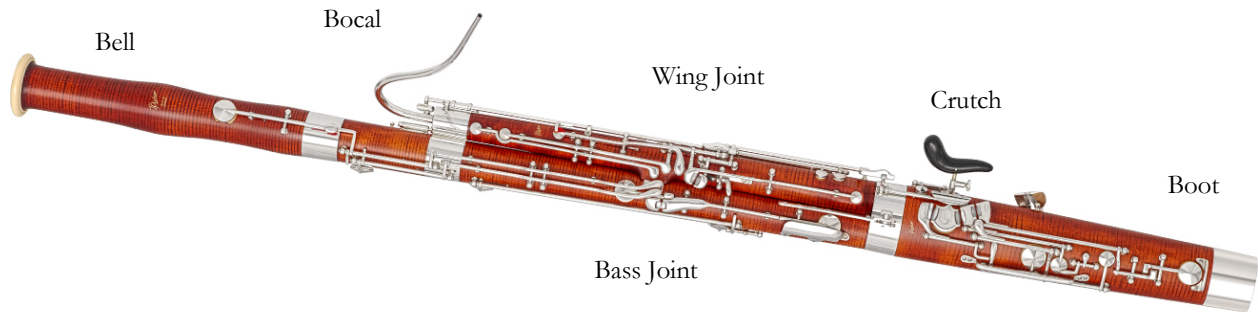


Meet Your Bassoon!



Things that should come in your case:

- Your bassoon!
- A seat strap- these come in two varieties, hook and cup. I prefer cup straps, and they fit all bassoons!
- 1 or 2 bocals- there are a lot of “makes and models” of bocal, but yours probably matches your instrument. Most importantly they come in different lengths marked with a number 0-3 on the side. The higher the number, the longer and flatter its pitch. Most bassoonists should use a 1 or a 2.
 - Bocals are very fragile! Be careful with them, always handle them by the curved part, not the end!
- A Crutch- also called a hand rest. These add a balance point for the right hand, I like playing with one but not all bassoonists use one. Try it out and see what you think! If you have smaller hands, you might not be comfortable playing with one.

Other things that you should buy yourself for your case:

- Swabs- these are vitally important for protecting your instrument and should be used after every playing session! Excess moisture can damage the wood, cork, and pads of your instrument and lead to expensive repairs.
 - For hygiene purposes, I recommend purchasing your own. I prefer silk or microfiber swabs, and they should be different for the wing and the boot joint.
 - Some swabs claim to be “universal,” but if they’re small enough to fit in the wing joint they won’t adequately swab the boot.
 - Always make sure the swabs are untangled with no knots in the cord before pulling them through to prevent them getting stuck.
 - If your swab gets stuck, get help! Don’t keep pulling it!
- Water cup- bassoon reeds must be soaked in water before they work well! Your mouth won’t work well enough. All bassoon retailers sell small cups that can clip to your music stand for convenience.
 - I dip my reed in tip first, then drop it in butt first to really soak the whole thing and give it a chance to absorb water. This helps it seal and vibrate well so that you sound your best!
 - The correct length of time is generally the time it takes to set up my bassoon. I put the reed in the water before I start and its ready to go by the time the instrument is together. They might need more time (or a subsequent soak) if it’s particularly dry or it hasn’t been used in a while.
- Reed case- your reeds are expensive, take care of them! I prefer cases with plastic pegs, make sure it has ventilation holes and can hold at least 3-5 reeds.

- The tubes your reeds come in do not have adequate ventilation and storing reeds in them encourages mold to grow—not what you want in your mouth!
- Cork grease- if you have trouble getting your instrument together, use a little cork grease to lubricate the cork. If you have string wrapped tenons, rub some wax on them instead to help them go in.

