



Unit 7

Recorder Basics

Now it's time for the soprano recorder! Learn how to breathe, hold the recorder, and play notes between low C and high D for simple melodies, such as "Hot Cross Buns" and "Au Claire de la Lune."

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"A Simple Melody," music and lyrics by Nick Scarim, © 2000 Nick Scarim, © 2008 Carnegie Hall. Performed by Sue Landis and Michael Mizrahi.

"Tideo," traditional American song. Performed by Sue Landis and Shane Schag.

"De Colores," traditional Mexican song. Performed by Sue Landis and Shane Schag.

"Ode to Joy" by Ludwig van Beethoven. Adapted by John Whitney. Performed by Sue Landis and Shane Schag.

"Au Claire de la lune" by Claude Debussy. Arranged by Richard Mannoia. Performed by Sue Landis.

"Hot Cross Buns," traditional American song. Performed by Sue Landis.

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Unit 7: Recorder Basics

Elvis: I don't know about you, Violet, but I am ready to play the recorder.

Violet: Hey, did you know that there are many different types of recorders? There's a whole family of them!

Composer: Recorders are in the woodwind family, but because there are so many sizes of recorders, each one with its own range of notes and its own name, we can group them in a family of their own, the recorder family.



Violet: We are learning how to play one instrument from this family—the soprano recorder.

Elvis: Soprano recorder? Does that mean that it can play high pitches, just like the soprano voice can sing high pitches?

Composer: That's right, Elvis. A family, or consort, of recorders is like a chorus of instruments. Each type of recorder in the family plays notes within a certain range, and when you put them together like a chorus, they can cover a huge span of notes, from the highest to the lowest.



soprano
high voice

alto
middle-high voice

tenor
middle-low voice

bass
low voice

Elvis: Very cool! What kind of music can be played on recorders?

Composer: Lots of composers including J. S. Bach wrote pieces for recorder during the Baroque music period, which began over 300 years ago. Let's listen to an example of Baroque music.



listen to Brandenburg Concerto No. 4 by Bach
(Examples of this recommended work are available for download from your favorite online music retailer.)

Elvis: That's a neat sound. Have recorders been used in any other kind of music?

- Play a quick Simon Says–style game to reinforce direction following and the three positions.
- When your students are separating notes, or **tonguing**, you might also experiment with having them touch the tip of the recorder with their tongues, which makes the separation more distinct.

teacher tips
for the following pages



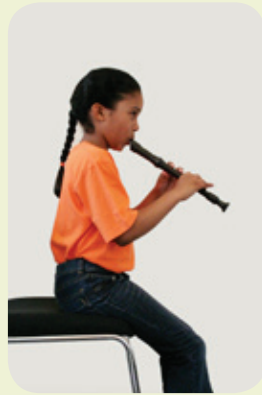
Composer: Sure, they've been used in popular, folk, new age, and world music, just to name a few. Jazz artist Keith Jarrett, singers Billy Joel and Bruce Springsteen, and the band The Beatles, have all used the recorder in their music.

Violet: Cool, I love Billy Joel. And now we get to play the recorder, too! How do we start?

Composer: First, good musicians need to be experts at following directions. Let me show you two positions:



rest position



playing position

Composer: Next, it's important to sit up tall and toward the edge of your seat when you're playing the recorder so you can take good, full breaths.

Violet: Like when we sing!

Composer: Right! Now that you're sitting up tall, pretend you're blowing out some birthday candles on a cake. Would you blow a lot of fast air out of your mouth?



Preparing to **Play the Recorder**

Before learning how to play notes on the recorder, prepare your students with some tips on how to play the recorder.

First teach them two positions: **rest position** and **playing position**.

Rest Position

Students place their recorder in their laps or let them hang from their lanyards.

Violet: Of course! I want all those candles to go out.

Composer: Right. But when you play the recorder, you're not blowing out birthday candles. If you use that much air when you play your recorder, it will squeak! Instead, pretend that you are blowing gently on a single candle flame so that it flickers back and forth, but doesn't go out. Try it! Another way to check your air is to put your hand a few inches in front of your lips as you blow—for the recorder, you want to feel **slow, gentle** air, **not** a ton of **fast** air like that birthday breath.

Elvis: Now my breath comes out slowly and steadily.

Composer: Great! Now let's see how our breathing works on the recorder. We'll start by playing the note B. But first, **make sure your left hand is on top** each time you play. Your fingers should be curved and relaxed.



Are you using the right **speed** of air to play the recorder? To check, blow very gently on your palm, like you're trying to melt a snowflake. Then pucker your lips to feel the air come out in a steady stream.



