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Class: \_\_\_\_\_

Read each question carefully, then print the letter of the correct answer on the line next to each question.

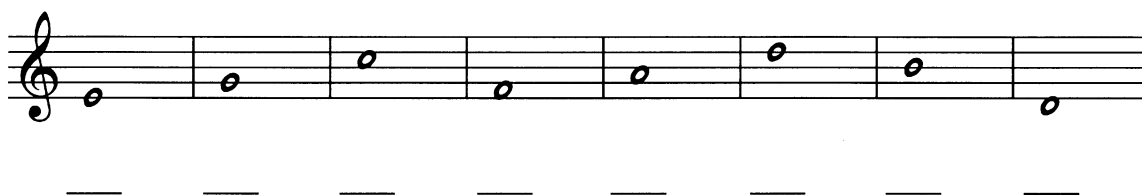
1. \_\_\_\_\_ What hand(s) goes on the **top** part of the recorder?
  - a. Right hand
  - b. Left hand
  - c. Both hands
2. \_\_\_\_\_ What is the correct way to start and stop notes?
  - a. By lifting fingers on and off of the holes
  - b. By not breathing into the recorder
  - c. By using your tongue and saying "tu"
3. \_\_\_\_\_ To get the best sound from the recorder, it is best to blow
  - a. Hard
  - b. Gently
  - c. Not at all
4. \_\_\_\_\_ If you have a squeak, what two things should you check (**two answers**):
  - a. That you are **NOT** blowing too hard
  - b. That your fingers are covering the holes tightly
  - c. That you are blowing **HARD ENOUGH**
  - d. That you are playing the right note
5. \_\_\_\_\_ What is the name of the process where you use your tongue to start and stop notes on the recorder?
  - a. Roof of the mouth
  - b. Lipping
  - c. Tonguing
6. \_\_\_\_\_ Which thumb covers the hole on the back of the recorder?
  - a. Right thumb
  - b. Left thumb
  - c. Neither – it is always uncovered.
7. \_\_\_\_\_ What does this symbol mean in music ♯
  - a. Apostrophe
  - b. Comma
  - c. Breath mark – take a breath in music



8. \_\_\_\_ What is the “saying” to remember the names of the LINE notes? (Be careful!)  
 a. Every Good Boy Is Fine  
 b. Every Boy Does Fine  
 c. Every Good Boy Does Fine

9. \_\_\_\_ What is the “saying” to remember the names of the SPACE notes?  
 a. FACT  
 b. FACE  
 c. FUNNY

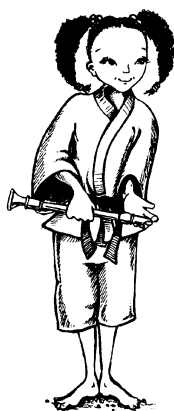
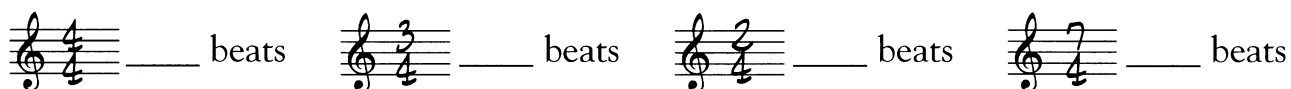
10. Name the notes in the example:



11. How many beat(s) is each note or rest held for?

1. \_\_\_\_ beat(s)    2. \_\_\_\_ beat(s)    3. \_\_\_\_ beat(s)  
 4. \_\_\_\_ beat(s)    5. \_\_\_\_ beat(s)    6. \_\_\_\_ beat(s)

12. In the following time signatures, how many beats are in each measure?



# Hot Cross Buns

2 measures (8 beats) introduction  
on recording

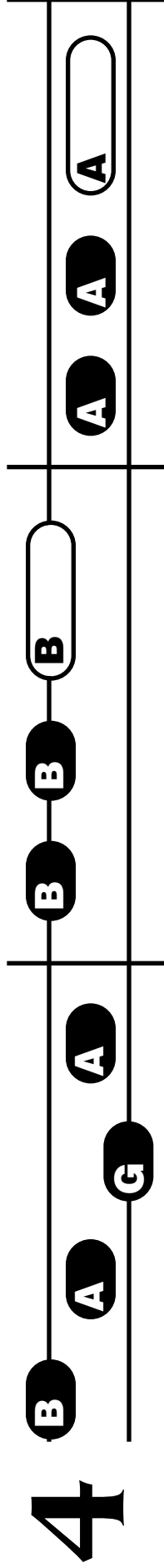
Traditional  
arr. Paul Jennings

Musical score for the first system of 'Hot Cross Buns'. It consists of five staves. The top two staves are for melodic instruments: XYLOPHONE/BELLS and MARIMBA/METALLOPHONE (OR BASS BARS). The bottom three staves are for rhythmic instruments: HAND DRUM/(FRAME DRUM), COWBELL, and SHAKER/MARACAS. The key signature is one sharp (F#) and the time signature is 4/4. The score shows the first two measures of an 8-beat introduction.

