

# FLUTE/PICCOLO TUNING GUIDE

## PROCEDURES FOR TUNING THE INSTRUMENT

1. Warm up thoroughly before tuning if possible. Be sure the instrument is warm. Cold flutes are flat. If flutes are tuned cold, they will play sharp.

2. Tune at a mezzo-forte dynamic and do not use vibrato.

3. Tune to a reliable frequency (electronic tuner or stable instrument tone).

4. Hear the pitch to match, then play, hear the pitch again, then play again. Do not adjust your pitch. Compare the two sounds so that you may judge if you are higher or lower than the tuning sound.

5. Adjust the amount the head joint is pulled out from the flute body to change the pitch. If you are higher than the tuning note, pull out. If you are lower than the tuning note, push in.



*Note: The head joint has a moveable tuning cork plugging the closed end of the flute. Be sure the cork is in good condition and the cork position is adjusted properly. The exact position of this cork is critical to proper intonation in all registers. To check cork placement, carefully insert the bottom end of the cleaning rod into the open end of the headjoint until it touches the metal plate at the cork end. The etched line on the cleaning rod should be in the center of the embouchure hole. Ask for help from a teacher or professional repair person when adjusting the cork. If the cork moves easily in the tube, it should be replaced. This is a minor repair expense.*

The main causes of poor intonation in flute/piccolo playing are poor listening habits, unsteady breath, unstable tongue position or poorly placed tongue, poorly formed embouchure, inefficient hand position and incorrect flute assembly.

## INHERENT INTONATION FLAWS

1. Low "C", "C-sharp", "D", "E-flat", and "E" tend to be flat. Be sure air speed is fast and enough air is hitting the strike wall. Lift and point the upper lip forward to make this adjustment. Be sure your head is level and balanced on your spine.
2. Notes from high "E-flat" through high "C" (with the exception of \*B-flat) tend to be sharp. To lower pitch, relax lips and avoid pinching the corners together. Relax your tongue. Move the air forward in your mouth to increase air speed. Aim the air into the strike wall with your upper lip.
3. Third space "C" and "C-sharp" are sharp. Direct the air down into the tube by lifting and pointing the upper lip (without rolling the flute or bending head) to adjust the pitch. Check to make sure that the line between your lower lip and skin is not pressed behind the lip plate. If it is, gently reposition it so that the lip is just inside the embouchure hole. This allows for improved upper lip flexibility.

## TECHNIQUES FOR ADJUSTING PITCHES WHILE PLAYING

1. Keep air steady.
2. To lower pitch, adjust embouchure by relaxing lips and directing air into the tube with upper lip.
3. To raise pitch, lift head slightly while maintaining arm position to blow more above the tube, keeping the lower lip on the lip plate while still pointing the upper lip forward.
4. Alternate fingerings.
5. Combinations of the above.