



The Oboe Embouchure

Your **embouchure** is the way you grip your oboe reed with your mouth. Getting it right is one of the most important things you'll do as an oboe player — it decides how your reed vibrates, which shapes your *tone* (the sound you make).

● The Basic Steps

Three moves to form your embouchure.

1

Place the reed on your lower lip.

2

Fold your lower lip inward and roll it into your mouth with the reed.

3

Close your mouth and surround the reed with both your upper and lower lips.

● Important Rules



Teeth off the reed

Your teeth should **never** touch the reed. Only your lips should grip it.



Turn your lips in

You should barely see the red part of your lips — they stay mostly inside your mouth.



Don't puff your cheeks

Keep them relaxed and flat, not blown out like a balloon.



Grip it like a circle

Flex the muscles all around your mouth equally — top, bottom *and* sides. Hug the reed gently from every direction, never squeeze it in a vice.

Content adapted from WOODWINDS: Fundamental Performance Techniques by Gene A. Saucier. Original concepts belong to the author; this summary is for student reference.

● How Much Reed Goes In?

This one really matters — so experiment and **listen**. Try different amounts to hear the difference. It's how you start training your ear!

TOO MUCH

Big, open, raucous, **dull** tone.

TOO LITTLE

Small, pinched, **bright**, narrow tone.

✓ JUST RIGHT

Balanced, **clear** tone. That's the target.

● Tips for Success



Soak your reed in water before playing. A wet reed is happier and easier to control.



Use a mirror. Check that your lips are turned in and your cheeks aren't puffed.



Keep steady pressure. Don't tighten or loosen between high and low notes — the same tension should work throughout.



Practice short sessions. Your mouth muscles tire quickly at first — that's normal! Start small and work up.



Test with a "crow." Put a little more reed in and use less lip pressure. A cackle with two pitches at once means it's vibrating nicely.



Go slow, listen closely, and your ear will guide the rest.