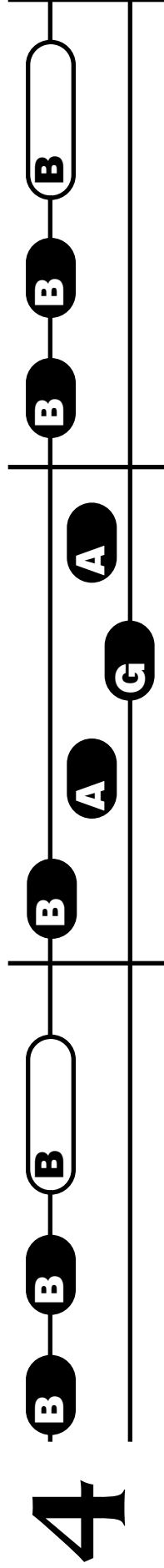
Musical score for the second system of 'Hot Cross Buns'. It consists of five staves, identical in notation to the first system. The staves are labeled: XYLO./BELLS, MAR./MET. (B.B.), H.D./ (F.D.), CB., and SH./MAR. The score shows the continuation of the 8-beat introduction.

A Sample Iconic Version Of A Song

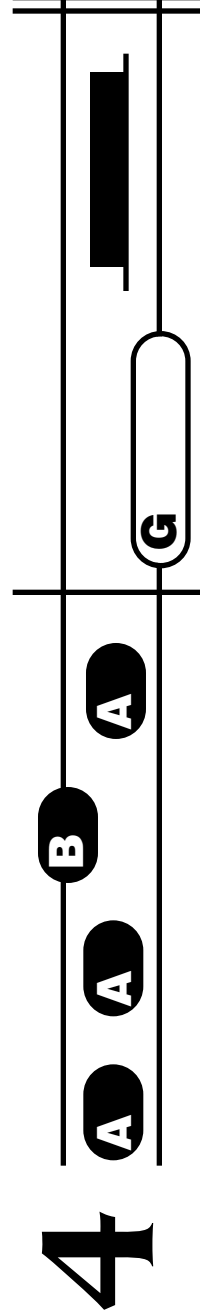

# Merrily We Roll Along

**4**  **B** **A** **G** **B** **B** **B** **A** **A** **A**

Mer - ri - ly we roll a - long, roll a - long,

**4**  **B** **B** **B** **A** **G** **B** **B** **B**








roll a - long. Mer - ri - ly we roll a - long,

**4**  **A** **B** **A** **G** 



o'er the deep blue sea.

# How We Count Music

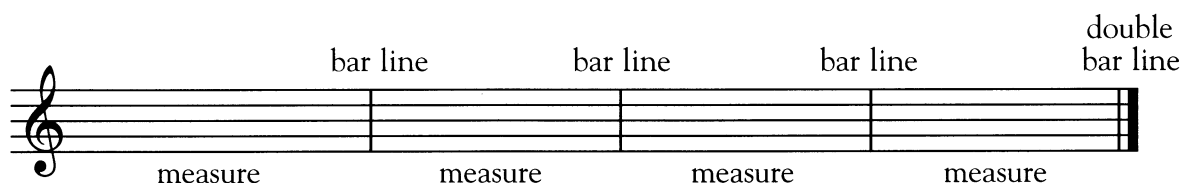
Below are some of the notes we use in music. Each note has a name and a value or length. Here are their American names and values in 4/4 time:

<b>quarter note</b>		(ta)	1 beat
<b>eighth note</b>		(ti)	1/2 beat
<b>eighth note pair</b>		(ti-ti)	1 beat
<b>dotted quarter note</b>		(ta-ee)	1 1/2 beats
<b>half note</b>		(two-oo)	2 beats
<b>dotted half note</b>		(three-ee-ee)	3 beats
<b>whole note</b>		(fo-o-o-or)	4 beats

A rest is a silence. For every note, there is a rest of equal value. Here are some rests we will use in our music:

<b>quarter rest</b>		(sh)	1 beat
<b>half rest</b>		(re-est)	2 beats

Music is written so that we read it from left to right and top to bottom, just as we read a book. Our music is divided into sections called **measures** or **bars**. Measures are separated by **bar lines**. A **double bar line** is placed at the end of a song.



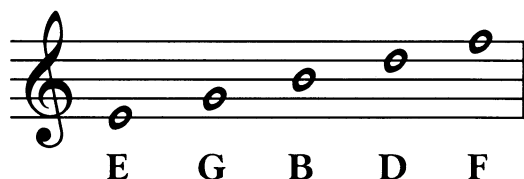
# How We Name The Notes

Music is written on a **staff** made up of five lines. Notes are written on these lines or in the spaces between them. They can also be written in the spaces below and above these lines.

Notes are given names based on the letters of the alphabet from A through G.

Each staff begins with a **clef**. Music for different instruments is written in different clefs. The recorder you are playing uses the **treble** clef. Here are the names of the notes of the staff in treble clef:

notes on lines



notes in spaces



It may help you to remember the notes on the lines by remembering the sentence **Every Good Boy Does Fine**. The notes in the spaces spell out the word **FACE**.

Here are the notes on the treble clef that we will use in our recorder music. Fill in their names under the notes.





