

Basic Reed Maintenance

Reeds are a very important part of playing clarinet as they can make or break the way that you sound. Don't feel the need to do everything below at once, but slowly start to make a routine with your reeds. You will notice a difference!

Reed storage:

It is ideal to store reeds in a reed case that holds 6-12 at a time for both protection and convenience. Some reed cases may include space for a humidity control pack/sponge. Since reeds are essentially from a plant (cane called *arundo donax*), they can be easily affected by the weather. Humidity control can help keep them more consistent.

Reed case recommendations:

- D'Addario Reed Case (8)
- Protec (12)
- Vandoren (6)

The break-in process:

Brand new reeds require a break-in process so the cane can get used to moisture. This is also to avoid waterlogging, when water is trapped in the fibers. This can increase the chances of mold and cause the fibers to collapse, resulting in a tough-to-play reed.

1. Take the new reed out of the plastic wrapper
2. Rub the reed carefully between your fingers to close the pores.
3. Soak the reed for 20-30 seconds
4. Play the new reed for no more than 1-2 minutes in the low/middle register. Double the playing time each day for 4-5 days to slowly break it in.

If reeds are not properly broken in, they can get easily waterlogged, moldy, and have a short life span. I recommend writing the date that you opened it on the back with a pen/sharpie to keep track of the process.

Reed rotation:

No two reeds are exactly the same, so it is important to have at least 4 reeds that are broken in/ready to play along with 4 new reeds that you are actively breaking in. Try to rotate your reeds so you are not playing on one all the time. This will make a box of reeds last in the long run!

Keeping reeds clean and happy:

No one likes moldy reeds. Be sure to always wipe your reeds clean after using them before storing them back in the case. Instead of soaking the reed in your mouth, you can opt to use a small container (such as a medicine bottle) with water to soak your reeds in. This is a bit more sanitary and will help them last longer.

Synthetic Reeds:

Synthetic reeds can be a good choice for marching season as they are slightly more durable and are not affected by the weather. I personally do not recommend using synthetic reeds during concert season and solo/ensemble.

Trouble-shooting:

If you are having difficulty making a good sound and you think it may be the reed, check:

1. Quality: Is the reed chipped or moldy?
2. Placement: Is the reed too high, too low, or off-center on the mouthpiece?
3. Warpage: The tip of the reed can get wavy, which results in a fuzzy sound. If you notice this, carefully press the very tip of the reed onto the table of your mouthpiece with the thumb to flatten it.

Good quality reed recommendations:

- Vandoren
 - Blue Traditional
 - V-12
- D'Addario Reserve
 - Classic (purple box)
- Légère
 - Synthetic French Cut