

Clarinet Fingering

Luck or Logic?

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I. Hand and finger position

- A. Basic hand position is derived from the hands hanging at the sides of the body in a relaxed position; notice the curve of the fingers caused by muscle tone.
- B. Maintain this basic hand position when holding the clarinet – elbows bent; note the angle of the hands.
- C. Specifics of hand and finger position
 1. Right hand thumb: bottom half of the nail should be under the standard thumb rest; this varies slightly with individual hand sizes; the right thumb should be perpendicular to the clarinet
 2. Right hand index finger: should remain curved and arching over the edge of the lowest side key
 3. Left hand: should be curved and arching over both the A and A-flat keys
 4. Left hand thumb: should point slightly toward the top of the clarinet at about 35 degrees

II. Basic fingerings for scales and arpeggios

- A. Primary considerations:
 1. Whenever possible, continue finger motion in the *same hand*
 2. Without sacrificing good intonation, try to move as few fingers as possible in connecting intervals
 3. Whenever possible, incorporate the “right hand down” technique into all scales and arpeggios
 4. Remember that the right hand cannot be left down below open g without resulting in poor intonation

2. Without sacrificing good intonation, try to move as few fingers as possible in connecting intervals.
3. Whenever possible, incorporate the “right hand down” technique into all scales and arpeggios.
4. Remember that the right hand cannot be left down below open g without resulting in poor intonation.

B. Specific scale patterns:

Ex. 1 F Major



Ex. 2 B-flat Major



Ex. 3 E-flat Major



Ex. 4 D Major & A Major



Ex. 5 E Major



Ex. 6 F-sharp Major



Ex. 7 Chromatic Scale

Note Below: The proper use of little sequences is critical in the development of smooth and reliable finger technique.

C. Specific arpeggio patterns:

Ex. 8 G Major

Ex. 9 A Major

Ex. 10 E Major

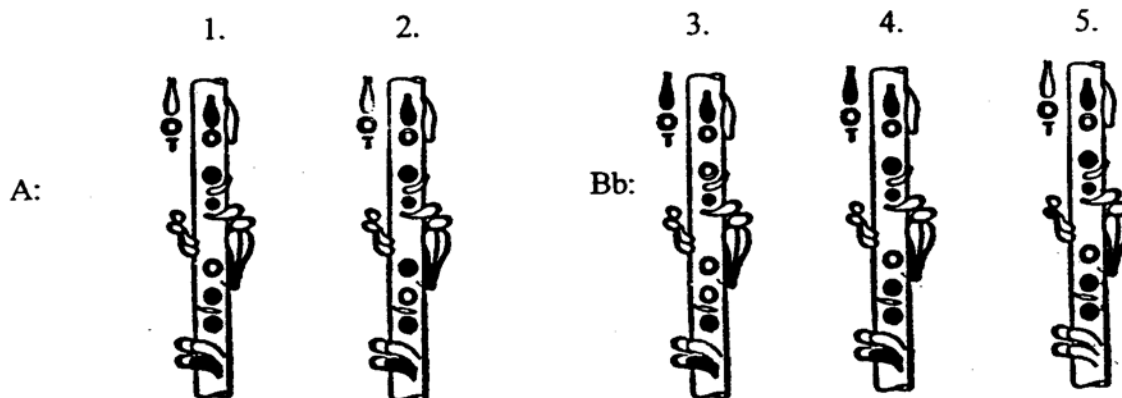
Ex. 11 B-flat Major

Ex. 12 F-sharp Major

III. Throat tone resonance fingerings

A. These fingerings can aid in:

1. improving tone quality
2. stabilizing pitch
3. improving uniformity of resistance in blowing between throat tones and lower clarion register in scales and arpeggios
4. connection of registers



Ex. 13 Jacob, William Byrd Suite, Mvt. IV



Ex. 14 Swearingen, Novena



IV. Trill fingerings in rapid passages

Note Below: While trill fingerings usually do not possess the fullness of tone of standard fingerings, in rapid passages the player's concern is with ease of fingering and

smoothness. As long as acceptable intonation is maintained, extended register fingerings (i.e. trill fingerings) can often improve the connection of slurred passages involving register changes. Stated simply, don't change registers unless the situation requires it.