# Practice Counting

In the space provided, write how many beats each note or rest equals:

1.  \_\_\_\_\_beat(s)

6.  \_\_\_\_\_beat(s)

2.  \_\_\_\_\_beat(s)


7.  \_\_\_\_\_beat(s)

3.  \_\_\_\_\_beat(s)

8.  \_\_\_\_\_beat(s)

4.  \_\_\_\_\_beat(s)

9.  \_\_\_\_\_beat(s)

5.  \_\_\_\_\_beat(s)

# Practice Naming The Notes

Write the letter name of each note in the space provided:



\_\_\_\_\_



\_\_\_\_\_



# Recorder Karate

**Black Belt**

*Award Of Excellence*

In Recognition Of Outstanding Accomplishments

\_\_\_\_\_  
Music Director

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date







Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Teacher: \_\_\_\_\_

## FINGERING REVIEW

Fill in the holes that are covered to play the notes indicated.



B



A

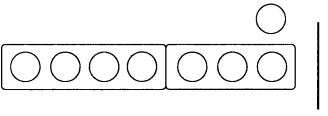
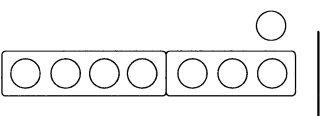
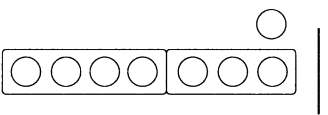
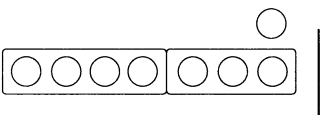
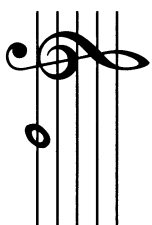
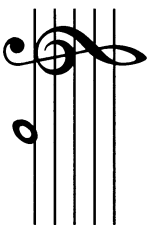


G



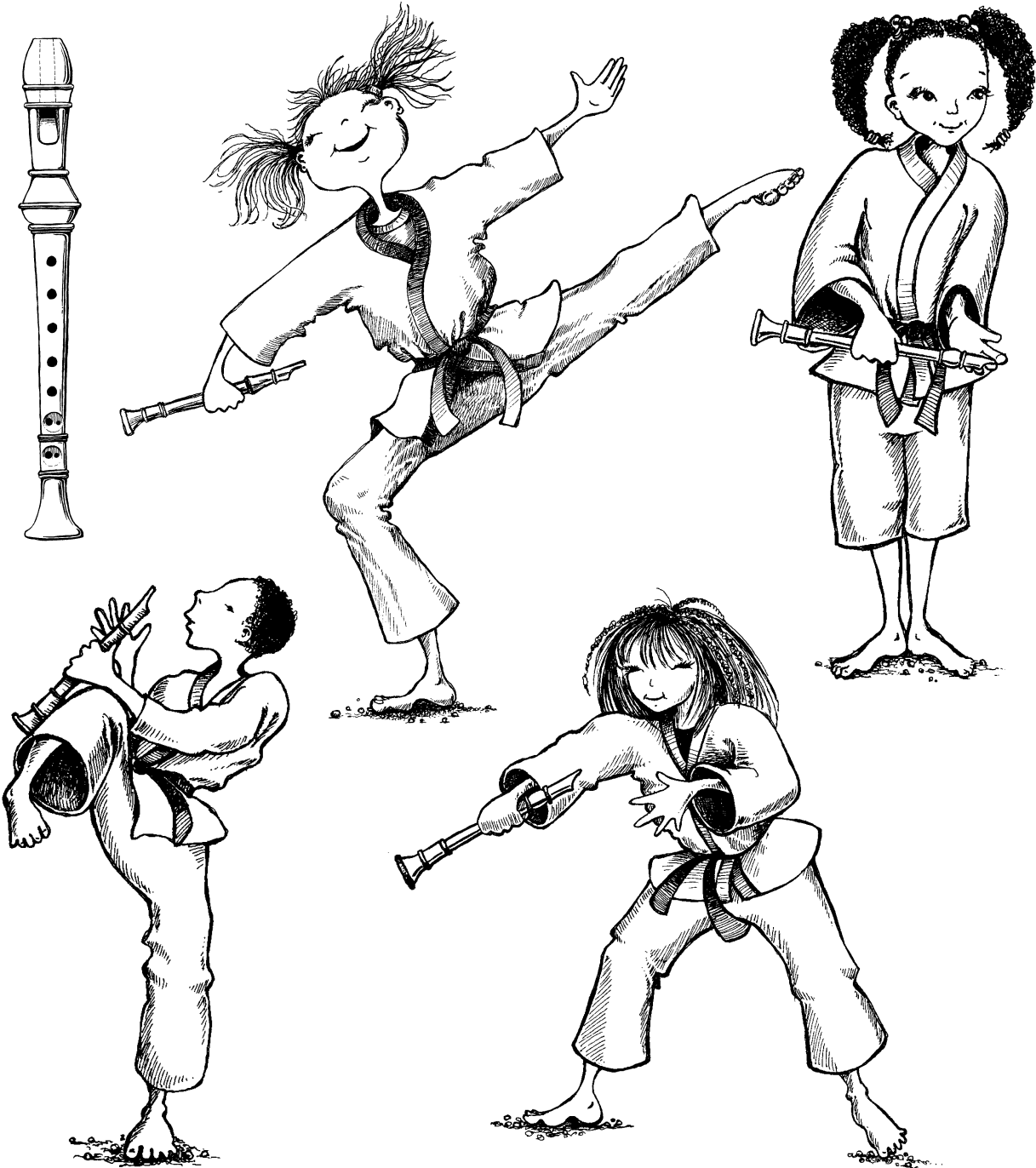
## NAME THE NOTES AND DRAW THE FINGERINGS

