

Bocal Majority

WOODWINDS

Oboe Reed Care

How to make the most out of your reed:

Do not handle the reed at the tip or on the string – only handle it from the cork (the staple). The tip is thin and touching it there can cause it to break. Putting the reed in or taking it out of the oboe while touching the string may cause the reed to come apart over time.

Always soak your oboe reed for about a minute in a cup of room-temperature water before you start to play (the cane part / the tip of the reed). We recommend avoiding soaking the string or the cork. It is ok if the string or cork get wet, but those parts do not need to soak in water like the cane part does.

Do not over soak the reed. Soaking for a longer time could make the reed feel harder to play.

After you're done playing, you must let the reed dry out, otherwise it could mold. Do not put the wet or damp reed back in the coffin we sent it in! That will likely cause it to mold.

Tips for protecting the reed:

It's a good idea to keep your eyes on the reed as much as possible when in use. When the reed is not in your mouth, make sure that you are aware of where it is so that the tip does not get chipped or otherwise damaged. This will help it last longer.

A good reed case is a must. The plastic coffins that the reeds come in are not suitable for storing reeds and can result in the reed growing mold or getting chipped.

Make sure reeds are flat and not angled in the reed case (the sides could get damaged). Wipe off the excess water at the end of your practice/lesson/class and blow the extra water out of the reed before storage to help avoid mold.

Never store your reeds in the water soaker cup overnight.

When it's time to put away your instrument, remove the reed first.

Frequently Asked Questions:

Q: How long does each reed last?

A: Every reed is different. Reeds are made of an organic substance and they will eventually wear out naturally. A realistic expectation of the optimal life span of a reed is about 4 weeks (depending on amount of time spent playing it). Damage to the reed also contributes to reeds wearing out or otherwise breaking. If the reed is physically damaged it will not last as long. A reed is considered worn out or broken if it is cracked, chipped or molded. Sometimes reeds last longer and sometimes reeds don't last as long. That is to be expected since they're made from an organic substance.

Q: What if I don't like the reed I got?

A: You might get a reed and you might love it! Or you might not love it. Why? All reeds from Bocal Majority are handmade by professional musicians. Each of our reeds is made in a slightly different style. Each player may develop preferences or specific needs over time. If you get a reed that you don't prefer, consider a different style or ask us for advice on what you might like instead. We have a quiz you can take to help you get the best fit reed for you!

Take the oboe reed quiz to find your ideal match!



Oboe Reed Quiz

Q: What do I do if, when the reed arrives, it is chipped or broken?

Damaged Reed Form

A: Fill out this form within 24 hours of receiving the damaged reed.



Q: I got a reed and it's "bad," or "it doesn't work," or the teacher said there is something wrong with the reed and told me to contact you.

A: We're here to help you! We understand reed use can be confusing. While from time to time a reed that does not meet our standards may slip through our quality control, most commonly when you have a reed that is somehow not working for you, there is an adjustment that can turn a reed *zero* into a reed *hero*! Give us a chance to help you by filling out this form and explaining the problem as best you can. We're teachers, too and our goal is to help you have the best experience possible with your reeds.

Reed Problem Form



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Oboe Reed Common Problems and Solutions

PROBLEM	CAUSE	SOLUTIONS
The reed is too hard to blow	There is too much cane still on the reed.	The reed has to vibrate in order to produce sound. Positive scraping ADDS vibration to a reed. Take a small layer of cane off all areas of the reed to get it to vibrate. Check the pitch of the reed. Lightly thin the rails of the heart to relax the tip opening. If the reed sounds too muffled or fuzzy, lightly blend the upper heart into the tip and out to the corners. To help the upper register, lightly thin the upper back (windows) just under the heart. Always scrape away from the spine.
The reed is too hard to tongue	Either the tip is too heavy or the division between the tip and the heart is not blended enough or both issues.	The very tip of the reed needs to be the thinnest part of the reed. Make sure the tip does not flair out. Check the reed from the profile view. The tip should come down to a point. It should not flair out. If looking at the flat of the reed in the light, there should not be a shadow at the tip. If the blend of the tip to the heart is too steep, it is as if the air hits a brick wall. Therefore, the response stops. Lightly blend the upper heart into the tip and out to the corners. Always check the pitch of the reed while doing adjustments.
The reed is hard to control.	Basically, a reed that is hard to control is too free or over vibrating.	This means we need to add resistance. Resistance is controlled vibration. Negative scraping CONTROLS how the reed vibrates. Thinning the rails of the tip pushes strength to the center of the reed. Thus, forming a spine in the tip. The spine adds focus and control to a reed. Check the pitch of the reed. If the pitch of the reed is flat, clip the tip of the reed a very tiny amount. Making the reed shorter will raise the pitch of the reed as well as add resistance. Always scrape away from the spine. Check the pitch of the reed often.

Would you like to learn more about how to do common reed adjustments to get the most out of your reed? This is a link to a video by Sally Bohls and Jennifer Auerbach on basic oboe and bassoon reed adjusting:



OLD NAME TO NEW NAME OBOE REED COMPARISON CHART

OLD NAME	NEW NAME	PERCENTAGE
Basic Oboe Reed	Oboe Reed #1	50%/50%
Intermediate S Oboe Reed	Oboe Reed #2	55%/45%
Intermediate S+ Oboe Reed	Oboe Reed #3	56%/44%
Intermediate A Oboe Reed	Oboe Reed #4	58%/42%
Intermediate O Oboe Reed	Oboe Reed #5	59%/41%
Intermediate D Oboe Reed	Oboe Reed #6	60%/40%
Intermediate D+ Oboe Reed	Oboe Reed #7	61%/39%
Intermediate Z Oboe Reed	Oboe Reed #8	62%/38%
Intermediate G Oboe Reed	Oboe Reed #9	63%/37%
Intermediate H Oboe Reed	Oboe Reed #10	64%/36%
Pro I Oboe Reed	Oboe Reed #11	65%/35%
Pro T Oboe Reed	Oboe Reed #12	68%/32%
Intermediate F Oboe Reed	Oboe Reed #13	70%/30%
Intermediate B Oboe Reed	Oboe Reed #14	72%/28%
Pro NTX Oboe Reed	Oboe Reed #15	80%/20%

We changed what we're calling our reeds. Learn what changed and why:

Previously our reeds were classified as basic, intermediate, and pro. Those classifications do not give us the all of the information we need when choosing which reed we need and are a bit misleading. We are shifting your thought process, when picking a reed, over to how a reed vibrates. Reeds will now be classified by how much resistance vs freedom is scraped into them by the reed maker. Resistance is controlled vibration. Freedom is flexibility. The amount of resistance vs freedom varies depending on the reed. We describe this process in percentages. The amount of resistance in a reed will always be listed first. The amount of freedom will be listed second. The percentages will always equal 100%. For example, a young player will need a freer blowing reed. This reed needs enough resistance to hold steady but enough freedom to easily vibrate. Those percentages will be 50/50 or 55/45. As the player grows and their playing matures, the amount of resistance will increase and the amount of freedom will decrease. This change allows the reed to have more finesse/ nuance and control as well as a more mature tone quality. Those percentages might be 56/44-65/35. From here, the amount of resistance vs freedom can vary from 66/34-80/20. A player needs the kind of reed that makes them sound good and able to play successfully throughout the range of the instrument. We never want to play on a reed that feels hard to control whether that is too much resistance or too much freedom in the reed. A player needs exactly what they need. Nothing more. Nothing less.

Oboe reeds will be classified as Reed #1 (50/50) - Reed #15 (80/20).