

# Sample Woodwind Methods syllabus

By Bret Pimentel, DMA. Feel free to copy, adapt, and expand for use in your courses. Some background information:

- [“Things you need to cover in woodwind methods class”](#)
- [“Things you don’t need to cover in woodwind methods class”](#)
- [“Concept-based woodwind methods”](#)

## Course description

Introduction to teaching and playing woodwind instruments, geared toward music education majors.

## Text

[\*Woodwind Basics: Core concepts for playing and teaching flute, oboe, clarinet, bassoon, and saxophone\*](#), by Bret Pimentel. Published 2017 by Meaty Fresh Press. ISBN: 978-0-9988063-0-3

[For class situations with all students playing the same instrument at the same time, practice materials are selected from individual method books (such as the [\*Rubank Elementary Method\*](#)). For classes with students playing different instruments, practice materials are selected from a band method book (such as [\*Accent on Achievement\*](#)).]

## Major course activities

- A typical class session includes a brief lecture, review of the reading assignment, and class discussion. This is followed by playing assigned woodwind instruments individually and as a group, and giving and receiving critiques and suggestions.
- Preparation for typical class sessions should include practicing the assigned materials on the assigned instrument and reading the assigned text.
- During the course of the semester, students will write a series of reports based on observation (aural and visual) of live woodwind-instrument performances, using concepts learned in class to connect observations (positive and negative) with woodwind-playing techniques.
- During the course of the semester, students will participate in an online discussion board conversation, evaluating online woodwind pedagogical articles for their usefulness and trustworthiness in teaching beginning woodwind players. [Alternatively: evaluate pedagogical material from print books and journals, and compile a resource notebook.]
- Each of four units will culminate in a written test covering reading and lecture material, and a playing test covering material from the practice assignments. Playing tests are graded based on the instructor’s evaluation of the student’s success, and on comments written about classmates’ playing tests (these comments are for the instructor’s eyes only, and not shared with classmates).

# Schedule

[This sample schedule is based on meeting three times per week for 12 weeks. For many university semester schedules that leaves some extra room to incorporate additional topics or to spend time on additional in-class activities.]

Unit	Week	Day	Lecture topic	Reading assignment	Practice assignment	Activity
1	1	1	Introduction to the woodwind families Assembly/first notes on new instruments	<i>Woodwind Basics</i> chapter 1 <i>Woodwind Basics</i> chapter 5		Distribute instruments
		2	Posture and playing position	<i>Woodwind Basics</i> chapter 6	Assignment 1	
		3	Elements of woodwind sound: tone, response, intonation, volume/dynamics, fluency	<i>Woodwind Basics</i> chapter 3	Assignment 2	
	2	4	Basic woodwind acoustics	<i>Woodwind Basics</i> chapter 2	Assignment 3	
		5	Embouchure basics Flute embouchure	<i>Woodwind Basics</i> chapter 10 <a href="#">“Changing octaves on the flute”</a>	Assignment 4	
		6	Clarinet embouchure Saxophone embouchure	<i>Woodwind Basics</i> chapter 10 <a href="#">“Clarinet and saxophone embouchures and the ‘chin’”</a> <a href="#">“Please stop telling your clarinet students to tighten their embouchures”</a>	Assignment 5	Discussion board participation due

Unit	Week	Day	Lecture topic	Reading assignment	Practice assignment	Activity
	3	7	Oboe embouchure Bassoon embouchure	<i>Woodwind Basics</i> chapter 10 <a href="#">“The double reeds and ‘uneven’ embouchures”</a>	Assignment 6	
		8				Written test
		9				Playing test Collect instruments
2	4	10	Review tests Assembly/first notes on new instruments	(Review) <i>Woodwind Basics</i> chapter 5		Distribute instruments
		11	Breathing	<i>Woodwind Basics</i> chapter 7	Assignment 1	
		12	Breath support	<i>Woodwind Basics</i> chapter 8	Assignment 2	Concert report due
	5	13	Breath support	<i>Woodwind Basics</i> chapter 8	Assignment 3	
		14	Voicing	<i>Woodwind Basics</i> chapter 9	Assignment 4	
		15	Voicing	<i>Woodwind Basics</i> chapter 9	Assignment 5	Discussion board participation due
	6	16	Articulation	<i>Woodwind Basics</i> chapter 12	Assignment 6	
		17				Written test
		18				Playing test Collect instruments
3	7	19	Review tests Assembly/first notes on new instruments	(Review) <i>Woodwind Basics</i> chapter 5		Distribute instruments

Unit	Week	Day	Lecture topic	Reading assignment	Practice assignment	Activity
		20	Finger technique	<i>Woodwind Basics</i> chapter 13	Assignment 1	
		21	Fingering selection	<i>Woodwind Basics</i> chapter 14	Assignment 2	Concert report due
	8	22	Fingering selection	<i>Woodwind Basics</i> chapter 14	Assignment 3	
		23	Tuning	<i>Woodwind Basics</i> chapter 11	Assignment 4	
		24	Tuning	<i>Woodwind Basics</i> chapter 11	Assignment 5	Discussion board participation due
	9	25			Assignment 6	
		26				Written test
		27				Playing test Collect instruments
4	10	28	Review tests Assembly/first notes on new instruments	(Review) <i>Woodwind Basics</i> chapter 5		Distribute instruments
		29	Instruments and accessories	<i>Woodwind Basics</i> chapter 15	Assignment 1	
		30	Instruments and accessories (reeds)	<i>Woodwind Basics</i> chapter 15	Assignment 2	Concert report due
	11	31	Which woodwind to play? (matching prospective students to instruments)	<i>Woodwind Basics</i> chapter 4	Assignment 3	
		32	Woodwind transpositions	<a href="#"><u>“Why do some instruments transpose?”</u></a>	Assignment 4	
		33	Basic woodwind repairs	<a href="#"><u>“A toolkit for simple woodwind repairs”</u></a>	Assignment 5	Discussion board participation due

Unit	Week	Day	Lecture topic	Reading assignment	Practice assignment	Activity
	12	34	Basic woodwind repairs	<a href="#">“Do it yourself: replace a tenon cork”</a> <a href="#">“Do it yourself: replace saxophone palm key pads”</a>	Assignment 6	
		35				Written test
		36				Playing test Collect instruments