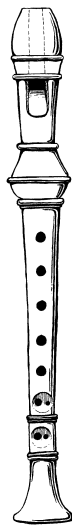
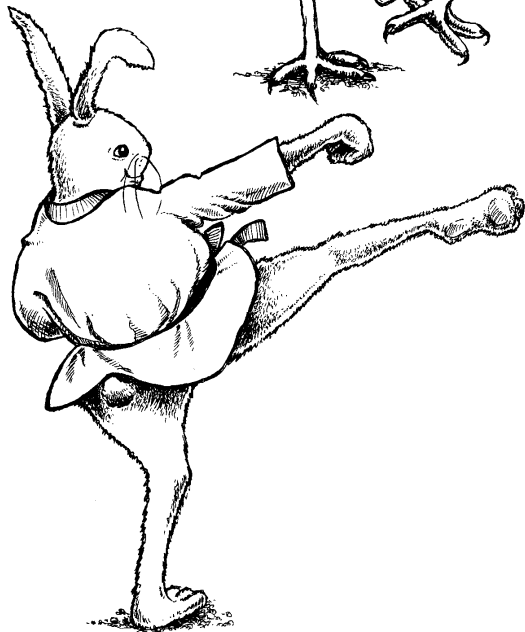
In the space provided, write the letter name of the note on the staff and then fill in the holes that are covered when you play that note. If there are two notes with the same letter name, be sure to tell whether it is low or high.



## Recorder Karate Clip Art

The next two pages include a couple more borders and a lot of clip art for your use with this product. You may combine and resize these and all other graphics in this book to make posters, awards, or teaching worksheets of your own. We have not included more realistic, adult karate illustrations as they are easy to find if you want to use them. Instead, we are providing kid-friendly art that you can't find anywhere but here. Have fun with them!





# How To Play The Recorder

## A Tutorial For Teachers

### Introduction

When I first started teaching recorders, I knew nothing about them. I had never even played one before. But recorders were in our curriculum, so I still taught them even though I was a beginner. Today, I almost cringe at how little I knew then. I say “almost” because thanks to *Recorder Karate* – the unit turned out highly successful. The kids absolutely loved it! I just didn’t feel like I personally knew enough about recorders. Since then, I have done a lot of research in this area for graduate school projects. My teaching of this unit has greatly improved as I have learned more and more about the recorder.

From what I have learned, I will try to provide a more thorough explanation of how to play the recorder and all that goes with that, without being too lengthy or too technical. Hopefully, you will know more and feel more confident than I did that first year. I am not suggesting that you will teach your students all of the things that are included here, but I know that I feel better and can play better for my students after knowing these things.

If you are a trained woodwind player, or one who has had extensive training on the recorder, much of what I say will be common knowledge. I write this section for other teachers like myself who come to teaching with a limited knowledge of what it takes to play a wind instrument.

The recorder really isn’t a difficult instrument to play, especially for someone who has gotten a degree in music. Still, it is important to model a beautiful tone and proper technique when playing for our students, and playing musically takes practice.

### About The Recorder

- The soprano recorder can play approximately 26 notes (depending on what style you have). The range is middle C up to the C that is two octaves above it, plus D.
- The recorder has a thumb hole in the back and seven holes down the front. Some recorders have double holes on the bottom two holes. These double holes allow more accidentals (pitches) to be played.
- All of the holes and the window on the mouthpiece should form a straight line, except for the bottom hole, which is turned slightly to the

player’s right so that it is more accessible to the right hand pinky, which is shorter and obviously cannot reach as far as the other fingers.

### Dynamics On The Recorder

A wide range of dynamics is not possible on the recorder. That is the main reason that the transverse flute became more popular than the recorder in the 1800s, as orchestras were larger and other instruments were being redesigned to play with a wider dynamic range. If one tries to play *forte*, the tone may be harsh and sharp. Playing *piano* may cause the tone to be flat and lifeless. The best dynamic level for young players on the recorder is *mezzo forte*. A little variation is possible in each direction, of course.

### How To Hold The Recorder

#### Left Hand

- The left hand is placed at the top of the recorder, which is by the mouthpiece. The left hand covers the thumb hole in the back of the recorder and the first three holes. The pinkie finger of the left hand is never used and should be held a relaxed distance away from the recorder.
- For students who have a difficult time remembering to use their left hand on the top of the recorder, have them wear a hair “scrunchie” on their left wrist. Then, either by pointing to your own left wrist (with a scrunchie on it) or by simply saying the word “scrunchie” you can give the students a reminder to check their hand position. You could also give them a landmark on the left side of the room, such as the door or window to help them remember left from right.

