

Learn to Play the Bagpipes

Working Draft



Provided by the Garden Valley Pipe Band
in memory of Zach Lees

This is a working draft,

if you encounter errors in this document or have ideas/suggestions to improve it, please send them to:

JAMES@GARDENVALLEYPIPEBAND.ORG

Please include the applicable page number(s) in your email.

Thanks!

Index/Progress Sheet

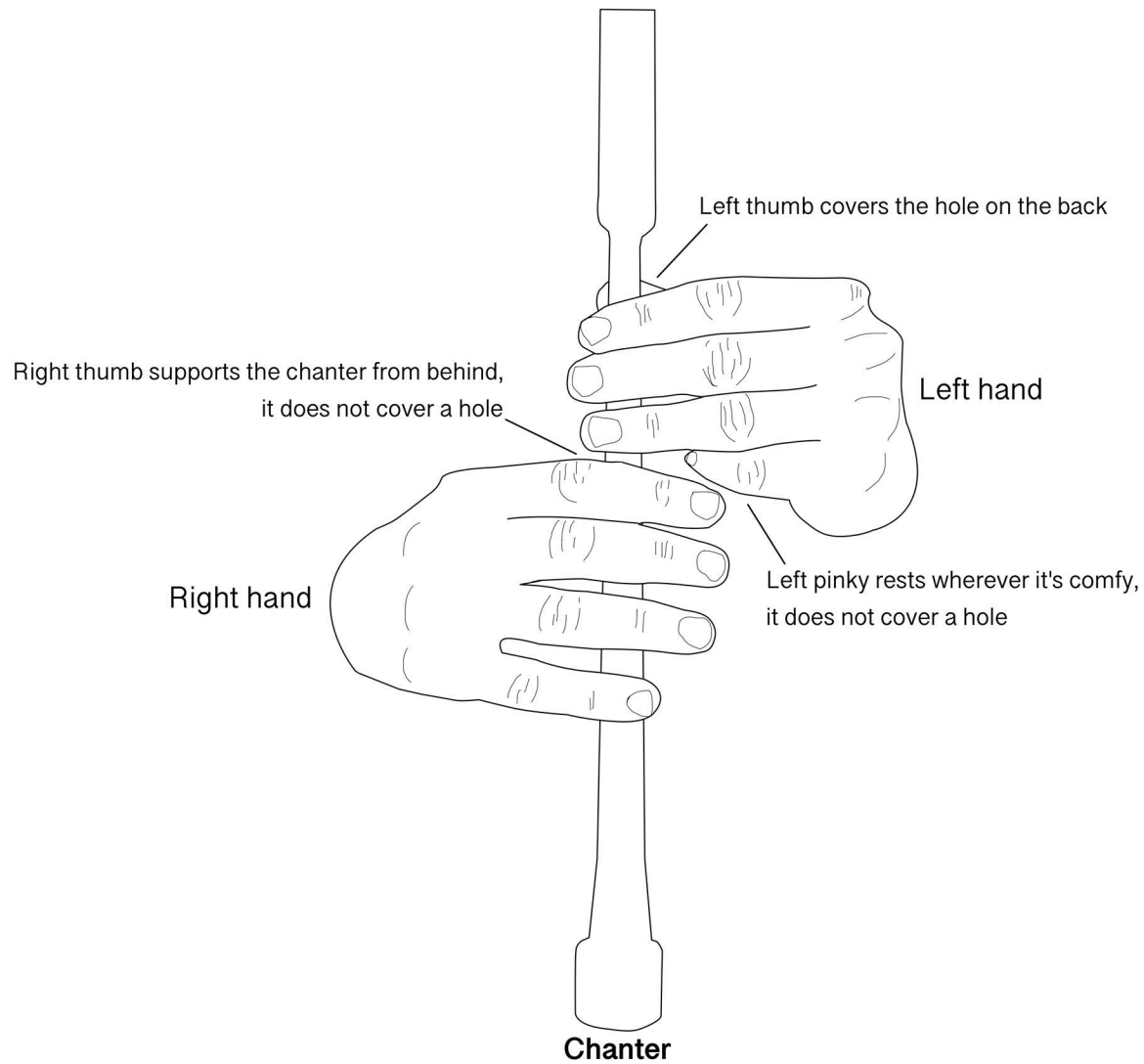


Week	Pg.	Principal/Song	Instructor Initials	Date of Pass-off
BEGINNER				
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Week	Pg.	Principal/Song	Instructor Initials	Date of Pass-off
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Additional Tunes				
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	58	Bonnie Dundee (CM)		
	59	The Green Hills of Tyrol (CM)		
	60	When the Battle's O'er (CM)		
	61	The Highland Laddie (CM)		
	62	Rowan Tree (CM)		

