

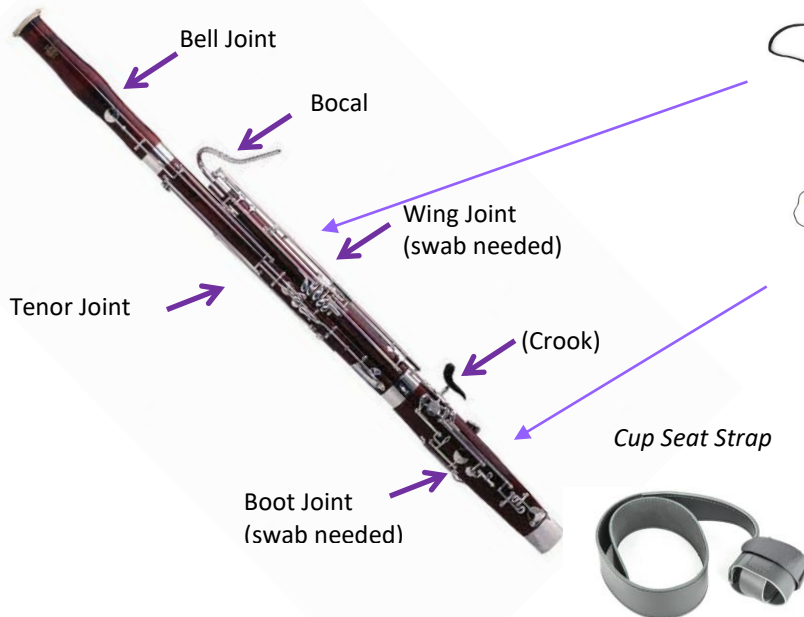


Bassoon Maintenance, Care and Materials

By Ariel Detwiler



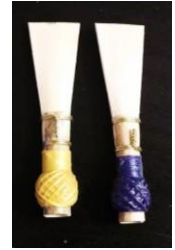
The Bassoon



Wing and Boot Joint Swabs



Reeds



Water Cup w/ stand clip



Reed Case



What you'll find in the case:

Make sure you have these things in your case at all times. These should be provided for you.

- **Seat strap** ***make sure it works for your bassoon—not all bassoons have hook attachments! Your safest bet is a CUP seat strap. You can find a cheap version [HERE](#).*
- **1-2 bocals** ***bocals come in a variety of types, namely “1”, “2”, and sometimes “3” sizes, engraved in the metal of the bocal itself. Larger numbers mean longer bocals, which means they will play with a flatter pitch. If you feel consistently flat when you play, try a smaller number. If you feel sharp, try a larger number. This setup may change if you change reed styles and instruments!*
 - **HANDLE BOCALS WITH CARE. They are very easy to dent/bend and are expensive to replace!**
- **Crook** (pictured above) Crooks provide a little extra stability for your right hand position. Not all bassoonists use a crook (especially if they have small hands!), but if there is one in your case, try using it! You may just find it useful. If there isn't one provided, ask if there might be extras at your school.

Ariel Detwiler
acdewiler@gmail.com
www.arieldetwiler.com


Supplies you'll need to buy yourself:

- **Cork Grease.** If you see red string wrapped around the connecting tenons of your instrument, DO NOT use cork grease on those parts! HOWEVER, bocals will always have cork on them. Make sure you're using cork grease whenever the cork on your instrument or bocal feels dry, or you'll risk ripping the cork off your bocal, which is an expensive and annoying repair.
- **Water cup.** Double reeds are not like single reeds where you can just use your own saliva to soak the reed. Bassoon reeds need to be completely immersed in water for at least a minute to be able to play effectively—and they may dry out as you play, depending on the humidity of your environment. A great option to keep fresh water with you at all times is a [water cup that attaches to your stand!](#)
- **Swabs.** You'll need two different swabs: a boot joint swab and a wing joint swab. There are “universal” swabs that claim to work for both—don't trust them! The wing joint is significantly smaller than the boot joint, and swabs get stuck easily for two reasons: when they are the wrong size, and when they are made of cotton. Make sure you get two different swabs (different colors, if possible), and make sure you buy SILK swabs! Your case may already have swabs provided, but for your safety, I would recommend buying your own swabs.
- **Reed Case.** Reeds are understandably sold individually in small cases, usually plastic tubes. The problem is that most of these tubes are airtight, which can cause reeds to mold since they can't dry out properly. Throw those tubes out and get a ventilated case! [Here is a great recommendation!](#)

Reeds

The most important thing to understand about reeds is that they can be the cause OR the solution for any of your issues on the bassoon. Make sure you're buying from a recommended, reputable professional seller—not just the cheapest reed you can find. When diagnosing issues on your instrument, MOST issues are solved simply by buying better reeds. Here are some tips for buying and maintaining your reeds:

- **Seek professional opinions.** Not all music stores have employees who play the bassoon, which is a huge hint that they most likely don't sell good bassoon reeds. Seek out stores which focus on actively renting and selling bassoons (you'll find a list of my recommendations below!), call and ask to talk to a bassoon specialist, and ask for their recommendation of reeds for your level.
- **If you're searching online, look for sellers who have videos of themselves playing their own reeds!** This will give you an idea of the sound their reeds make, which will help you choose what kind of sound YOU want to have.
- **Price=quality.** Usually, the quality of the reed is reflected in the price. On average, you'll pay about \$20 per reed for great reeds that have been play tested for quality and crafted by a professional. Spending a little more on reeds and doing your research on sellers will usually result in better reeds that last a long time, which means you won't be wasting your money on reeds that don't play in tune or deteriorate quickly over time.
- **Buy from your teacher if you can.** If you take lessons from a professional bassoonist who sells their reeds, buy them whenever you can, or at least take their recommendations for reed sellers seriously. Teaching techniques and reed qualities usually go hand-in-hand, so you'll have an easier time progressing in lessons if you are using reeds that are highly recommended by your teacher.

- 
- **Rotate your reeds.** Keep 2-3 reeds at any given time, and make sure you practice on all of them regularly so you have options, even if you have a favorite! If a reed is damaged unexpectedly, you'll want to have a backup ready to go.
 - **Replenish your reeds every 4 months.** Temperature, humidity, and moisture affect your reeds differently every single day. Drastic season changes sometimes mean the death of a great reed. Plan ahead by ordering reeds every few months to keep your supply fresh.
 - **Store your reeds in a well-ventilated reed case.** A good reed case goes a long way. Make sure your reeds are able to dry completely between practice sessions, and never keep them in an air-tight container such as the plastic tubes reeds are often sold in. If you have to keep them in that tube for a short time, make sure you poke a hole in the side for ventilation—otherwise your reeds will grow mold!!! A quick and cheap solution is a tin Altoids case with holes poked in the top and a folded paper towel for cushioning inside.
 - **Understand reed adjustment.** No reed stays the same day after day, month after month. Every time you soak and dry your reed, it changes slightly. Over time, your reed will play differently than when you first played it. This isn't because you or the reed maker did something wrong—it's because all reeds need adjustment to play their best! Ask your bassoon teacher about reed adjustment tools and seek out professional resources to learn how to use them effectively!

Bassoon Maintenance and Quick Fixes

Prevention is really all you can do to keep a bassoon in good shape. It is the most complicated of the woodwinds, and you should NEVER try to repair one yourself. Take your bassoons in for routine maintenance every 2-3 years to prevent large and unexpected repair bills and long wait times.

Never use key oil, glue, cement, or tape to repair your instrument. If something happens, tell your band director and/or whoever you rent your instrument from in order to get it fixed professionally. Try to take it to a repair shop that specializes in bassoon repair if you can—not all music stores will do a great job since the bassoon is highly specialized. Here are some common issues you might run into:

- **BENT KEYS.** If you bend a key, DO NOT try to bend it back yourself! Take it to a repair tech!
- **PADS FALL OFF.** If this happens, some of your notes may not sound right. Tape is a quick fix, but will cause speaking issues. Make sure to get this repaired professionally. DO NOT use super glue!!
- **BENT/DENTED BOCAL.** Sometimes small dents don't do anything to the sound, but if you notice a difference in the placement of the bocal on the instrument or any cracks in the metal, you'll have issues playing. If you have another bocal, use it instead, but small bocal issues can usually be repaired by professional bassoon repair specialists.
- **CORK FALLS OFF BOCAL.** Take it to a repair tech! You can't use a bocal that has damaged cork.



Music & Books

Solos will be recommended based on the student's personal growth and ability. Depending on your level of ability, I would recommend the following books to practice bassoon technique:

- Beginner: Rubank *Elementary Method for Bassoon*
- Intermediate: Hawkins *Melodious and Progressive Studies for Bassoon, Book 1*
- Advanced: Weissenborn 50 Studies.
- Learning Tenor Clef: *Tenor Clef* by Wade Irvin

Bassoon supply and sheet music stores

ACDC Reeds: Handmade professional quality bassoon reeds made by myself! www.acdcreeds.etsy.com, or www.arieldetwiler.com

Midwest Musical Imports: Minneapolis, MN. www.mmimports.com –huge selection of woodwind accessories, specializing in double reeds. Sells reeds, instruments, music, and has a full bassoon repair shop on location. BASSOON RENTALS AND BUYING OPTIONS!

Trevco-Varner Music: Dexter, MI. www.trevcomusic.com – HUGE selection of sheet music for double reeds and other instruments.

Forrest's Music Double Reed Specialists: Berkeley, CA. www.forrestsmusic.com – double reed specialists with reeds, music, tools and supplies.

The Woodwind & Brasswind – general woodwind supplies www.wwbw.com