#### Right Hand

- The right hand is placed at the bottom of the recorder. The right thumb is used to balance the recorder and is placed between the 4th and 5th holes on the back. The right hand fingers cover the four holes near the bottom of the recorder.
- As an alternative for younger students or special needs students, the right hand may be placed around the bell of the recorder in the beginning. Teach these students to leave their hand open (fingers out straight) so that they do not block the air hole in the bell.



• Also, in extremely rare cases, the right pinkie can be placed on the recorder between the 6th and 7th holes to help maintain balance.

• **Cover the holes completely with the flat, fleshy pad of your fingers, NOT the fingertips.**

• Some students will try to use the same finger for different holes. Be sure to teach them that each finger always covers only one hole and it never moves to cover another hole. This will help to eliminate problems before they become habits.

• I have my students use what they think is the flat, fleshy pad of their fingers on the holes and then we pull fingers off the holes and look for “warts” (indentations from the holes) in the correct place on their fingers. I have them compare the placement of their “warts” compared to mine and to repeat this exercise until their “warts” are in the same place as mine.

**Fingers should be slightly curved.**

• The left hand thumb is angled slightly upward and then covers the hole on the back of the recorder very close to the thumbnail. The fingers are slightly angled downward on each hole and the middle and index fingers are a little more curved than the ring finger. The right hand fingering is the same, except that it changes slightly when the right hand pinkie is used. When it is, the downward angle should be slightly decreased, and the little finger should be held straight to cover the hole properly.

• Fingers that are not being used to cover holes should be held a little distance above their holes so they are ready to quickly play the next note, about 1/2 inch.

**Hold your recorder at a 45-degree angle.**

Your elbows should be slightly away from your body. Make sure to sit up straight.

**How To Place The Recorder In Your Mouth**

• Place the mouthpiece of the recorder on your bottom lip and in front of your bottom teeth. Do NOT close your top teeth down on to the mouthpiece.

• Make sure not to put too much of the mouthpiece in your mouth. Only the tip of the mouthpiece should be in your mouth.

• Press down very gently with your upper lip by whispering “mmm.” This will put your mouth into the correct position. Be careful not to let your teeth or your tongue touch the mouthpiece.

• Make sure that your lips stay firm around the mouthpiece. Don’t open and close your mouth on each note. This will avoid air leaks.

**How To Play The Recorder**

**Breath/Air Pressure**

• Blow softly, but with a steady air stream. Little air is required. Blowing too hard can produce an obnoxious noise.

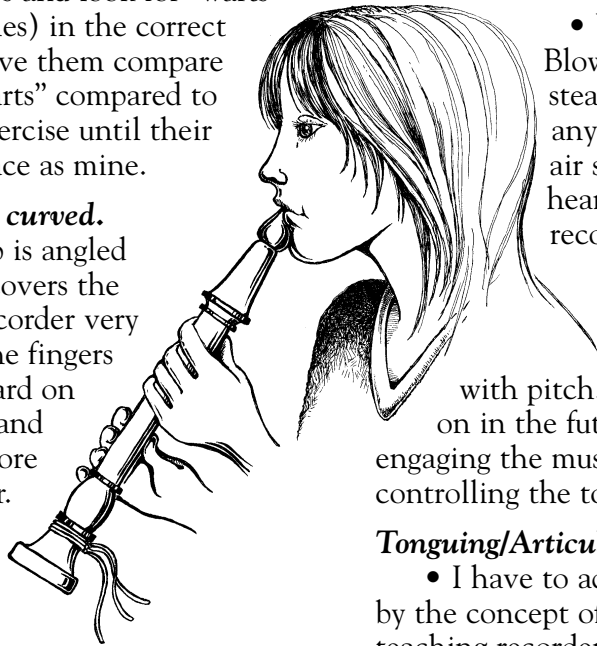
• Use the “Steamy Window Trick.” Blow on your hand as if you are steaming up the car window without anyone nearby hearing you blow. The air should be warm and should not be heard. Blow this same way into your recorder for best results.

• Make sure that students are directing the air straight ahead instead of down. This will help with pitch. It will also help students who go on in the future to play a wind instrument by engaging the muscles that will be important in controlling the tone of a wind instrument.

**Tonguing/Articulation**

• I have to admit that I was a little intimidated by the concept of tonguing during my first year of teaching recorders. I didn’t feel like I knew enough about what was really supposed to happen to be able to expand any further than what the method book that I used at the time said, “Whisper the syllable ‘tu’ when starting to play.” And then, I got even further confused when I checked other books and found out that there were many different ideas on the correct way to tongue. After researching this quite a bit, this is what I have discovered that should help to simplify this issue.

• First of all, the tongue should act like a valve that releases and stops the stream of air. To do this, the tongue should quickly touch the roof of the mouth behind the front teeth. As the tongue is moved away from the roof of the mouth, the air stream enters the recorder. (I have my students say “tu” a few times and tell me what the tongue touches when they say “tu.” I want them to discover that it touches the roof of their mouth.) The lower jaw does NOT move while tonguing.



- To help children understand this process and what it sounds like, I play several notes with tonguing and several without. We discuss how the tongued notes have a slight separation between them and the other notes do not. This seems to reach most students. Others will have a harder time getting this. For these students, you could try having them do tonguing exercises such as “tu” – “tu” – “tu” with a space after each syllable before they play on the recorder.