When you need to separate notes, you can pretend you're whispering the sound "doo." Your tongue will gently touch the roof of your mouth. Now, try playing B a few times. Good! Now listen to what I play and repeat.



listen to **Track 35**



Playing Position

Students hold their recorder up and are ready to play. Left hand is on the top; right hand is on the bottom.

Practice rest position and playing position. When playing the recorder, call out which position you would like your students to go to next. This will help make a smoother transition from playing to listening.

Ciino's checklist

For Easy Recorder Playing



1. Is your left hand on top?



2. Which finger holes need to be covered for the note you want to play?

**3. Are those finger holes completely sealed?
Remember to press firmly!**



4. Are your teeth covered lightly with your lips?

5. Is your air stream cool, gentle, and steady?



6. Are you separating notes by having your tongue gently touch the roof of your mouth or the tip of the recorder?

Please note that the photos above show the fingering for low D.



lesson **extension**

Recorder Practice

Once your students are in playing position and are ready to play B, lead them in a call-and-response exercise. You can use this every time you learn a new note or at the beginning of music class to get everyone focused.

1. Play a rhythm (preferably four beats to start) and have students copy you. To make separations between notes, gently touch your tongue to the roof of your mouth—to do this, you can think of whispering “doo.”











listen to **Track 37**











listen to **Track 38**



Are you remembering to sit up tall when you play the recorder? It makes a big difference!

Composer: Great job! Let's learn another note. This one is A.



Remember to use my **Checklist for Easy Recorder Playing**. You can use it every time you learn a new note!

It's lower than B on the staff, so it has a lower pitch.



Now repeat what I play on the pitch A.



listen to **Track 39**

Composer: Great! You're ready to play the pieces on the next two pages. Don't forget the ...

Elvis: I know—the Four-Step Process!







listen to **Track 40**





listen to **Track 41**







listen to **Track 42**

Composer: Now, let's play some rhythms using both A and B.




 listen to **Track 43**



 listen to **Track 44**



 listen to **Track 45**

listening challenge

Now that you can play pitches A and B on your recorder, let's see how well you can hear the difference between them.



1. Pick a partner.
2. Have your partner close his or her eyes.
3. Play a four-beat pattern on your recorder using notes A and B.
4. See if your partner can repeat the pattern you played.
5. If your partner gets it right, switch and see if you can do it!

Try practicing first as a class with your teacher.

Composer: Are you ready for a new pitch?

Violet: Yes! What's next?

Composer: The next one is G.



lesson extension

Make up a four-beat ostinato rhythm (a short melody or pattern that is repeated). Practice this rhythm a few times as a class so everyone has it; then, go around the room, alternating every four beats between student-improvised solos and the ostinato rhythm. [US 2, 3; NYC 1]

The form should sound like the following: ostinato, student improvisation, ostinato, student improvisation, and so on. This helps students practice playing and develop their listening skills while also incorporating some creative music making. You can use this exercise with any rhythm drill or pitch drill throughout the year.

Let's do some call and response using G to practice.



listen to **Track 46**

You've got it! Now we can play these pieces:











listen to **Track 47**











listen to **Track 48**



listen to **Track 49**

recorder reference



B



A



G

Composer: Great job! Let's try one more challenge. Remember learning about eighth notes?

Elvis: Sure, an eighth note gets half a beat. So two eighth notes equal a quarter note.

Composer: That's right! Let's play some eighth notes. But before that, let's write in the counts and then clap the rhythms.





1 and 2 and 1 and 2 and 1 and 2 and 1 and 2



listen to **Track 50**





1 2 and 3 and 1 2 and 3 and 1 2 and 3 and 1 2 3



listen to **Track 51**

Composer: Now you're ready to play your first real songs. The first is called "Hot Cross Buns" and we'll be using the song to practice the three notes we know so far on the recorder.









Hot cross buns Hot cross buns one a pen-ny two a pen-ny Hot cross buns

Hot cross buns Hot cross buns one a pen - two a pen-ny Hot cross buns



listen to **Track 52**

Violet: It's fun to play a real song! Is there another song you can teach us?

Composer: Sure! Let's learn a French song called "Au Claire de la lune," or what I call "Moonlight," for short.









Au Claire de la lune, Au Claire de la lune, Au Claire de la lune, Au Claire de la lune

Au Claire de la lune, Au Claire de la lune, Au Claire de la lune, Au Claire de la lune



listen to **Track 53**

teacher **tip**

Use **Gino's Checklist for Easy Recorder Playing** if your students are having a hard time remembering all the things they must do and think about in order to play the recorder.

reflective writing

Playing an instrument takes concentration because you need to think about so many things at once! Write down three things that you must think about when you play the recorder.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Composer: You guys are getting really good at playing the recorder. How about trying this?