Reeds:

Reeds make a huge difference in the way you sound! No one sounds good with a bad reed so set yourself up for success and buy good, handmade reeds. Make sure you're buying from a reputable professional reed maker, not the cheapest reed you can find at a general music store! You're better off purchasing them online (see suggested vendors below) or from your private teacher. It's common for reeds to need occasional adjustments, here are some suggestions for purchasing and maintaining your reeds:

- Buy reeds from a variety of sources to try them out. Once you find a maker you like, buy several at a time so that you can rotate through them. This will make them last much longer than if you play the same one every day. Ideally you should have 3 reeds that you're happy with at any time and you play one a day, letting the others rest.
- Reeds that you buy online from a professional reed maker might be more expensive than the Jones reeds in the music store, but they're much better! That difference will mean you sound better, you're more comfortable playing, and that they'll last longer.
- If you take private lessons, ask about buying reeds from your teacher. Some prefer not to make extra reeds for their students, but they should at least be able to suggest good reeds for your climate and help you adjust them.
- Store your reeds in that good well-ventilated case that you bought! This will help them last longer and be more consistent day to day.
- Start learning about reed adjustment- reeds change over time, and with changes in elevation and humidity. There's a whole world of reed making and adjusting, but you can start with a pair of needle nose pliers. Use them to gently open or close the first wire and feel the difference!
 - There are three wires on a bassoon reed: the first wire near the collar, then the second wire, then the third hidden under the wrapping.
 - Squeezing the first wire from the sides will open the tip, making it more resistant, louder, and lower in pitch. Squeezing it from the top and bottom will close the tip, making it less resistant, softer, and higher in pitch.
 - The second wire is the opposite over the first: squeezing from the top and bottom opens the throat, and from the sides closes the throat.

Bassoon Maintenance

The best thing you can do for your instrument is to always swab it out! Also make sure that you never store anything in the case on top of the keys (even sheet music can bend the keys). If you have to put your bassoon down, either take it apart and put it back in the case or use a bassoon stand. Laying it down on the ground is a last resort (they're very expensive, would you want to step on one?)

- You shouldn't be attempting repairs on your instrument. If there's an issue, take it to your band director or your private teacher for help.
- But- keep a small screwdriver in your case and periodically make sure that none of the screws are backing out. Keep them snug, but don't tighten them as hard as you can.
- Remember to only adjust your bocal from the curve, not the tip, and always blow out excess moisture before putting it away.
- Use your swabs every time you put the instrument away, swabbing from the big end of the wing joint to the small end, same for the boot.

Etude Books

There are many options for bassoon etude books. Every bassoonist has studied the Weissenborn at some point in their career!

- Weissenborn
 - This is the bread and butter book for bassoonists and every serious bassoonist should have a copy. This is also where all-state etudes usually come from. The original is in the public domain and is available for free on imslp.org
 - There are two revised versions of the book that are available online for purchase. One in two volumes by Doug Spaniol and another in one volume by Frank Morelli. I'm partial to the version by Spaniol. It comes in two volumes, the first is great for beginners and starts with how to put the instrument together. The second is more advanced and is suitable for high schoolers and college students. *The all-state etudes are only in the advanced second volume*
- Rubank Methods
 - These are fine for providing additional etudes to play but aren't as pedagogically structured as the Weissenborn. There's more variety of etudes for young players.
- Learning Tenor Clef by Wade Irvin
 - A great secondary resource for focusing on tenor clef reading.

Online Bassoon Vendors

There are many great options for purchasing tools, reeds, instruments, and music. Here are a few of my favorite vendors for those which are all operated by double reed players and can offer advice. Also included are some independent reed makers.

- Miller Marketing- millermarketingco.com
 - Purveyor of all things bassoon
- Midwest Musical Imports- mmimports.com
 - Purveyor of all things bassoon
- Forrest's Music- forrestsmusic.com
 - Purveyor of all things bassoon
- Woodwind Brasswind- wwbw.com
 - Purveyor of all types of band supplies
- Trevco-Varner Music- trevcomusic.com
 - The most comprehensive seller of double reed sheet music
- ACDC Reeds- arieldetwiler.com
 - High quality handmade bassoon reeds
- Jiffy Reeds- jiffyreeds.com
 - High quality handmade bassoon reeds
- Barton Cane- bartoncane.com
 - Sells very good bassoon cane (but not finished reeds)