- There are two main types of articulation used in playing the recorder: the separated style, *staccato* and the connected style, *legato*. The separated style is done by simply stopping the air stream (not with the tongue but with the diaphragm). Stopping the air stream is also okay to do at the end of a long tone or before a silence in the music. To achieve the connected style of articulation, say the syllables “du” – “du” – “du” with the airflow being almost continuous. The tongue is actually stopping the air stream in this style of articulation by touching the roof of the mouth.

- I do not go into great detail about *staccato* and *legato* with my students. I simply tell my beginning students to start playing by whispering “tu” as they breathe into the recorder. I instruct them to stop each pitch with their tongue touching the roof of their mouths as they prepare to say “tu” again.

- Some of my students who have a problem with tonguing tend to do a more separated style of articulation between each notes. However, by doing this they usually are not holding the pitch out for the note value. Again, playing examples for them can be very helpful here. I usually play the passage the way they played it and then the correct way. Together we figure out why they sounded different and which way is correct (holding the note out for the proper length of time). I instruct them to focus on holding out the note until the very last second before they need to play again. This usually fixes the problem.

### **Advanced Tonguing/Articulation**

- One helpful suggestion for playing complicated rhythms that include sixteenth notes is to tongue the following syllables – “ti-ki-ti-ki” or “ti-di-ti-di” or “d-d-d-d.” For one eighth note and two sixteenth note patterns, try “ti-ti-ki” or “ti-ti-di” or

“ti-d-d.” For two sixteenth and one eighth note patterns, try “ti-ki-ti” or “ti-di-ti” or “d-d-ti.”

- There are many advanced ways to tongue, including different syllables for many different pitches depending on pitch highness or lowness. These advanced ideas are beyond the scope of this book. For more in-depth information, consult any of the following books:

*The Recorder Book*, Kenneth Wollitz (1981)  
*Let's Play The Recorder*, Robert Bouchard (1962)  
*Recorder Technique*, A. Rowland-Jones (1979)

*Editor's Note: Even though these more comprehensive books may be out of print, they are often available at your local library or may be purchased from used book dealers. Like many books, they are also often found through online auctions run by eBay, Amazon, and others.*

Ornamentations, including trills, turns, and appoggiaturas are possible on the recorder but, again, are beyond the scope of this book. Please refer to books listed above for more information. There are also excellent descriptions of acoustics and how the recorder works in terms of acoustics in many of these books.

- See the *Common Problems* section for tips on how to fix problems that beginners usually have with tonguing.

### **Slurring/Legato**

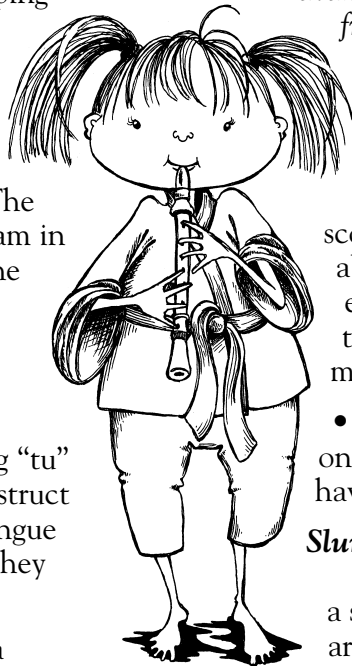
- When two or more notes are written with a slur, the first note is tongued, but the others are to be played in one continuous breath without tonguing between them. This is rarely used with beginning students. Once students have mastered the art of proper tonguing, they can move on to this technique.

### **Fingering**

#### **Fingering Systems**

- There are two commonly used fingering systems for recorders: English (sometimes called Baroque) and German. This book uses the English/Baroque fingering, as do most method books today, because this is the method most commonly used in this country.

German fingering was originally thought to make fingering F and F# much simpler and easier for beginners. Since one of the main causes for squeaks is not covering holes completely, proponents of the German fingering feel that the single holes would be



much easier for a beginner (if accidentals were not introduced). However, English/Baroque recorders and fingering are much more common today. Make sure to use English/Baroque fingering on an English/Baroque recorder. If not, certain notes will be slightly out of tune.

### **Half Covering**

• The notes in the higher octave are actually overtones that are obtained by opening the left hand thumb hole and increasing the air pressure. This can be done in one of two ways. First, you can “pinch” the thumb hole. This is done by pushing the thumbnail (which must be fairly short) into the thumb hole. The second method is to just move the thumb slightly to the left (or slightly down) and leave part of the hole uncovered. I have found that as I play higher notes (such as G’ and A’), I had the most success at achieving the correct intonation when only about eight-tenths of the hole was left uncovered. This will vary from recorder to recorder and player to player.

For example, high G is played by fingering low G and then half-covering the thumb hole. (Sometimes it will be helpful to students to tell them to direct the air at the roofs of their mouths to be able to better play high G.)