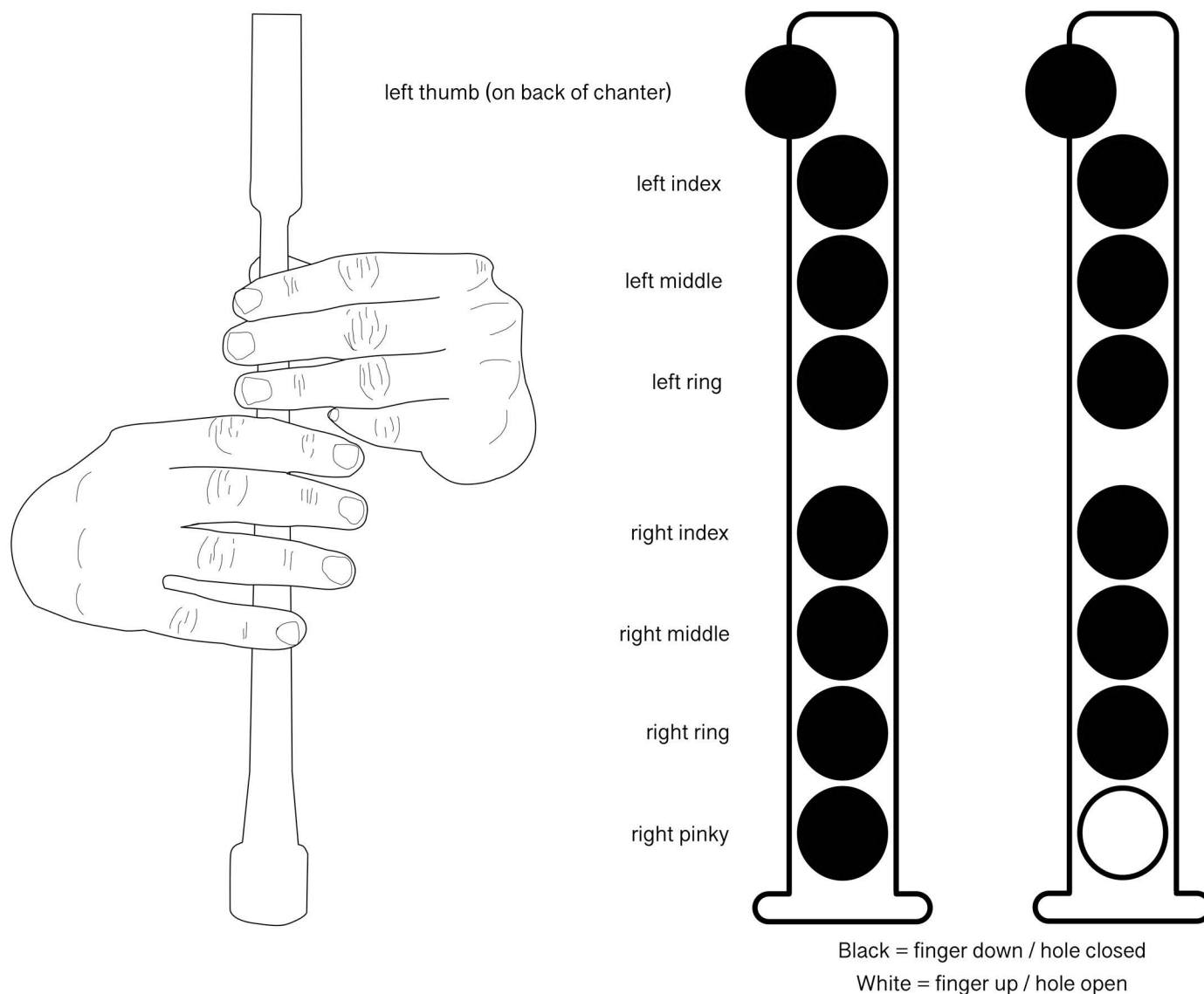
Holding the Chanter

Chapter 1



Holding the Chanter

Chapter 1



Do not play with your finger tips, fingers should be relaxed and relatively straight



Do not squeeze the chanter, hold it gently so your fingers can move freely



It may be helpful to rest the base of your chanter on your knee, a table, or something similar

The Scale

Chapter 2



"The Lower Hand"

Ex. 2.1



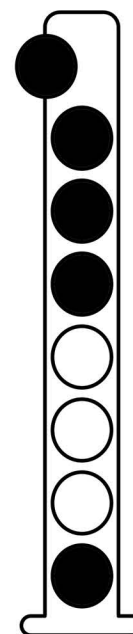
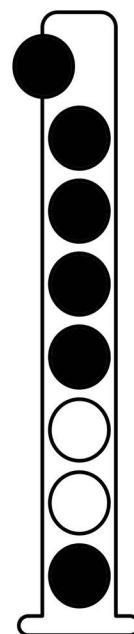
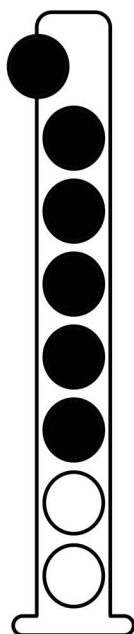
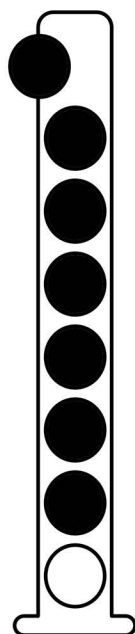
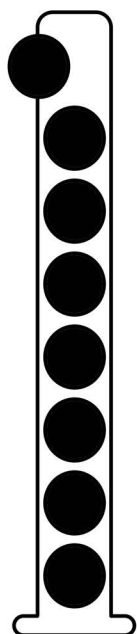
G

A

B

C

D



all fingers down

lift right pinky

lift right pinky
and right ring

lift right ring
and right middle,
keep right pinky
down

lift right ring,
right middle,
and right index;
keep right pinky
down



Play each of these notes. When you begin to feel comfortable, try playing the scale from G, at the bottom, up to D without taking a break between notes

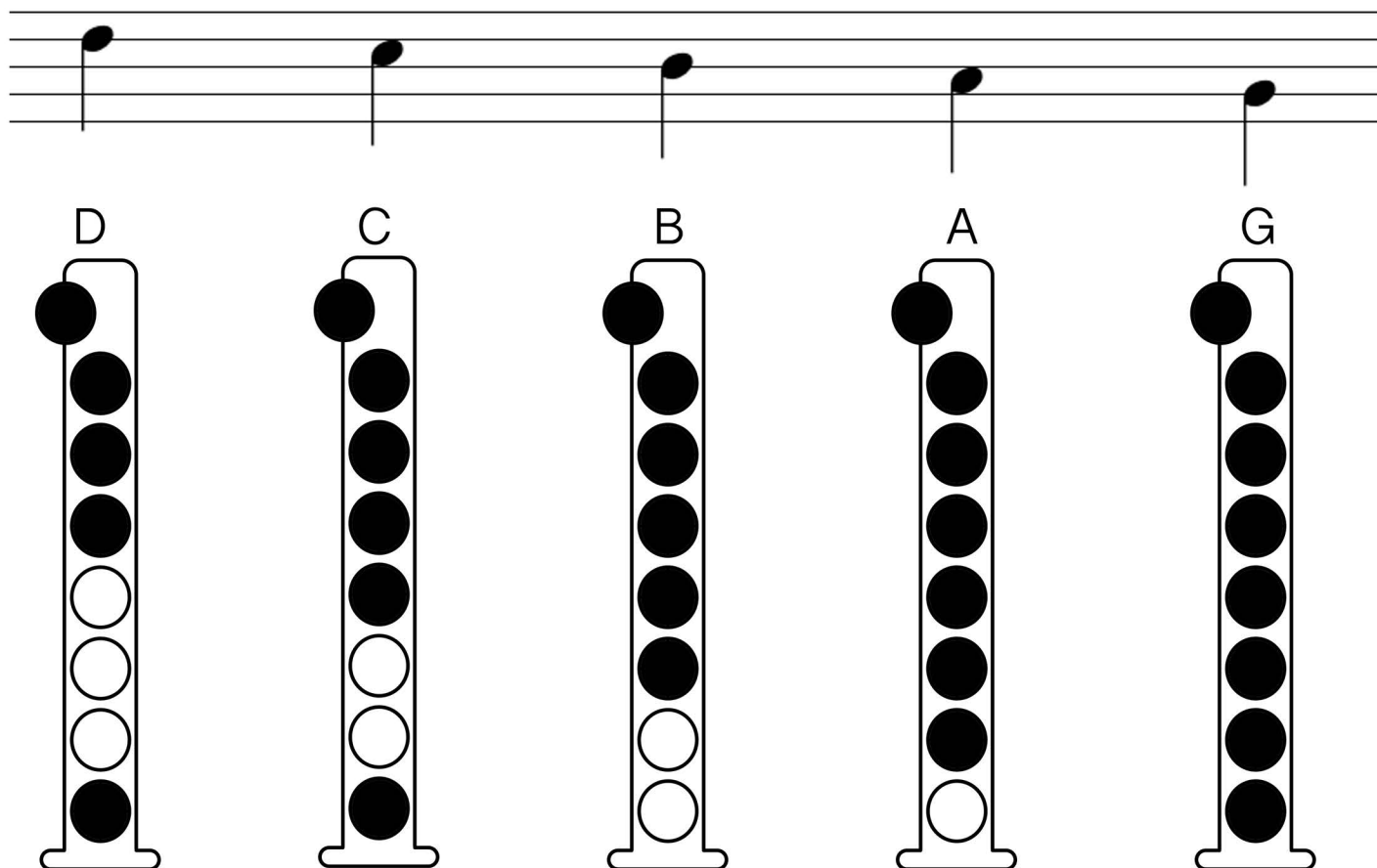
The Scale

Chapter 2



"The Lower Hand"

