

WARMING UP – WOODWIND PLAYERS

What do all high level athletes do before they go out to play a game? What do all great singers do before they go on stage? How about public speakers? What do they do before they give a speech? Actors and actresses? Dancers? They all warm up! Yes, they all know they will perform better, much better, if they prepare themselves mentally and physically.

As instrumental musicians, we also need a good warm up routine if we want to play our best. We'll be much more confident in a performance but we'll also save a lot of frustration when we're practicing if we have everything working well before we start!

Every performer comes up with their own warm up routine. That routine changes a lot over time as their skills improve. The funny thing is, the more skilled they become, usually the more warm up they do! That's because they've seen how much it has helped them to improve at their skill.

Here are some basic ideas for warming up for musicians:

1. Simply producing a good sound comes first. We want what's known as good tone quality. We work on that by starting out with the simplest way we can produce sound on our instrument. Woodwind players can play their mouthpieces. Make sure you're holding it at the correct angle and it's a big, smooth sound. Make sure you feel the air flowing freely from you through the mouth piece. Play around with changing pitch going low to high and back to low. Play some simple songs with just your mouth piece. Flutes should do octave jumps with their head joint. Then, put your mouth piece in the instrument and play nice, smooth, relaxed long notes. Several seconds long. Take good breaths. Single reeds make sure the air is always fast and moving high across the inside of your mouth. Flutes put a strong air stream at the right speed straight down into the tone hole. Double reeds use good air support while not over blowing. Make sure the notes are long, smooth, not sputtery or bouncy or changing pitch. Listen for a big, open sound. We call these **Long Tones**.
2. Next, get the tongue working. The tongue is a muscle so it needs exercise to improve and to gain coordination. Tonguing exercises are a great warm up. Don't go faster than you can play cleanly but push yourself to improve the crispness of the tonguing and the speed over time.
3. Practice things to warm up fingers. Scales, scale patterns and arpeggios are great. Memorize different ones. The chromatic scale is a great one to learn! As you add new scales and arpeggios, your warm up time will increase because, if you don't continue to practice them, you will lose ones you had memorized. Always play these patterns at the speed you can play them well. As you start to learn them, don't go faster that you can actually think of the next note. Otherwise, you'll learn sloppy fingerings which means you'll always play them sloppy! Remember from our **Practice!** Sheet; perfect practice makes perfect performance.
4. Octave/ register jumps. Play notes with the same front fingerings but different thumb fingering (with or without). Make sure you are using correct air to get the low and high notes in tune with each other. I'll be showing you some of these and more on warming up in upcoming videos.

All this above can be done in 5-7 minutes for a pretty new player. Professionals might spend 1, 2 even 3 hours a day warming up! Keep doing these warmups every time you practice and you'll be amazed at how fast you improve as a player!