

References and Resources for Directors Starting Students on Bassoon

Brands and Models

For beginners, many public school programs choose to purchase a plastic bassoon which tends to be easier to care for and less prone to breaking. The Fox Renard Model 41 and 51 are both very popular, however, a Fox Renard Model III or IV may be preferable as they have a more complete key system. The Model 41 or 51 offers a short reach option for beginning students which shortens the stretch between the right hand middle and ring fingers.

For a slightly higher price, Fox Products offers a durable Fox Renard Model 222 all-maple wooden bassoon that has an optional (and recommended) high D key.

For an intermediate student or one that is considering purchasing their own bassoon, the Fox Renard 220 or 240 are good options. These are typically too expensive for a school budget. Both bassoons have high D and E keys, whisper key locks, and additional rollers on keys for ease of finger movement and are good bridge instruments between student models and fully professional bassoon.

For professional use, a student might use a Fox model 601, 201, or II. This is an expensive purchase and is only recommended for college students and committed professionals. This should be done with consultation a private instructor and these bassoons are not usually the best option for public school use.

Parts and Accessories

All bassoons should be divided into **four parts (boot joint, wing joint, long joint, and bell) and will require at least one bocal**. Selection of 2 or 3 of different bocal lengths can assist with major tuning adjustments. Bocals come in different lengths and fox sizes 2 or 3 are recommended and are most common.

Reeds for beginning students are available from many double reed merchants. In a perfect world students would be able to purchase reeds from a private teacher or professional bassoonist who can make personalized reeds for their students. Among commercial reed makers, the “Jones” reed is perhaps the most common among beginners thanks to their wide availability. Dealers such as Forrests Music in Berkeley, California typically have a range of reeds of high quality for a comparable price.

A **seat strap** is an essential tool for holding the instrument. The most common option is the hook strap with the next most common option being the cup strap. Both work well although the hook strap attaches to a hole in the boot cap while the cup version is used when there is no hole drilled in the cap.

To clean the bassoon after playing, two different **swabs** are required. Both the boot joint and wing joint swabs can be made of cotton or silk, but as the bore dimensions are so different between the two joints the wing joint swab must be made of a narrower piece of material than the boot joint swab. Also, the boot joint swab often has a weight on one end to assist in moving it from one side of the boot through to the other. A well made swab should be longer than the joint

it is to be pulled through due to the fact that swabs can easily get stuck in the instrument. Having a swab that is longer than the joint ensures that there is enough cord on both ends to grasp in case the swab gets stuck.

Method Books for Beginning Students

A comprehensive method book is essential for every beginning bassoonist. The method by Julius Wiessenborn is the most commonly used book among students who are new to the bassoon. The edition revised by Fred Bettoney is widely available, but enhanced versions of this text by authors such as Doug Spaniol and his *New Weissenborn Method for Bassoon* might be more helpful for students learning on their own due to the more detailed descriptions and images.