Ex. 2.2



Now try playing the same notes, but from D down to G

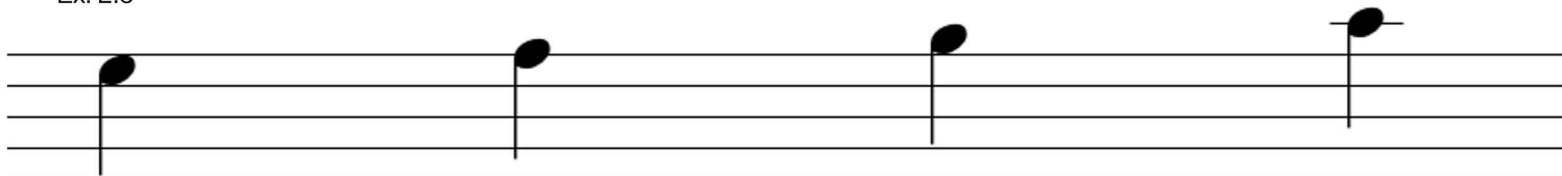
The Scale

Chapter 2

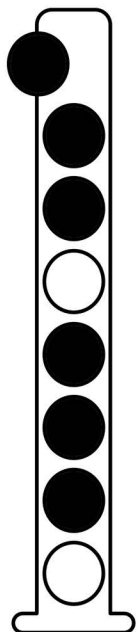


"The Upper Hand"

Ex. 2.3

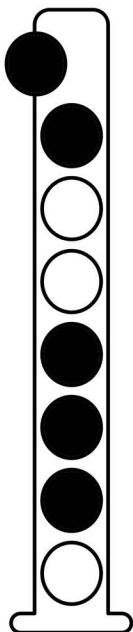


E



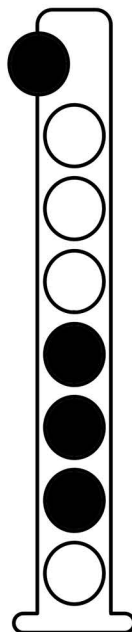
lift right pinky
and left
ring finger

F



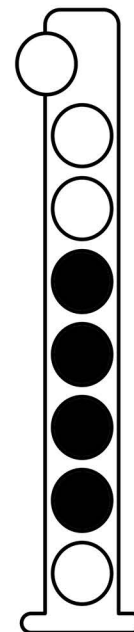
lift right pinky,
left ring,
and left middle

(high) G



lift right pinky,
left ring,
left middle,
and left pointer

(high) A



lift right pinky,
drop left ring,
lift left middle,
left pointer,
and left thumb



Play each of these notes. When you begin to feel comfortable, try playing the scale from E up to high-A without taking a break between notes

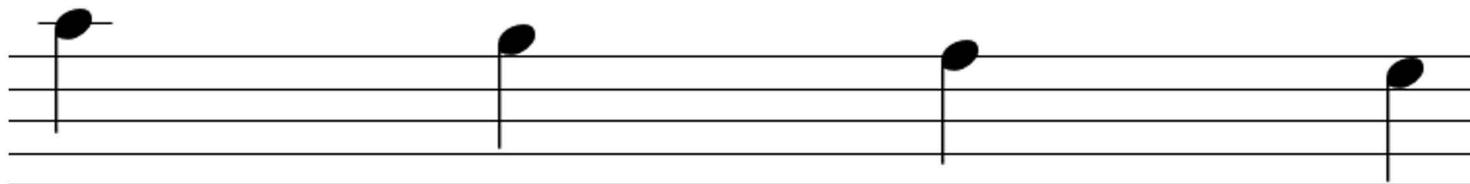
The Scale

Chapter 2



"The Upper Hand"

Ex. 2.4

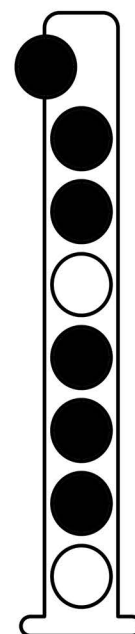
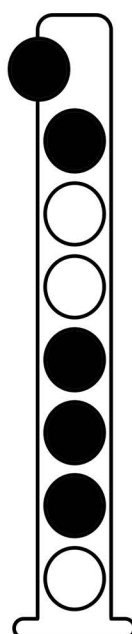
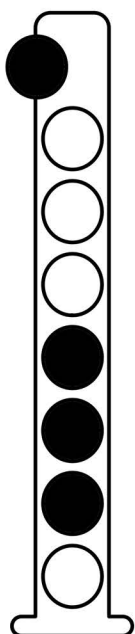
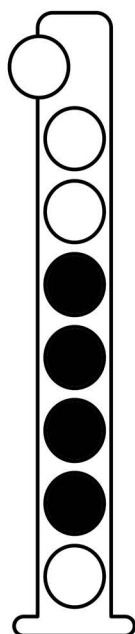