The musical notation consists of two staves in 4/4 time. The first staff begins with a treble clef and a 4/4 time signature. The melody is: C4 (quarter), D4 (quarter), E4 (quarter), F4 (quarter), G4 (quarter), A4 (quarter), B4 (quarter), C5 (quarter), B4 (quarter), A4 (quarter), G4 (quarter), F4 (quarter), E4 (quarter), D4 (quarter), C4 (quarter). The second staff begins with a treble clef and contains the following notes: C4 (quarter), D4 (quarter), E4 (quarter), F4 (quarter), G4 (quarter), A4 (quarter), B4 (quarter), C5 (quarter), B4 (quarter), A4 (quarter), G4 (quarter), F4 (quarter), E4 (quarter), D4 (quarter), C4 (quarter).



listen to **Track 54**

Elvis: Hey, I've heard this before! It's the recorder part for "A Simple Melody" by Nick Scarim.

Composer: You're right! And now you've learned how to play the first part of it on your recorder. Now, let's learn the next part and use the Four-Step Process to play it.



listen to **Track 55**

You've got it! Now, let's put all four phrases together to form the entire piece. A **phrase** is a musical idea with a specific contour, or shape, and duration.



Phrases are like musical sentences. When you want to look at how the phrases come together to form a piece, or a musical paragraph, you are looking at the **musical form** of the piece.

A Simple Melody

The musical score is written in 4/4 time and consists of three systems, each with two staves. The first system is labeled 'A' and contains two staves of music. The second system is labeled 'B' and also contains two staves. The third system is labeled 'A' and contains two staves. The melody is simple, using quarter and eighth notes. The first system (A) starts with a quarter rest, followed by a quarter note G4, a quarter note A4, a quarter note B4, a quarter note C5, a quarter note B4, a quarter note A4, a quarter note G4, and a quarter rest. The second system (B) starts with a quarter note G4, a quarter note A4, a quarter note B4, a quarter note C5, a quarter note B4, a quarter note A4, a quarter note G4, and a quarter rest. The third system (A) starts with a quarter rest, followed by a quarter note G4, a quarter note A4, a quarter note B4, a quarter note C5, a quarter note B4, a quarter note A4, a quarter note G4, and a quarter rest. The final staff of the third system ends with a double bar line.



listen to **Track 56**

Composer: Great job! You're on your way to being important players in the LinkUP! orchestra.



How do we know we're ready for new notes?

Good musicians always check their work and try to do their very best. After the class plays a song, fill out this chart:

How did I do?	How did we do?
What can I do better?	What can we do better?

Some things you can think about:

OK Needs Work

- | | | |
|--------------------------|--------------------------|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Did I get the rhythms right? |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Are my fingers moving to the correct notes? |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | How is my air flow? Am I squeaking? |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | How is my posture? |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Is my left hand on top? |

lesson extension

(fifth grade)

In music, we label phrases with letters to show how the phrases come together to form the piece. Similar phrases will share the same letter and contrasting phrases will have different letters (ABAB or AAAA, for example). The song "A Simple Melody" has four sections, or phrases. Each phrase is about eight measures long. The phrases are marked above. [US 6, NYC 2]

1. Have your students look at the music, identify the four phrases, identify which of the phrases are similar or different, and label each phrase with a letter. This piece's form is AABA.

When the whole class is playing

OK Needs Work

Are we all following directions when the teacher says “rest,” “ready,” and “playing position”?

Do we all start and stop together?

Are we playing with a soft and smooth sound?

Elvis: Can you teach us some more notes?

Composer: Sure! Our next two notes are high C and D. Take a look at these pictures. Can you see the difference between the two?



high C



high D

Violet: Oh yeah ... the C and D look almost the same, but for D, you take your thumb taken off. But wait! Won't my recorder fall if I'm not using my left thumb?

Composer: Good question. The recorder will be balanced in your mouth, and, don't forget, with your right thumb.

2. If you or your students haven't worked with musical form before and you want to begin with a visual tool, try labeling the phrases with names of fruit, animals, or insects (for example, AABA: Apple, Apple, Banana, Apple; or Ant, Ant, Bear, Ant).

3. Have your students draw pictures of the fruit, animal, or insect by the beginning of each phrase.

4. It may take your students a few class sessions before they can play phrases A and B of "A Simple Melody." Break it into even smaller sections for them, and work on a couple of measures at a time.

Elvis: But where does the right thumb go?

