

# Reed Adjustment Tips



## When you first receive a new reed:

- If you haven't tried these reeds before, **remember to take a minute to reset your embouchure.** Back to basics—cushion the reed with your lips, like you're drinking through a straw, and use more air than pressure. Sometimes when we've been working with old reeds, our tendency is to pinch, which is always to be avoided with new reeds!!
- If the **wires are loose**, don't panic! Soak the reed for 30 seconds to two minutes (in dry and/or cold climates, you'll want to soak longer). If the wires are still loose after soaking, tighten them. If not, you're good to go! Most new reeds in the winter will have loose wires, simply because of the climate, but soaking solves that problem 9 out of 10 times.
- If the **reeds are impossible or very hard to play**, check the tip opening. If it looks wide to you, it probably is! Take some pliers and make the first wire (closest to the tip) less round. This will close the tip and make your reed probably feel perfect!

## Some pro tips:

- **Soak your reed in warm water** whenever you can. Trust me—you'll love the increased vibrancy and response you get from your reeds, plus it cuts down on soaking time.
- **NEVER adjust wires when the reed is dry.** You're asking for that reed to crack!
- **NEVER put a plaque in a reed with a crack in the tip.** It'll just make things worse.
- **Have 3-4 reeds at any given time.** I always recommend buying or making reeds at season changes—about 4 times per year. Even if your hometown doesn't experience wildly different temperatures year round, your humidity probably changes! Plan ahead and order them before you know you need them!
- **Rotate your reeds!** I'm so bad at this—I find one I love and just play it until it's dead, BUT I have the luxury of picking any reed I'm working on—which is about 30 reeds per week! Make sure to practice on all your reeds once in a while, even if you don't like them. Check them all at least once every week, and you might find another one or two you like just as much as your favorite.
- **Learning to make reeds?** Continue to buy from your favorite seller until you feel 100% confident that you can play on your reeds with no issues. We've all been there— while it's important to learn to make reeds, it's also important to have a backup just in case you don't have anything that will guarantee you a great performance. No shame!
- **If your reed is flat, make the 2<sup>nd</sup> wire rounder.** This is why I never glue down the 2<sup>nd</sup> wire—if you ever need to adjust it, it can do wonders for intonation. Instead of clipping the tip, make the 2<sup>nd</sup> wire rounder. If that doesn't work, then definitely clip the tip a bit.
- **Store your reeds in a container WITH VISIBLE VENTILATION.** I can't stress this one enough!
- **On Contra reeds:** every contrabassoon is different, so you may need to make adjustments to any contra reed you buy, depending on your instrument and what it needs—and of course what you WANT from your contra reeds. For example, I find that my reeds specifically will play pretty flat on Amati contrabassoons, and need to be clipped 1-2mm to play well in tune. They are tested on a Moosmann contra and a Fox contra pretty regularly, which seem to do just fine with room for the tuning slide to move in both directions.
- **Last but not least, shop around!!!** It's important to find what you like, and the easiest way to do that is to buy a bunch of different reeds from different makers—there are many different shapes, different materials, different canes, and different processes. Try everything!