(high) A

(high) G

F

E



Now try playing the same notes, but from high-A down to E

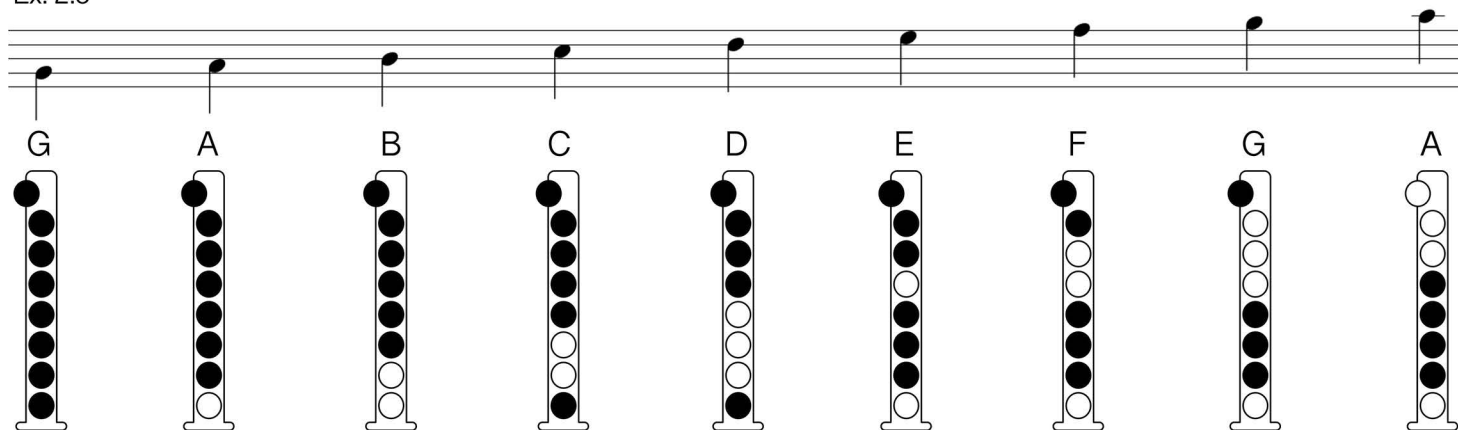
The Scale

Chapter 2



Scale - Bottom to Top

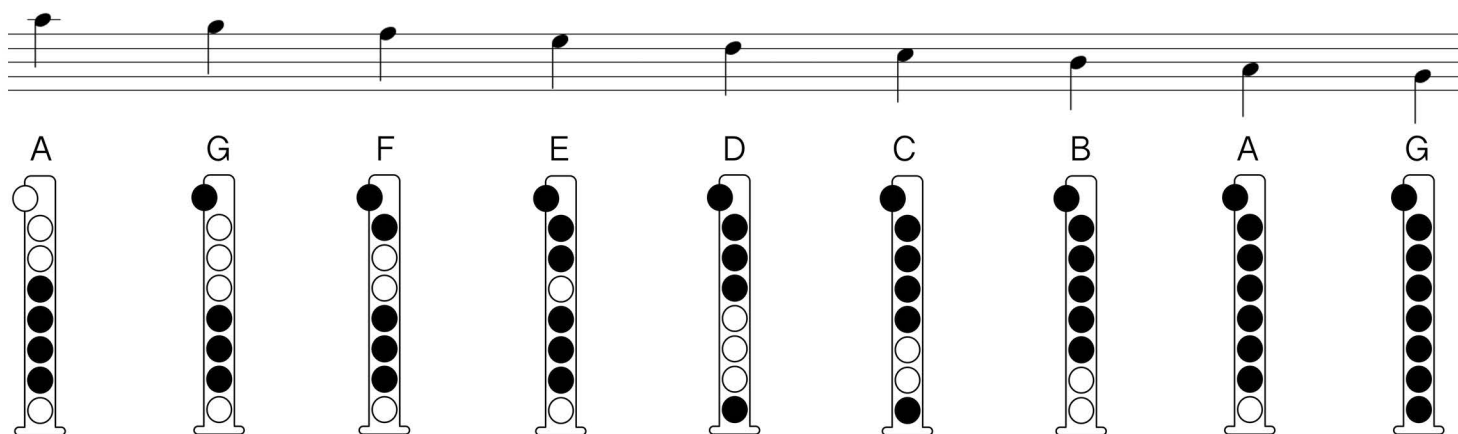
Ex. 2.5



Once you're comfortable, try covering the fingering diagrams

Ex. 2.6

Scale - Top to Bottom



The Scale

Chapter 2



Ex. 2.7

Exercise 2.7 shows a musical staff with ten notes: G, A, B, A, B, C, B, C, D, and A. Below each note is a vertical diagram of a pipe with seven holes. The fingerings are as follows:

- G: 6th hole black, 7th hole white
- A: 5th hole black, 6th hole white, 7th hole white
- B: 4th hole black, 5th hole white, 6th hole white, 7th hole white
- A: 5th hole black, 6th hole white, 7th hole white
- B: 4th hole black, 5th hole white, 6th hole white, 7th hole white
- C: 3rd hole black, 4th hole white, 5th hole white, 6th hole white, 7th hole black
- B: 4th hole black, 5th hole white, 6th hole white, 7th hole white
- C: 3rd hole black, 4th hole white, 5th hole white, 6th hole white, 7th hole black
- D: 2nd hole black, 3rd hole white, 4th hole white, 5th hole white, 6th hole white, 7th hole black
- A: 5th hole black, 6th hole white, 7th hole white

Ex. 2.8

Exercise 2.8 shows a musical staff with ten notes: D, C, B, C, B, A, B, A, G, and A. Below each note is a vertical diagram of a pipe with seven holes. The fingerings are as follows:

- D: 2nd hole black, 3rd hole white, 4th hole white, 5th hole white, 6th hole white, 7th hole black
- C: 3rd hole black, 4th hole white, 5th hole white, 6th hole white, 7th hole black
- B: 4th hole black, 5th hole white, 6th hole white, 7th hole white
- C: 3rd hole black, 4th hole white, 5th hole white, 6th hole white, 7th hole black
- B: 4th hole black, 5th hole white, 6th hole white, 7th hole white
- A: 5th hole black, 6th hole white, 7th hole white
- B: 4th hole black, 5th hole white, 6th hole white, 7th hole white
- A: 5th hole black, 6th hole white, 7th hole white
- G: 6th hole black, 7th hole white
- A: 5th hole black, 6th hole white, 7th hole white

The Scale

Chapter 2



Ex. 2.9

Exercise 2.9 shows a musical staff with ten notes: E, F, G, F, G, A, G, F, G, F. Below each note is a vertical fingering diagram for a pipe. The diagrams show the sequence of fingerings (black dots for closed, white circles for open) for each note. The sequence of fingerings is: E (1, 2, 3, 4, 5), F (1, 2, 3, 4, 5), G (1, 2, 3, 4, 5), F (1, 2, 3, 4, 5), G (1, 2, 3, 4, 5), A (1, 2, 3, 4, 5), G (1, 2, 3, 4, 5), F (1, 2, 3, 4, 5), G (1, 2, 3, 4, 5), F (1, 2, 3, 4, 5).

Ex. 2.10

Exercise 2.10 shows a musical staff with ten notes: A, G, F, G, F, E, F, G, F, G. Below each note is a vertical fingering diagram for a pipe. The diagrams show the sequence of fingerings (black dots for closed, white circles for open) for each note. The sequence of fingerings is: A (1, 2, 3, 4, 5), G (1, 2, 3, 4, 5), F (1, 2, 3, 4, 5), G (1, 2, 3, 4, 5), F (1, 2, 3, 4, 5), E (1, 2, 3, 4, 5), F (1, 2, 3, 4, 5), G (1, 2, 3, 4, 5), F (1, 2, 3, 4, 5), G (1, 2, 3, 4, 5).

The Scale

Chapter 2



London Bridges

1 - 2 & 3 4 | 1 2 3 - 4 | 1 2 3 - 4 | 1 2 3 - 4

1 - 2 & 3 4 | 1 2 3 - 4 | 1 - 2 3 - 4 | 1 2 - 3 - 4

Ex. 2.11

G B A C B D C E D F E G F A G

Ex. 2.12

A G A F A E A D A C A B A A A G A

Ex. 2.13

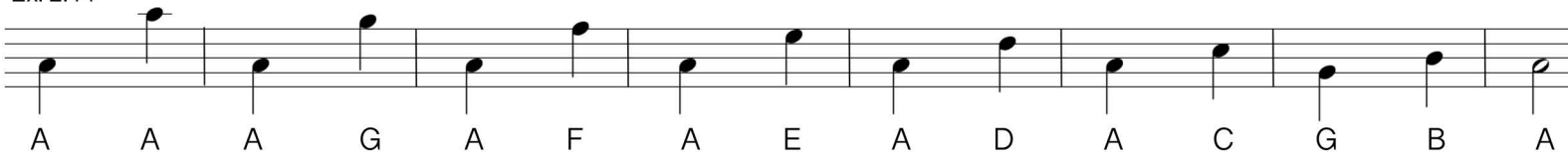
A C E A E C A D F A F D G B D G D B E C B A

The Scale

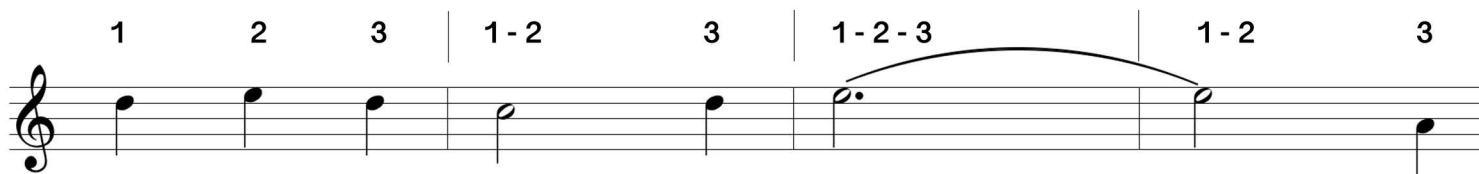
Chapter 2



Ex. 2.14



Damhsa Hat Mheicsiceo



Gracenotes - G,D,E


Chapter 3




these are gracenotes



 Gracenotes can separate the notes of a song

 Gracenotes have no, 'mathematical,' value - so in the example above, there are only four beats, just as there would be with no gracenotes at all

 Gracenotes are embellishments - we use them to make songs sound fancy

Gracenotes - G,D,E

Chapter 3



This is a G-gracenote

play "A"

pop your left pointer finger off of the chanter

return your left pointer finger to the chanter



Gracenotes happen quickly. You want your gracenote to sound like a quick, little "pop" or "beep".