### **Cross-Fingering Or Fork Fingering**

• One great thing about recorders is that even though the soprano recorder (and also the tenor and great bass) makes it easy to play parts of a C major scale by just covering or opening holes in succession, it can play in any key as the recorder is capable of playing chromatically throughout its range. However, to be able to play all of the accidentals, one must learn how to cross-finger or play what some call fork fingerings. This is when you cover holes beneath open holes.

• Low F is played with the left thumb and all fingers, except the middle finger of the right hand. Sometimes, students will “find” F on their own by playing all of the left hand thumb and fingers and just the index finger of the right hand (they think that this is F because it is in between G and E). I play both for them a few times until they can hear the difference. (The one that just uses the index finger of the right hand actually causes the note to

sound very sharp.)

### **Alternate Fingerings**

• Some tones have several different ways to finger the notes. For advanced players, the choice of which fingering to use is determined by what is most convenient or on which produces the best sound on a given instrument. I do not teach alternate fingerings to beginner students. I feel that this is simply just too confusing for them. I use the fingerings E2 and B1 with beginners and do not tell them that alternates exist. However, it is helpful for the teacher to know about alternate fingerings because different method books sometimes use these alternate fingerings.

• There are actually three different ways to finger High E:

1. Finger low E and take the left thumb off the recorder. (E1)
2. Finger low E and half-uncover the thumb hole. (E2) (You may also “pinch” the thumb hole – the left thumb is bent with the fingernail pointed into the hole.)
3. The middle and ring fingers of the left hand and the index and middle fingers of the right hand on the holes that they play on the recorder. (E3)

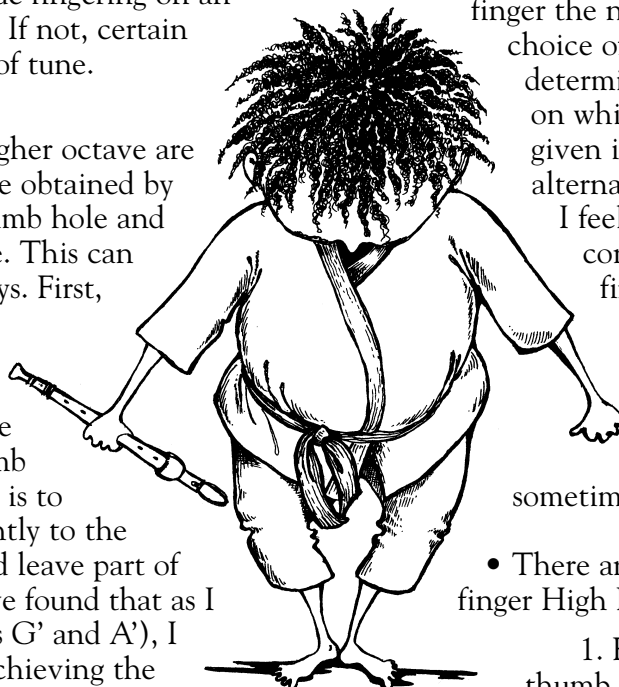
• There are two different fingerings for B:

1. Use the thumb and the first finger of the left hand. (B1)
2. Use the thumb and middle and ring fingers of left hand. (B2)

### **Phrasing**

• Phrasing is naturally combined with breathing. Usually, where the melody naturally divides is the best place to breathe. If a phrase is too long or if it has many short or high notes, you may have to find a place to breathe. Teachers should be careful to introduce this to children by at least trying to play through two measures on one breath. Later, this can be lengthened and then planned and marked on more difficult pieces or on pieces that are not marked. This will help your students to play more musically right from the very beginning.

• Never take a breath on a bar line, unless it is unavoidable.



- 
- Never take a breath before a long or important note, unless it is unavoidable.

### **Common Problems That Students Have And How To Fix Them**

This section will list many problems that are common among beginners and will give tips for stopping these problems before they become habits.

#### ***Two Main Causes For Squeaks***

- If your students squeak, they may be blowing too hard. Have them try to blow with a very steady air stream.
- Another common reason for squeaks is that their fingers may not be covering the holes completely. Ask them to remember, “Leaks Cause Squeaks,” and to keep trying! I have my students practice with a mirror at home and when they hear a squeak, I instruct them to freeze their fingers and to look and find where there is a hole showing and then to fix it. This usually helps to make them more aware of their leaky fingers!

#### ***Intonation***

- The pitches on the recorder are not produced as mechanically and as precisely as they are on a “tempered” keyboard, like the modern piano. To play perfectly in tune, adjustments in air pressure (less for lower notes and more for higher notes) and finger positions will need to be made at times. “Shading” (holding a finger just above a hole can lower the pitch slightly) a note that is too sharp or “opening” one that is too flat is sometimes necessary to make the pitch sound perfectly in tune. This obviously isn’t something you would teach to beginning players, but it should help the music teacher to be able to play with a more beautiful sound. Always use your ear in tuning each note for the best sound.

This is also the reason that the middle range of the recorder is the easier to start with, because beginners often blow too hard when playing low notes and not hard enough on the higher notes.

- Another thing that can affect the pitch is keeping an even amount of air pressure for the duration of the note. The tone will become higher if the pressure is increased and it will become lower if the pressure is decreased. This is actually how one goes about creating vibrato on the recorder. A fast and continuous alteration of the air pressure, which is controlled from the diaphragm, will create vibrato. This is something that I haven’t really attempted in my own playing for students because I

don’t want to confuse them, but I wanted to include it for those teachers who might be interested in attempting it.

