

# Daily Breathing Routine

The following exercises were developed by the great tubists Sam Pilafian and Patrick Sheridan, and are among those featured in their book/DVD set *The Breathing Gym*. The goal here is primarily to "stretch" the breathing apparatus in order to prepare it for the day's playing.

1. While raising or arms over your head, slowly breathe in for 6 counts. Lower your arms as you exhale for 6 counts. Then go to 8, 10 (Your arms should go out to your sides and come up and down.)

2.  
4 counts in—4 counts out (2 times)  
3 counts in—4 counts out (2 times)  
2 counts in—4 counts out (2 times)  
1 count in—4 counts out (repeat as many times as possible)

3.  
4 counts in—4 counts out (2 times)  
4 counts in—3 counts out (2 times)  
4 counts in—2 counts out (2 times)  
4 counts in—1 count out (repeat as many times as possible)

4.  
4 counts in—4 counts out (2 times)  
3 counts in—3 counts out (2 times)  
2 counts in—2 counts out (2 times)  
1 count in—1 count out (repeat as many times as possible)

5. **"Bow and Arrow"** (To work on forte breathing.) Breathe in as you pull an imaginary bow back, take two more quick breaths, and then let go of the bow's string and breathe out.

7. **"Blowing a Paper Airplane"** (To work on piano playing.) Toss the airplane slowly as you blow gently. Follow completely through with the hand as you envision the paper airplane flying with your breath.

8. **"Throwing Darts"** (To work on mezzo forte / mezzo piano playing.) Blow out long, fast streams of air as you throw an imaginary dart.

9. Breathe in for 8 counts, hold it for 8 counts (as you do this, keep the chest and mouth open), and then blow out for 8 counts.

10. **Paper on the Wall** – Cut out a small square of paper about the size of a post-it note. Place it on the wall at the level of your mouth and stand with you face 2–3 inches away from the paper. Take a breath in and then blow with a small, fast air stream. The goal is to hold the paper in place without it moving down the wall slowly or falling. This exercise make sure you have the fast airstream needed to play your instrument. Start by trying to hold the paper on the wall for 4 counts and then work your way up. Your next goal should be to reach 8 counts and then 12 counts. The longer you hold the paper on the wall, you will need to adjust the amount of air coming out (Bow and Arrow – Paper Airplane).

# Mouthpiece Exercises & Information

What can you actually do with just one note? Here are some mouthpiece exercises you can do!

- Long tones (8, 12, 16 counts)
- Piano Long Tones, Forte Long Tones, Mezzo Piano Long Tones, Mezzo Forte Long Tones
- Crescendos and Decrescendos
- Play repeated tongued notes (staccato, accent, etc.)
- Play rhythms from your Music Theory Workbook or the rhythms to songs you know or have.
- Brass Only – siren buzz, play your songs on your mouthpiece and match the correct pitches

This information is for flute, clarinet, bass clarinet, and saxophone players.

You should be able to produce the following concert pitches with your mouthpiece/reed/headjoint only, as a way to double check that you're using the correct embouchure. Use a tuner to check your embouchure pitches. These pitches are for standard mouthpieces and reeds.

Flute – A on open headjoint only

Bb Clarinet – F# on mouthpiece and barrel

Bass Clarinet – F# on mouthpiece and reed only

Alto Sax – G# on mouthpiece and neck

Tenor Sax – E on mouthpiece and neck

Baritone Sax – D or D# on mouthpiece and reed only

**If you are not getting the correct pitch, check the following:**

**Air Speed** – Always use fast air

**Flute Lip Aperture** (hole between your lips through which you blow air) – Should be very small

Flute Headjoint Placement against chin, up to lower lip. (Refer to the picture in your Music Theory Book)

**Reed Strength/Quality** – Reeds should be at least a #2 1/2 to #3 strength. By second half of first year, students should be playing on #3 reeds. Depending on mouthpiece/reed combination, harder reeds might be used as students progress. Ricco or Van Doren reeds are recommended. Reeds that are too soft and/or poor quality may produce sounds that are flat (or under pitch).

**Ligature** – Not snug enough? Ligature screws should be snug enough to hold the reed in place without the reed wiggling, but not so tight that the screws or ligature could break.

**How Much Mouthpiece or Reed in Mouth** – For **saxophone and clarinet**, look at the mouthpiece (with the reed on it) sideways. Note where the reed meets the mouthpiece. That is how far you should take the mouthpiece into your mouth.

**Lip Pressure** – **Clarinet** embouchure should be very firm, with top teeth on top of mouthpiece. Push mouthpiece UP to create firm pressure against top teeth. Mouthpiece must not be able to wiggle in mouth.

**Saxophone** embouchure is similar to clarinet, but not quite as firm.