Gracenotes - G,D,E

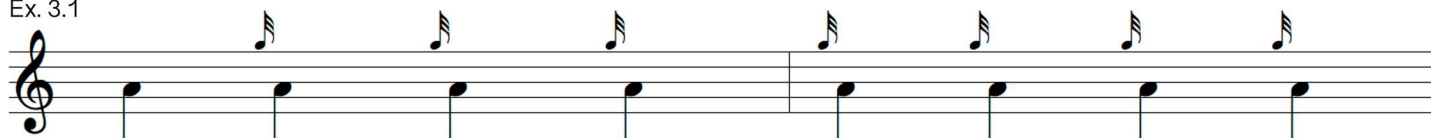
Chapter 3



G-Gracenote

exercises

Ex. 3.1




Ex. 3.2

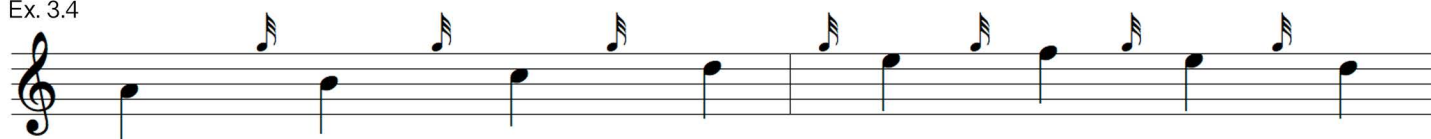


Ex. 3.3

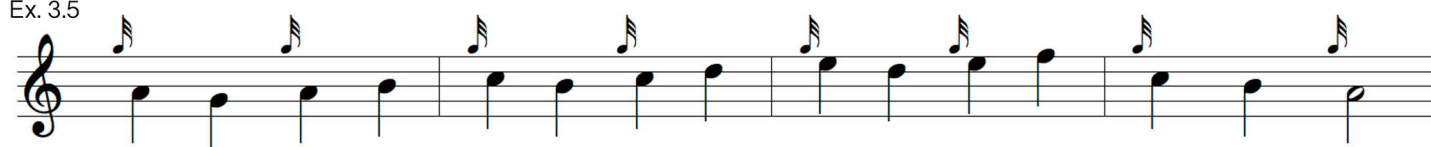


 Note that for the above exercises, the left-index is the only finger that moves, making the repeated G-gracenotes.

Ex. 3.4



Ex. 3.5



Gracenotes - G,D,E

Chapter 3



This is a D-gracenote

play "A"

pop your right pointer finger off of the chanter

return your right pointer finger to the chanter



The D-gracenote is exactly like the G-gracenote you've been practicing, except with the opposite hand.

Gracenotes - G,D,E

Chapter 3



Gort na Saileán


The Maids of Mourne Shore



Mo Ghile Mear

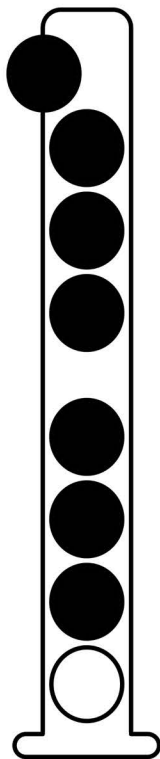
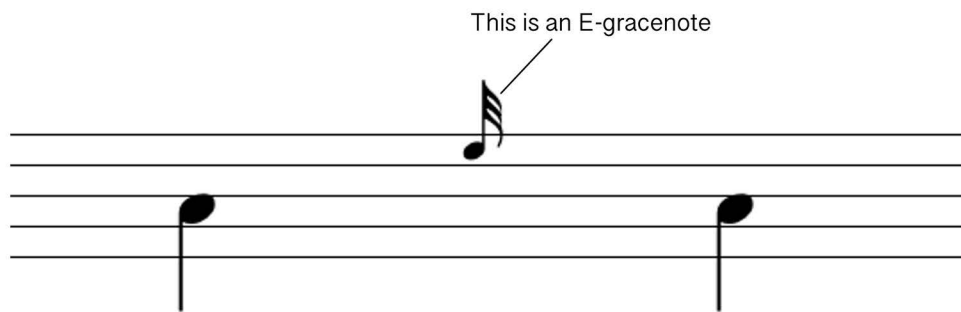
chorus, simplified



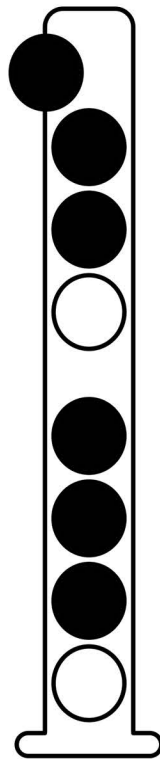
 Note that the top song is in "4/4" time and the bottom song is in "C" time. In this case, the "C" stands for "Common" and means "4/4" time. In other words, "C" and "4/4" both mean the same thing. Four counts per measure.

Gracenotes - G,D,E

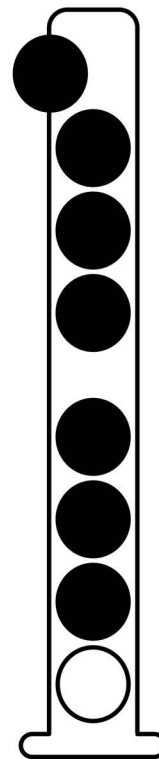
Chapter 3




play "A"



pop your left ring
finger off
of the chanter



return your left ring
finger
to the chanter

 The E-gracenote differs from the G and D-gracenotes only in that it is done using your top ring finger, so you're playing a brief, small "E-beep".

Gracenotes - G,D,E

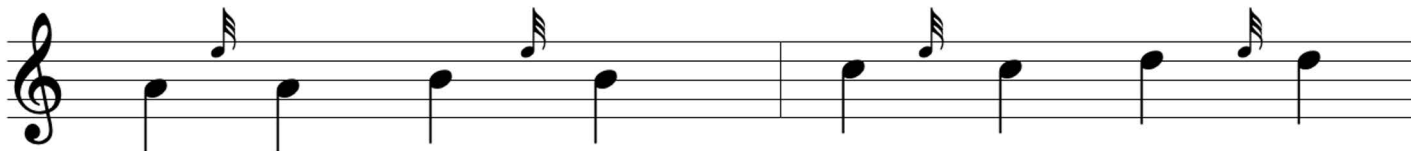
Chapter 3



E-Gracenote

exercises

Ex. 3.11



Ex. 3.12



Don't get discouraged if the E-gracenote is more difficult than those you previously learned. Moving the ring finger independently is more difficult than moving your pointer fingers independently