- To play with a better tone on the low notes, it is important to play with a relaxed, open throat. Have students imagine that they are yawning with their lips closed. Then, have them try blowing air with this same feeling in their mouths on the syllable “dah.” Another way for them to get the feel of this is to have them imagine a ping-pong ball in the back of their mouths.

#### ***Breath/Air Pressure***

##### ***The Candle Trick***

- For students who have problems with air pressure, have them blow on a candle flame that is 4 to 6 inches away from their mouths. Instruct them to “bend” the flame over but NOT to blow it out. The way to do this is by blowing with a light and steady stream of air. Have them practice sustaining the breath to hold the flame in this position for 5 to 10 seconds.

#### ***Tone Production And Articulation***

Here are four common problems that beginners have with tone production and articulation:

##### ***1. Overblowing***

If it doesn’t cause you to squeak, blowing too hard (overblowing) raises the pitch out of tune and blowing too soft (underblowing) lowers the pitch out of tune. Try to always play right in the center of the pitch by blowing a smooth, even tone (just right). (Think “warm, steamy window.”)

Use the word “breathe” instead of “blow” when correcting this problem. This should help students to visualize the gentle pressure needed.

##### ***2. “Hooting” each breath***

Remind students not to take the lips off of the recorder. They should remain firm to avoid air leaks. Also, remind them to start and stop each note with the tongue touching the roof of the mouth. It may be necessary to review the process of tonguing again very slowly. Also, the *Candle Trick* might be helpful with these students.

##### ***3. Slurring each note***

Review the tonguing process. Do the tonguing exercises found in the *Tonguing/Articulation* section. (Say “tu” – “tu” – “tu” with a space after each syllable.)

##### ***4. Not giving notes their full durations***

Some of my students who have a problem with

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tonguing tend to do a more separated style of articulation between each note. However, by doing this they usually are not holding the pitch out for the note value. Again, playing examples for them can be very helpful here. I usually play the passage the way they played it and then the correct way. Together we figure out why they sounded different and which way is correct (holding the note out for the proper length of time). I instruct them to focus on holding out the note until the very last second before they need to play again. This usually fixes the problem.

### **Other Tonguing Problems**

In the beginning, some students play each pitch as if it is a totally separate note and end up taking all their fingers off between each note. Explain that this causes them to move their fingers more than necessary. If students do this while testing for belts, I usually tell them (depending on the student and if they played the song with very few mistakes) that this

time the wrong fingering has lowered their grade, but I go ahead and give them the belt. However, I tell them that the next time I will not let them pass the belt if they are still fingering like this.

Students have “unclean” playing because their fingers and tongues are not moving at the same time. Much practice must be done to do this precisely.

### **Extra Tips**

Breathe from the diaphragm (near the stomach) for better tone quality.

Most children have not ever seen or used a fingering diagram before but, with a little explanation, they will have no problem with it. I make charts to hang up for each new note.

For students who put too much of the recorder in their mouths, have them practice with a mirror and notice that they are doing this. Remind them to keep their lips sealed firm around the mouthpiece of the recorder to avoid air leaks.

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## **Recorder Karate And The National Standards For Music Education**

A *Recorder Karate* unit can help you meet many of the National Standards For Music Education, including the following:

*Content Standard 2 - Performing on instruments, alone and with others, a varied repertoire of music*

2a - Students perform on at least one instrument accurately and independently, alone and in small and large ensembles, with good posture, good playing position, and good breath, bow, or stick control.

2b - Students perform with expression and technical accuracy on at least one string, wind, percussion, or classroom instrument a repertoire of instrumental literature with a level of difficulty of 2, on a scale of 1 to 6.

2c - Students perform music representing diverse genres and cultures, with expression appropriate for the work being performed.

2d - Students play by ear simple melodies on a melodic instrument and simple accompaniments on a harmonic instrument.

2e - Students who participate in an instrumental ensemble or class perform with expression and technical accuracy a varied repertoire of instrumental literature with a level of difficulty of 3, on a scale of 1 to 6, including some solos performed with memory.

*Content Standard 5 - Reading and notating music*

5a - Students read whole, half, quarter, eighth, sixteenth, and dotted notes and rests in 2/4, 3/4, 4/4, 6/8 signatures.

5b - Students read at sight simple melodies in the treble clefs.

5c - Students identify and define standard notation symbols for pitch, rhythm, dynamics, tempo, articulation, and expression.

5d - Students use standard notation to record their musical ideas and the musical ideas of others.

5e - Students who participate in a choral or instrumental ensemble or class sightread, accurately and expressively, music with a level of difficulty of 2, on a scale of 1 to 6.

*Content Standard 7 - Evaluating music and music performances*

7a - Students develop criteria for evaluating the quality and effectiveness of music performances and compositions and apply the criteria in their personal listening and performing.

7b - Students evaluate the quality and effectiveness of their own and others' performances, compositions, arrangements, and improvisations by applying specific criteria appropriate for the style of the music and offer constructive suggestions for improvement.