

Reed class, preparing and adjusting reeds.

Fallacies: #1 - Dry reeds on a flat surface only, wrong. Reeds warp to the wet spot. Dry them flat side up for the first couple of playings.

#2 – Don't leave the reed on the mouthpiece. Not a problem if you loosen the ligature and clean it. I'm not recommending it though.

#3 – Discolored reeds won't play good. Give it a play test; I've had some great reeds that looked awful.

Reed Warping: #1 - Humidity control, most important in the winter, #2 - close the pores, #3 – Don't soak for more than a few seconds, why close the pores and then soak the reed?, #4 – use water to wet the reed not saliva, it's less thick and has no enzymes which breaks down the reed faster than water. Never wet the bottom half of the reed, the part with the bark. That helps keep the reed from warping by not getting wet and dry which is the cause of warping.

Breaking in: Day 1, play each reed for a few seconds only. Day 2, play again for a few seconds, separate, seal, sand those that are pretty hard. Day 3, Play for half a minute or so, balance, sand if too hard, taper and clip if too soft. Day 4, same as Day 3.

Now set aside the good reeds and play on them for a few minutes for a few days each, no more than 10 minutes, then play them a few times a week for a few minutes. Practice on the others; toss the bad ones or practice using the knife and reed clipper on these.

Rotation: Have at least four good reeds. Use them for lessons, chamber music and concerts. Have at least four rehearsal reeds. Keep moving the rehearsal reeds to the concert reeds if and when they "shine". Keep replacing the rehearsal and concert reeds with new ones as needed. Practice on the others, if one becomes a "good" one set it aside for rotation. Make small adjustments as needed.

Always, I mean ALWAYS, have a new box of reeds opened and begin to break them in. ON average you should open a new box every two to three weeks, more often if it's a bad box. That way you always have new reeds breaking in and ready to replace your rehearsal and concert reeds. That will cost you no more than a year's worth of school books. It's part of the cost of going to school and being a clarinet player. Budget for it! Fifteen boxes of reeds a school year is not exorbitant. Average, about \$300.

Save your rejects from one season to another, some reeds that don't sound good in the winter may sound good in the summer. Buy five or six boxes at a time, save on shipping.

Brands: Experiment with different brands until you find the one that works best for you.

Equipment: Reed knife, sharpening stone, reed clipper, sand paper, wet and dry 600, very fine-polishing paper and 400, fine for taking off a little wood if reed is a bit too hard. Use the back of the paper for "closing" the pores. It's best to use a glass plate for sanding and closing the pores. A clean grand piano top is second best.