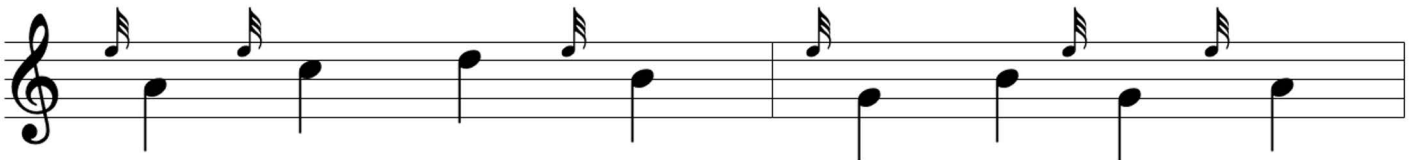


Moving your ring finger independently throughout the day will help gain dexterity for playing the E-gracenote. Try tapping your steering wheel, table or desk top, etc. with just the ring-finger while keeping all other fingers stationary

Ex. 3.13



Ex. 3.14

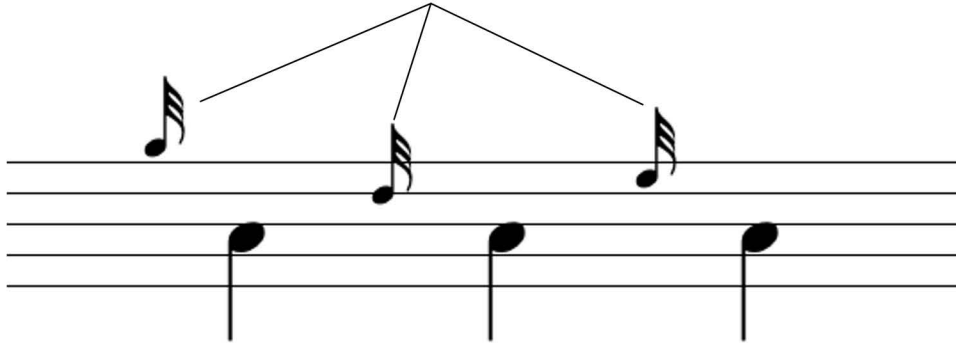



Gracenotes - G,D,E

Chapter 3

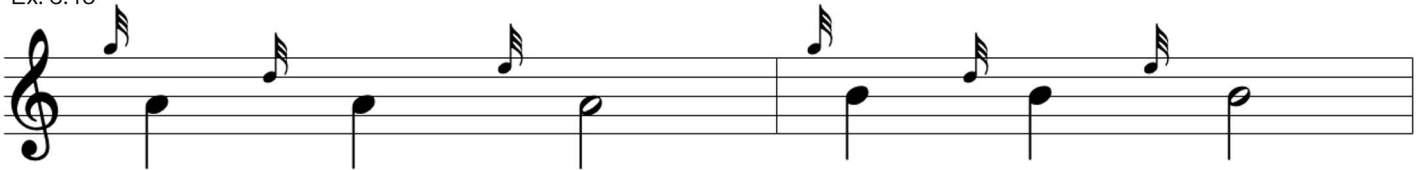


This combination is referred to as a "G.D.E."

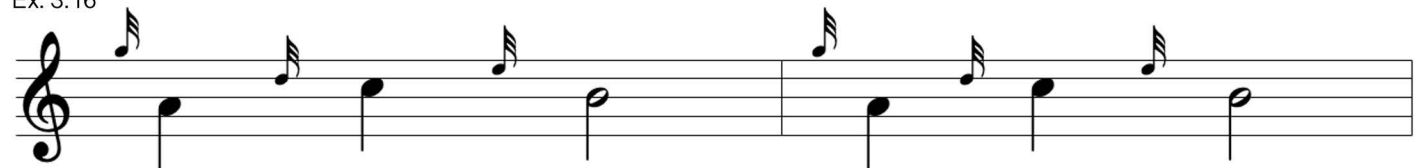


 Often songs will include sequences where a G, D, and E gracenote are played in-sequence. When this occurs, the combination of gracenotes can be lumped-together into what we call a, "GDE"

Ex. 3.15



Ex. 3.16



Ex. 3.17






Whiskey, You're the Devil

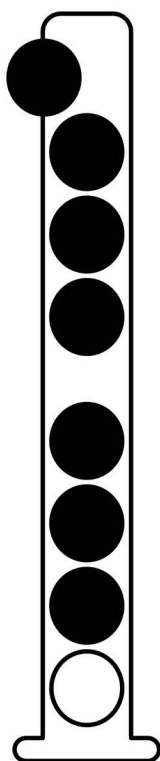
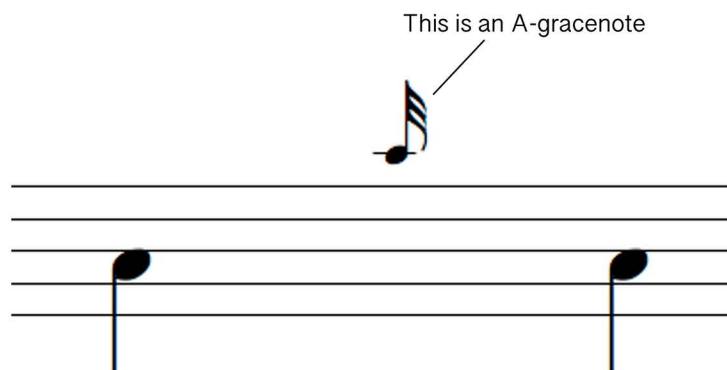
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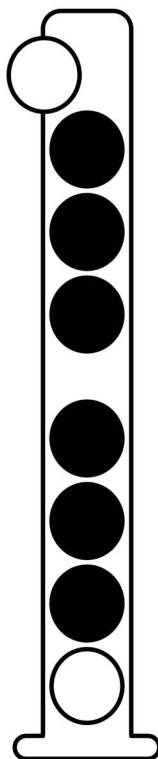
 Take your time and keep your fingering clean. Learning an instrument can be difficult, but it's even more difficult to learn an instrument incorrectly, and then have to re-learn it again. Don't rush yourself. Get these basics down good and proper, and you'll be setting yourself up for success.

High A Gracenote & Taps

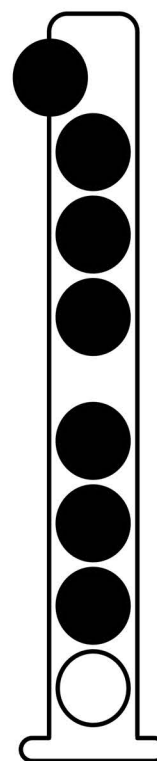
Chapter 4




play "A"



pop your left thumb off
of the chanter



return your left thumb
to the chanter

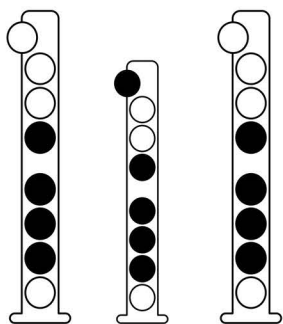
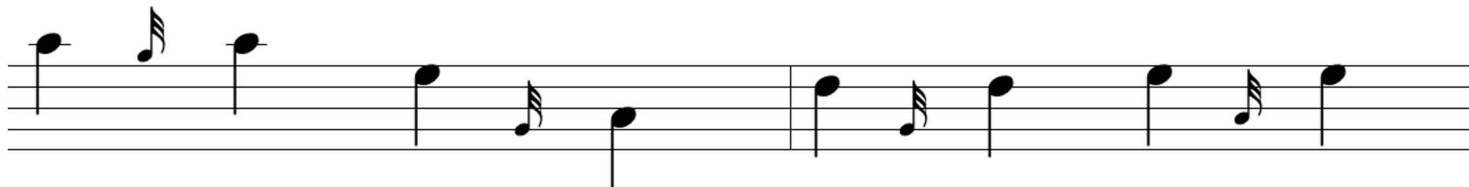
 The A-gracenote is simple to understand but can be challenging to play. Repeated practice, building muscle memory, is the only way to get that thumb to land perfectly on the hole every time. Practice this a lot, but **don't** squeeze your chanter too hard. Stay relaxed.

