

BASIC ADJUSTMENTS FOR MANUFACTURED OBOE REEDS

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RECOMMENDED TOOLS

General items

Emery board with fine and coarse side
Single edge razor blades
Jewelry pliers (these have no grooves on their teeth, best found online)
Teflon tape (also known as plumber's tape)

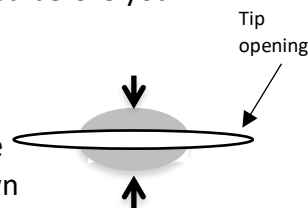
Tools Specific to Oboe

Small cutting block (used for clipping the tip)
Mandrel (used for restoring staples after pinching them with pliers)

FIX FOR GENERAL SHARPNESS (Crow is sharp)

1. Pinch the tip OPEN with your fingers, but make sure it is properly soaked before you do so. A dry reed will crack if you pinch it open.

2. Check the opening of the tip. If small, use your jewelry pliers to gently pinch the **FLAT** side of the staple to make the tip opening bigger. Place the jaws of the pliers parallel to the cane approximately five thread wraps down from where the thread meets the cane and gently pinch the staple.



CAUTION: Pinching too hard will open the tip too far and the sides of the tip will pull away from each other. The sides of the tip need to stay together. If the sides of the tip become "loose," intonation goes flat and response suffers.

Crow and play the reed after every pinch. It may take more than one pinch to correct the problem, but remember: **A LITTLE PINCH GOES A LONG WAY!**

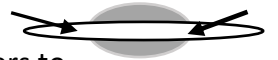
If you pinch the staple too much, slide the staple on to the **mandrel** to restore it to its original shape and then try again. If you do not have a mandrel, place the pliers on the rounded edges of the staple and gently press. This should make the opening smaller.

3. **Use the emery board.** If the crow has poor response (takes a lot of air) and is sharp, place the emery board horizontally on a table, light side up, and gently remove a little cane from the tip by lightly drawing the tip across the emery board (left to right). Turn the reed over and repeat on the other side. Crow and play the reed once you have swiped both blades across the emery board. If it does not work, try again with a little more pressure on your swipes. It may take more than one round of swipes on the emery board to make a difference. Always go slow and crow, then play the reed after every set of swipes.

If you go too far (i.e. take too much cane off), and the crow sounds too wild or free blowing, use the razor blade and your cutting block to clip a tiny bit off the tip. Crow and play the reed each time you clip it, and check your tuning with a tuner. Stop clipping and using the emery board when it feels and sounds good to you.

FIXES FOR GENERAL FLATNESS (Crow is flat)

1. **Pinch the tip CLOSED with your fingertips.** If the reed is over-soaked, this will help correct overall sharpness quickly and easily.



2. **Check the opening of the tip.** If large or overly round, use your jewelry pliers to gently pinch the **ROUNDED** side of the staple to make the tip opening smaller. Place the jaws of the pliers perpendicular to the cane approximately 3-5 thread wraps down from where the thread meets the cane and gently pinch the staple.

CAUTION: Pinching too hard will **close** the tip too far, making the intonation extremely sharp and the reed more difficult to play. Crow and play the reed after every pinch. It may take more than one pinch to correct the problem, but remember: **A LITTLE PINCH GOES A LONG WAY!**

If you pinch the staple too much, slide the staple on to the **mandrel** to restore it to its original shape and then try again. If you don't have a mandrel, place the pliers on the flat side of the staple and gently press to restore the opening.

2. **Clip the tip.** Use the cutting block and the razor blade to clip the width of a hair off the end of the tip. Crow and play the reed to see if it raised the pitch enough. It may take more than one clip to make a difference, so crow and play each time you clip. If the reed begins to feel resistant, follow the instructions for using the emery board under "Fix for General Sharpness" to help correct the problem.

3. **"Sand" the back.** Manufactured reeds usually leave too much cane in the back (or windows) of the reed. Use the rough (dark) side of the emery board and gently sand off cane in the back of the reed, being careful to avoid the spine if there is one. This will hopefully close the opening of the tip slightly, therefore raising the pitch. Make sure

you sand both blades of the reed in the same area and try to do it evenly. You can back light the reed and look to see if the back is sanded to an even thickness. If they are even, they will be the same color on each blade. Crow and play the reed after every set of sanding. Stop when the crow feels “tighter” and the pitch has raised.

IF THE REED FEELS TOO RESISTANT (POOR RESPONSE)

Use the emery board. If the crow has poor response (takes a lot of air), place the emery board horizontally on a table, light side up, and gently remove a little cane from the tip by lightly drawing the tip across the emery board (left to right). Turn the reed over and repeat on the other side. Crow and play the reed once you have swiped both blades across the emery board. If it needs more response, try again with a little more pressure on your swipes. It may take more than one round of swipes on the emery board to make a difference. Always go slow and crow, then play the reed after every set of swipes.

Removing cane from the tip generally tends to make the crow go flat, so you will likely need to clip the reed once or twice until the response feels just right and the pitch of the crow is “in the ball park”.

IF THE REED SOUNDS WILD OR TOO BRIGHT & EDGY

1. Try clipping a tiny bit off the tip, then crow the reed. If the vibrations get better or sound “cleaner”, take another tiny clip. The reed’s response may start to go away, however, so don’t be afraid to try sanding a little bit off the **sides of the tip**. To do this, you will slightly tilt the tip of the reed to the side as you swipe it across (left to right) the emery board. Tilting the reed slightly allows you to avoid the middle of the tip. If the middle of the tip gets too thin, the vibrations of the crow get wild and its tone will tend to be bright and edgy when played.

2. Back light the reed and examine the different parts of the reed on each blade. Look for any areas that might be darker than others, particularly in the tip and heart. Chances are, your reed has been unevenly profiled. If an area is darker than another on the reed, it means that particular area is thicker than what surrounds it. Use the light side of your emery board to lightly sand the thicker area.

3. Sometimes this can also be an indication that the opening of the tip is too big. Closing the opening of the reed will sometimes control the vibrations in the crow and make the reed sound better in your oboe.

If the tip is large or overly round, use your jewelry pliers to gently pinch the **ROUNDED** side of the staple to make the tip opening smaller. Place the jaws of the pliers perpendicular to the cane approximately five thread wraps down from where the thread meets the cane and gently pinch the staple.



CAUTION: Pinching too hard will **close** the tip too far, making the intonation extremely sharp and the reed more difficult to play. Crow and play the reed after every pinch. It may take more than one pinch to correct the problem, but remember: **A LITTLE PINCH GOES A LONG WAY!**

4. Wild sounding reeds may also occur because little to no cane has been removed from the back of the reed. To test this idea, slide the reed out of your mouth while crowing until you can put a tiny bit of pressure with your teeth (covered by your lips) on the area of the reed in which the back would be. If this makes the crow sound better, it is an indication that removing cane from the back may help your reed. Use the tip of your emery board (dark side) to gently sand cane out of the back by making two evenly sized “windows” on either side of the spine in the back of the reed.