

## Know Your Recorder



## Handling Your Recorder

Treat your recorder well and it will repay your kindness.

**Assembling your recorder:** (a) take a joint in each hand; (b) insert the tenon of the middle joint into the socket and slowly twist the joints into place. A smear of suitable grease on cork-lined or plastic tenons will help. **Never push the tenon straight into its socket: damage can easily result.**

**Warming your recorder:** warm your recorder gently before playing by holding particularly the head-joint in the hands or under the arm. Trouser pockets are also useful but guard against tiny pieces of fluff or other matter entering the windway.

**Never warm a recorder near a fire or radiator or in direct sunlight.**

**After playing:** always dry out your recorder with a soft fluffless cloth (e.g. a cotton handkerchief). Be wary of the mops sold for swabbing out recorders. Too many deposit fluff inside the instrument and do more harm than good. If you have such a mop, covering it with a thin cotton handkerchief makes an effective swab. Make sure that the tip of the wire stem of the mop is not inserted in any way or damage to the block may result, especially in wood recorders.

Finally, treat music (including the book!) with equal care. Do not bend it, and always carry it in a suitable case, or best in covers, protected from the weather.



## Making the First Sound

Holding your recorder as shown, put the tip of the mouthpiece (about  $\frac{1}{4}$  – 6mm) between your lips and blow a steady, but gentle, stream of air through the instrument. Your teeth must not touch the mouthpiece.

If the sound is harsh and shrill – blow more gently.

If the sound is weak and wavery – blow slightly more strongly until your breath seems to fill the instrument.

The sound should remain steady throughout:



## Starting a Note

To give the sound a clean, clear start:

- take the recorder away from your mouth and say the 'doo' – blowing the 'doo' sound for about five seconds;
- now say – 'doo-doo-doo-doo-doo' holding the 'doo' for about a second, and feel the tip of your tongue touch the ridge behind your upper front teeth;
- now, blowing out continuously (this is important) whisper 'doo-doo-doo-doo-doo' and as your tongue pulls back from the ridge;
- now repeat (c) as you blow through the recorder with a steady stream to produce a series of notes. For the time being, every note you play will be tongue-d.

If your tonguing produces a harsh or shrill sound, relax and use your tongue more gently.

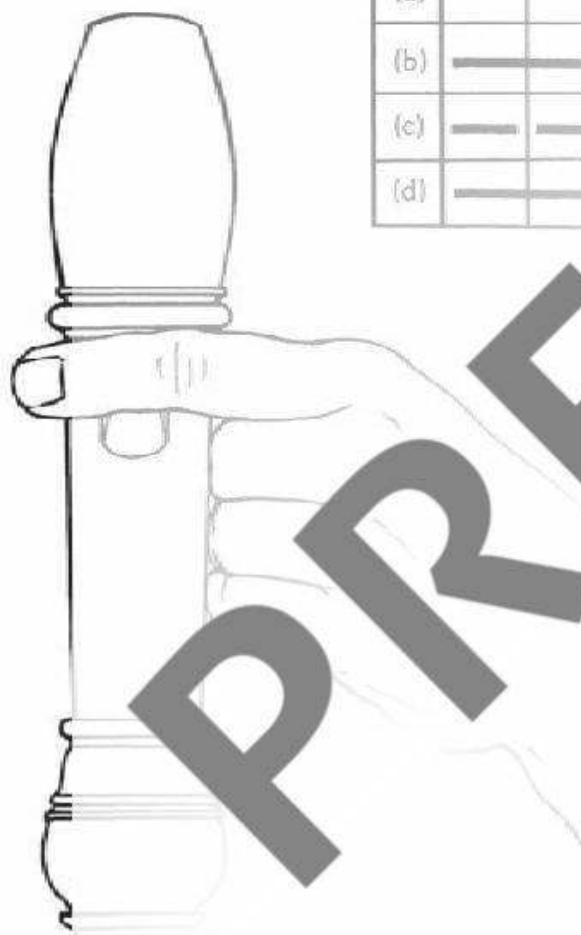
## Ending a Note

To end a note neatly, bring your tongue back up to the ridge behind your teeth and this will prevent any air from rushing down the recorder.



Now that you can start and stop sounds neatly, try making sounds of different lengths.  
As you play, count a steady 1, 2, 3, 4 in your head.

	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4
(a)	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
(b)	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
(c)	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
(d)	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—



### Clearing a Blocked Recorder

After playing for a short time, your recorder may sound either muffled, strangely out of tune or even completely blocked. The cause in each case is moisture in the windway which can be easily removed by laying a finger gently across (**not into!**) the window and blowing once, sharply, through the mouthpiece.

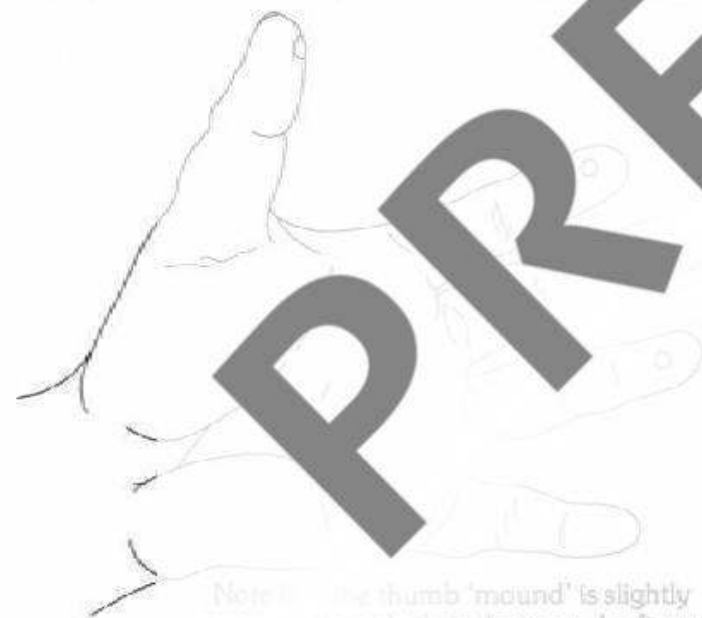
If the mouthpiece starts to clog whilst you are playing, a quick suck will usually clear it temporarily.

## Using your Fingers

Look at the diagram on the right and note –

1. that the left hand is used above the right;
2. that each finger covers only one hole and *never* moves to any other. (The small double holes like R3/R4 count, meantime, as one hole.)  
Fingers not in use are held directly above their own holes, about 1" (25mm) away;
3. that the left hand little finger (L4) is the only finger not used;
4. the position of the right thumb – at the back, between R1 and R2 i.e. almost exactly halfway between the thumbhole and the end of the instrument – which will be shown in all fingering charts by X. To support the instrument the thumb is placed here *even when the right hand fingers are not being used*. **Never allow your right hand to slip down and grasp the foot-joint.**

Finger-holes are covered by the pads of the fingers – not the tips. As a check, put your left thumb (L.Th) on the hole at the back and your left fingers on the thumbholes nearest the mouthpiece and press down firmly. You will feel the pads of your fingers pressing into your fingers, making little mounds which will clearly show the holes properly covered. Now compare your fingers with the diagram.



Note that the thumb 'mound' is slightly more on the side than those on the fingers.



(The modified) drawing, taken from a French recorder tutor of 1707 by Jacques Hotteterre, is still one of the best illustrations of good hand positions. *Note particularly the position of the right thumb.*

In playing position, the fingers are only slightly arched. (Picking up a pencil from a table puts the fingers in roughly the correct position.)