Composer: Another good question! Count each hole on the front of your recorder, starting at the top. Between the fourth and fifth holes down, there is a space. Place your right thumb on the back of the recorder, behind that space. You'll be all set to learn some low notes!

Now try these new versions of "Hot Cross Buns" and "Moonlight." The rhythms and patterns are the same, but the notes sound much different. They sound like another mood altogether.



Hot cross buns Hot cross buns one a pen-ny two a pen-ny Hot cross buns

5
Hot cross buns Hot cross buns one a pen-ny two a pen-ny Hot cross buns



listen to **Track 57**

Elvis: Can we try an experiment and play the two "Hot Cross Buns" versions at the same time?

Composer: Wow, Elvis, you're thinking like a composer! Yes, we can! When we put those two parts together, we will create harmony, the beautiful blending of two notes at the same time.

teacher tip

To help your students find where to place their right thumbs, place a sticker or piece of masking tape (or make a mark with a permanent marker) on the appropriate spot on the back of the recorder. The spot is opposite the space between the fourth and fifth holes down from the top.







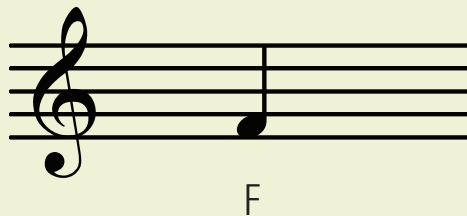




listen to **Track 58**

Violet: Okay, can we learn a note lower than G now?

Composer: Sure. One note lower than G is F, which looks like this:



Elvis: So can you make us versions of "Hot Cross Buns" and "Moonlight" using F?

Composer: My pleasure! Remember—same rhythms and patterns, just starting on different notes.











Hot cross buns Hot cross buns one a pen-ny two a pen-ny Hot cross buns



Hot cross buns Hot cross buns one a pen-ny two a pen-ny Hot cross buns



listen to **Track 59**







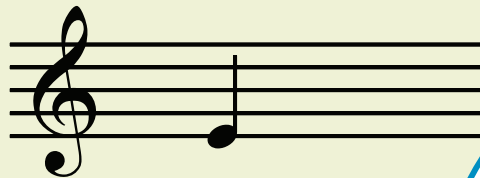




listen to **Track 60**

Violet: I love these lower notes! They're so smooth and soft. How low can I play on the recorder?

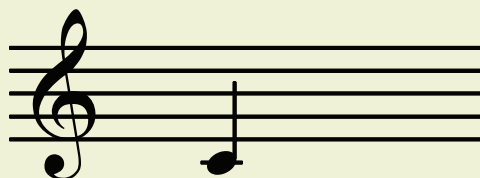
Composer: Here are the final and lowest notes of the recorder: low E, low D, and low C. These will take some extra practice to get your fingers covering all the holes completely and barely blowing any air at all.



low E



low D



low C

Remember, your right thumb should be behind the space between the fourth and fifth holes down from the top. Ask your teacher to put a sticker there to help you find this spot!



And here the lowest versions of "Hot Cross Buns" and "Moonlight," using E, low D, and low C.











listen to **Track 61**









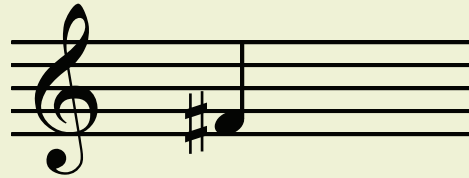


listen to **Track 62**

Composer: Our very final note on the recorder is F#. When we see the symbol # after a note, it means “sharp,” so we call the note “F sharp.” Look at the example below:



Here's how it looks on the staff.



F sharp

Notice how the # symbol comes before the note when it's on the staff.



Try these versions of “Hot Cross Buns” and “Au Claire de la Lune” that use F#.









Hot cross buns Hot cross buns one a pen-ny two a pen-ny Hot cross buns

Hot cross buns Hot cross buns one a pen-ny two a pen-ny Hot cross buns



listen to **Track 63**




listen to **Track 64**

Composer: If you've really mastered these low notes, you can play part two of "A Simple Melody." Here's the first section:



listen to **Track 65**

Here's how it looks all together:  [listen to Track 67](#)



The image displays eight staves of musical notation for the piece "A Simple Melody". Each staff begins with a treble clef, a key signature of one sharp (F#), and a 4/4 time signature. The notation consists of two distinct melodic lines: one starting on G4 and another starting on A4. The notes are primarily quarter and eighth notes, with some rests. The piece concludes with a double bar line on the eighth staff.

Elvis: And parts one and two of "A Simple Melody" can be played together to make ... **harmony!** Good job and keep practicing!