A. The extended chalumeau register:

Ex. 15 a/b



Two staves of musical notation. The top staff is in treble clef with a key signature of one flat (B-flat). It contains a slurred eighth-note passage: B-flat, C, D, E, F, G, A, B-flat. The bottom staff is in treble clef with a key signature of two flats (B-flat, E-flat). It contains a slurred eighth-note passage: B-flat, C, D, E-flat, F, G, A, B-flat. Both passages are marked with a box underneath and the label 'RSK4' for the top staff and 'RSK3,4' for the bottom staff.

Ex. 16 b-flat/c

B. The extended clarion register:

Ex. 17 Kalinnikov/Bainum, Symphony No. 1, Q + 1m.
c/d



A single staff of musical notation in treble clef with a key signature of one sharp (F-sharp). It contains a slurred eighth-note passage: F-sharp, G, A, B, C, D, E, F-sharp. The passage is marked with a box underneath and the label 'RSK3'.

Ex. 18 Shostakovich/Hunsberger, Festive Overture, 18 + 6m.
c/d-flat



A single staff of musical notation in treble clef with a key signature of two flats (B-flat, E-flat). It contains a slurred eighth-note passage: B-flat, C, D, E-flat, F, G, A, B-flat. The passage is marked with a box underneath and the label 'RSK1,2'.

Ex. 19 b/c-sharp



A single staff of musical notation in treble clef with a key signature of one flat (B-flat). It contains a slurred eighth-note passage: B-flat, C, D, E, F, G, A, B-flat. The passage is marked with a box underneath and the label 'RSK3'.

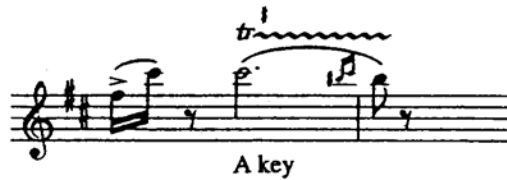
C. Clarion trills:

Ex. 20 a-flat/b-flat



D. Altissimo trills:

Ex. 21 Arnold, Four Scottish Dances, C + 6m.
c-sharp/d-sharp



Ex. 22 e-flat/f



Ex. 23 f-sharp/g



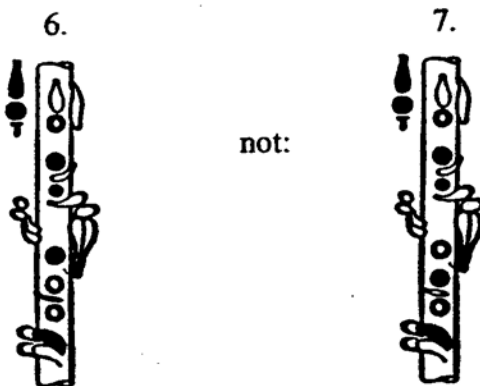
Ex. 24 f/g



V. Altissimo register fingerings







A. General suggestions:

1. The RH Ab/Eb key should almost always be used on D and all notes above. Exceptions: fast technical passages may be more manageable without it, and very soft sustained Ds may tune better without it; usually not needed on the A clarinet.
2. In fast technical passages, choose fingerings that use the fewest fingers (often trill fingerings). In slower, sustained passages, use fingerings that are more tonally stable and secure (often "long" fingerings).
3. High Eb is often misfingered. The correct fingering is:



B. "Long" fingerings (also called "front" or "covered")

1. This category of fingerings is especially useful when slurring into the altissimo register in slow moving, wide intervals. They are equally secure for articulated passages as well.
2. They are stable in pitch and tone, possess a wider dynamic range and have a fuller tone than most "regular" fingerings. Caution: some may tune sharp below a "mf" level.
3. Because more fingers are used in these fingerings, they are not recommended for fast, technical passages.


	8.	9.	10.	11.	
E:		F:		F#:	
					(flatter than 10; best for "pp")
	12.	13.		14.	
G:		G:		Ab:	

C. Other altissimo register fingerings:

Ex. 25



15.

Eb: 

-optional

Excellent for fast slurs c-eb-c. See also cadenza in Makris' Aegean Festival Overture

Here is a versatile fingering for high F# which has fine response and stability - unlike the "regular" F# fingering:

Ex. 26

Ex. 27

Ex. 28



Copland,
Concerto

16.

F#:



-optional