High A Gracenote & Taps

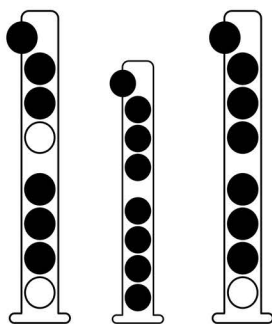
Chapter 4



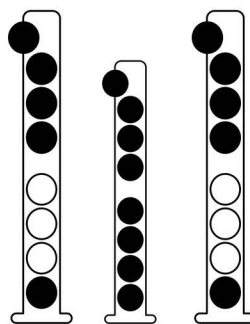
This embellishment goes by a few names, here we'll call it a, "tap".



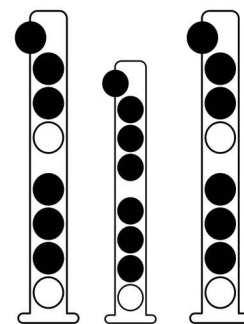
Play high-A, brush your left thumb across the top-most note, and you're back to high-A



Play E, briefly put all fingers on the chanter, then lift your right pinky to play A



Play D, briefly drop your right pointer, middle, and ring fingers onto the chanter, then pop them right back up again



Play E, touch your left ring finger to the chanter briefly, then pop it back up again



Put simply, a **gracenote** happens **above** the melody line, while a **tap** happens **below** the melody line.

High A Gracenote & Taps

Chapter 4



Ex. 4.1



Ex. 4.2



As you advance you may be given fewer exercises in some chapters, but they will increase in difficulty. Practice them repeatedly and master them before moving-on. Moving-on before you're ready is like building a house on an incomplete foundation.

Ex. 4.3



Ex. 4.4



High A Gracenote & Taps

Chapter 4



Going Home

Anton Dvorak

Skye Boat Song

Boulton & McLeod

Doublings

Chapter 5



These embellishments are doublings and half-doublings



Doublings are, basically, a set of two gracenotes played in rapid succession.



It is very common for students, when learning to play doublings, to overdo it a bit. Their fingers, trying to play quickly, end up fluttering excessively, so instead of a nice, controlled doubling like this:



we end up with a jittery, uncontrolled mess like this:



Doublings

Chapter 5



E Doubling



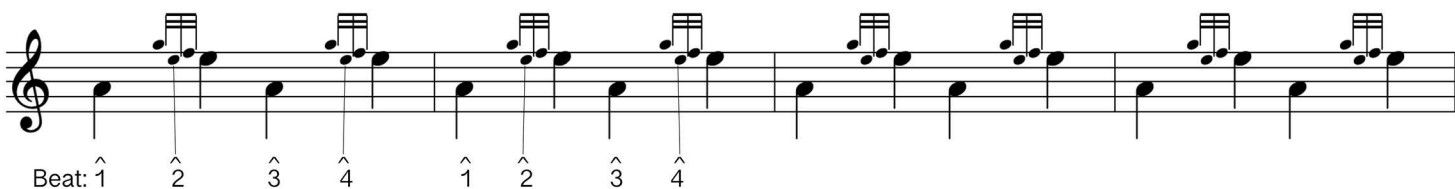
1: Play a low-A

2: G-gracenote to E

3: F-gracenote, (just lift your middle finger for a blip)

4: Rest on E

---play the first line through a few times, then play the following lines, "tightening," the E between the gracenotes---



Doublings

Chapter 5



Ex. 5.1



Ex. 5.2



Mari's Little Plate o' Haggis

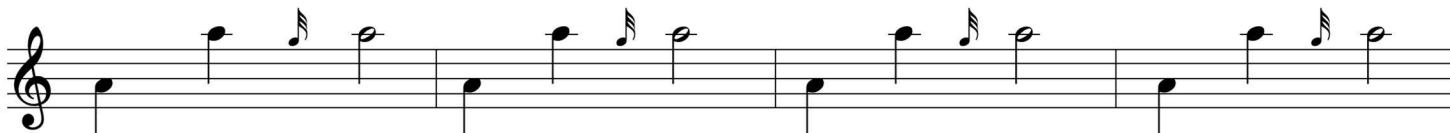


Doublings

Chapter 5



A Doubling

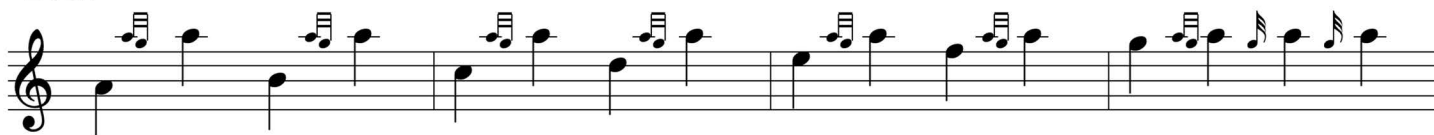


- 1: Play a low-A
- 2: Play high-A
- 3: Just brush your thumb across high-A so you play a tiny, "g," beep
- 4: Rest on A

Ex. 5.3



Ex. 5.4



Ex. 5.5



Doublings

Chapter 5



C Doubling



- 1: Play a low-A
- 2: G-gracenote to C
- 3: Play a D gracenote, stay on C

Ex. 5.6



Ex. 5.7



Ex. 5.8



Chapter 5

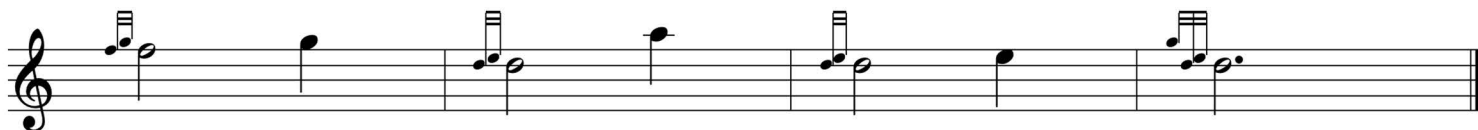


The first measure of the song 'The Old Church' is shown. It features a treble clef and a key signature of one flat (B-flat). The melody consists of four notes: a half note on G4, a quarter note on A4, a quarter note on B4, and a half note on C5. The lyrics 'The old church' are written below the notes.



- 1: Play a low-A
- 2: G-gracenote to D
- 3: Play a E gracenote, stay on D

Ex. 5.9

[illegible][illegible]



The Dark Island

Part 1, simplified

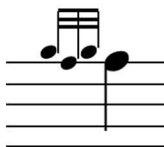


Doublings

Chapter 5

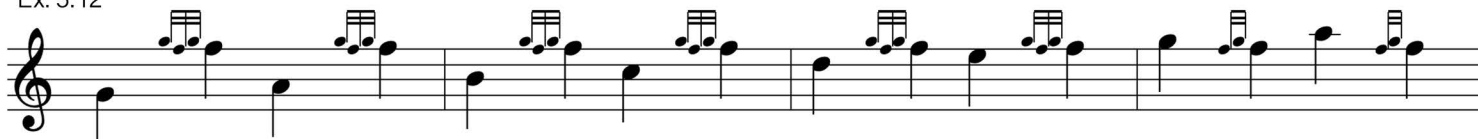


F Doubling



- 1: Play a low-A
- 2: G-gracenote to F
- 3: Play another G-gracenote

Ex. 5.12



Ex. 5.13



Ex. 5.14



Chapter 5



The first measure of the song 'The Old Church' is written on a five-line staff. It begins with a treble clef and a key signature of one flat (B-flat). The melody consists of four notes: a quarter note on the second line (D4), a quarter note on the second space (E4), a half note on the third line (F4), and a half note on the third space (G4). The measure is divided into two equal parts by a vertical bar line.



