



Tuning & Long Tones

Tuning is the next step of developing your instrumental sound after you have achieved a good tone quality on your instrument. If you have not yet developed a nice tone quality on your instrument, you will never sound in tune.

Before you begin, make sure that you have a tuner. Your tuner should be set to **A=440**. This is a number related to music physics that we do not need to go over at this point in time. If you see "440" notated somewhere on your tuner, you are good to go! If not, find the buttons that will adjust that number.

Each instrument has certain notes that play generally in tune more than others. When playing your note, make sure that your embouchure is firm and your air is focused and fast, creating a solid **mf** dynamic level for a sufficient amount of time for you to observe the tuner steadily gauge your sound. If the needle ends up leaning to the right, your tuning note is sharp (too high). If it leans to the left, your tuning note is flat (too low).

If your tuning note is sharp, you need to make your instrument longer, and therefore flatter.
If your tuning note is flat, you need to make your instrument shorter, and therefore sharper.

Tuning Notes (not concert key) – These notes are generally the best ones to tune to on your instrument. Tune them by adjusting the listed parts of your instrument by either pushing in or pulling out on these parts.

Flute - A (above staff); adjust the head joint to tune

Oboe - A; adjust reed for major tuning (otherwise use embouchure)

Bassoon – B-flat; adjust reed for major tuning (otherwise use embouchure)

Clarinet - G (open; adjust barrel to tune); G (above open G; adjust middle joint to tune)

Bass Clarinet – G (open); adjust the neck to tune

Saxophone – F-sharp (5th line); adjust the mouthpiece to tune

Trumpet – C (3rd space), G (2nd line); adjust tuning slide(s) to tune

French horn – C (3rd space); adjust tuning slide(s) to tune

Trombone/Baritone/Tuba – B-flat and F; adjust tuning slide(s) to tune

Even though you will learn how to tune these notes, this does not mean that you are “perfect!” Tuning is an everlasting challenging, and one that you should always listen for, whether you are just beginning to play or have been playing for 30 minutes or more. Just like how some notes on your instrument are naturally more in tune, other notes will be **less** in tune simply based on the construction of your instrument. For notes other than your tuning notes, practice long tones, adjusting just your embouchure instead of your air and your instrument, to train yourself to play these more in tune without having to use your tuning points. See the “Practice Tips” handout for more information on practicing long tones correctly. Eventually, your body and embouchure will adjust intonation for each note automatically while you are playing.