

COMMON OBOE REED ADJUSTMENTS

By Khara Wolf

Asses your crow and how the reed is playing:

- Thread Crow: Mouth on the thread (not the cane)- blow with a lot of air and there should be three octaves of a "C"
- Play the reed in the oboe to check for stability and tone

Things you are looking for:

- Tone. Does it sound buzzy? Stuffy? Bright? Ok?
- Pitch. Does it crow flat? Sharp? Does it play flat? Sharp? High notes flat?
- Stability. Are some notes flat and some in tune? Do you have to fight to keep it up to pitch?
- Response. How much air does it take to start making a sound? If it takes more then the slightest start of air, you will have that much more effort just to get the reed vibrating (let alone playing it!)
- Resistance. How much air does it take once the reed is already playing? Too much? Too little? You need some, but not too little or too much.

Crows a C, but it is not responsive and is stuffy/bright sounding when played.

Start by making the whole tip a little lighter (be sure to stay away from the center of the tip!). Once it is responsive (passes the "ha- ha" test), check for the following issues: is it flat? or is it still in tune, but bright and stuffy?

Crows a C and is responsive, but is too buzzy sounding when played.

- You need to get more of the lower vibrations going to darken the sound. Scrape a little out of the back and smooth the blend area. Do a small clip until it's back up to a crowing C.
- If the crow is wild: Refine the sides and corners of the tip.

Crows a C, is responsive, but is stuffy/bright.

You need to get more lower crow vibrations going. If the heart is still thick, scrape the channels lightly, scrape the blend area, and lastly the back. Once you have all three crows going, clip if needed to bring it back to a crowing C.

Crows flat, has a wild crow, and is not responsive (hard to play).

Check the opening. Then, clip the tip. Lighten the whole tip until it's responsive. Clip the tip again if needed to get back to a crowing C. Now, check for other issues listed above for suggestions. Is it stuffy/bright? Is it too buzzy?

Crows flat, is very responsive, but is buzzy sounding when played.

First clip it up to a crowing C. Often this will solve the issue, but if the crow is still wild, refine the sides and corners of the tip. If it gets stuffy after clipping, but is still responsive, lightly dust the blend area and/or the back.

Crows sharp, is not responsive, and sounds stuffy/bright when played.

This is what new reeds sometimes feel like in general, or after they've dried out. Lighten the whole tip until it responds. Then get some more lower crow vibrations going by smoothing the blend area, heart channels, then last the back. Clip to a C.

Crows sharp, is responsive, but is just a little stuffy or bright sounding.

Check the opening (is it too closed?). Dust the blend area, channels of the heart, and/or the back. Smooth out the transitions. Clip back to C if needed. Check the proportions. Is the tip long enough? Heart correct length?

Troubleshooting

Some issues you might run into: It chirps. It keeps getting worse. I took a chunk off of the tip. I keep getting "nicks". It leaks. It's unstable. It's too closed. It's too open.

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