- 1: Play a low-A
- 2: G-gracenote to B
- 3: Play a D gracenote, stay on B

Ex. 3.13



Ex. 3.13



Part 1, simplified



Doublings

Chapter 5

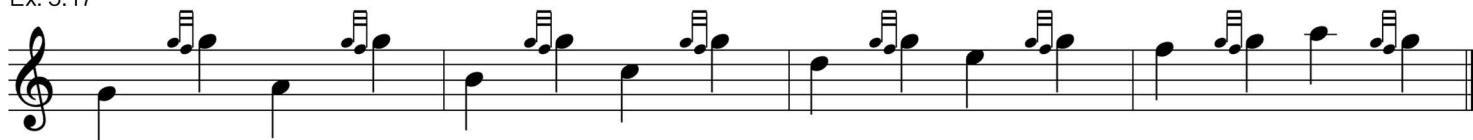


G Doubling

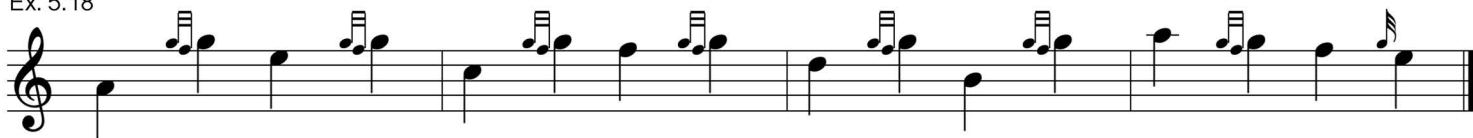


- 1: Play a low-A
- 2: Play high-G
- 3: Quick F-tap, back to G

Ex. 5.17



Ex. 5.18



Doublings

Chapter 5



Idumea

The musical score for 'Idumea' is written in 3/4 time and consists of four staves. The first staff begins with a treble clef and a 3/4 time signature. The melody is composed of eighth and sixteenth notes, often beamed together in pairs. The second staff continues the melody with similar rhythmic patterns. The third staff shows a continuation of the piece, maintaining the same tempo and key. The fourth staff concludes the piece with a final note and a double bar line.



Strikes/Shakes

Chapter 6




Some people call these, "Strikes," others call them, "Shakes"



There are typically three steps to a Strike (or Shake):

- 1-High gracenote, usually G, but sometimes A
- 2-Land on the, "target note," as seen above
- 3-Low tap, usually low-G or A, before returning to the, "target note"



"Proper," names for these movements vary, usually they are known as Strikes or Shakes, but sometimes what you see above is called by one of those names while this:  is known by the other. Alternatively, some make a distinction between, "heavy," and, "light," Strikes or Shakes.

You will probably find it easiest and best to just call them by whatever name your instructor uses.

Strikes/Shakes

Chapter 6



D Strike/Shake



Play each measure until it is comfortable, then move to the next, (don't worry about time signature).

Ex. 6.1



This is what some would call a Strike or Shake in contrast to the first line of this page. Others would refer to this as a **light** Strike or Shake while the above would be a **heavy** Strike or Shake. The only change is replacing the low-G tap with a C-tap, instead.

Ex. 6.2



Strikes/Shakes

Chapter 6



Ex. 6.3



Ex. 6.4



Ex. 6.5



The Leaving o' Liverpool



Strikes/Shakes


Chapter 6



Highland Cathedral

Roever & Korb



 At the end of this arrangement you'll notice the Italian phrase, "D.C. al Fine," which means, "Da Capo al Fine," or in English, "from the head to the end". This indicates that you should go back to the beginning of the song, and play until you encounter the end, "Fine".

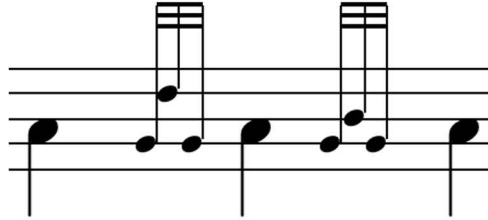
So, in this case, play the entire song straight through, then repeat the first two lines, (we ignore the word, "fine," in measure eight the first time through).

Grip/Leumluath & Taorluath

Chapter 7



These are two kinds of Leumluath, also known as "Grips"



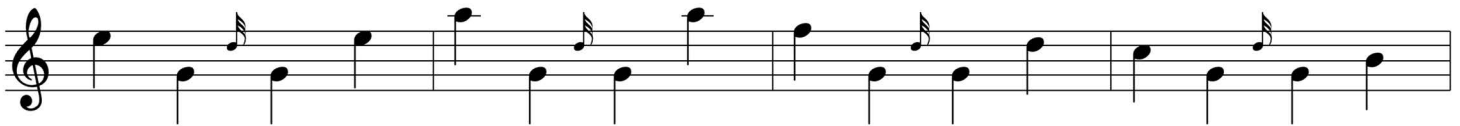
first we will learn to play a Grip with a D gracenote in the middle,
then we will learn to play a Grip with a B gracenote in the middle



Steps for playing a Grip/Leumluath with a D gracenote:

- 1: From the starting note, drop to low-G
- 2: Play a D gracenote
- 3: Return to low-G before moving-on to the target note

---play these two lines nice and slow, (don't worry about time signature,) to get a feel for the movement---



Grip/Leumluath & Taorluath

Chapter 7



Ex. 7.1



Ex. 7.2



Ex. 7.3



Ex. 7.4



Grip/Leumluath & Taorluath

Chapter 7



Now we will learn to play a Grip with a B gracenote in the middle.

Note: this is generally only played from C & D.



Steps for playing a Grip/Leumluath with a B gracenote:

- 1: From the starting note, drop to low-G
- 2: Play a B gracenote (lift your right/bottom ring finger)
- 3: Return to low-G before moving-on to the target note

---play these two lines nice and slow to get a feel for the movement. Don't get discouraged if it's more difficult than playing grips with a D gracenote -- using ring fingers indipendently is always a challenge. Practice, practice, practice---

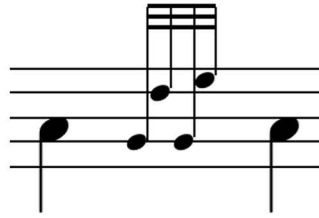


Ex. 7.5



Grip/Leumluath & Taorluath

Chapter 7



This is a Taorluath, no one knows how to pronounce this word.



Steps for playing a Taorluath:

- 1: From the starting note, drop to low-G
 - 2: Play a D gracenote
 - 3: Return to low-G briefly
 - 4: Play an E gracenote to the target note
- This is basically just a Grip with D gracenote plus an E gracenote at the end---



(just pause in between each of the measures in this line)



(feel free to move slowly through these last two measures)



The Star of the County Down



Throws

Chapter 8



This is a Throw



This movement is known by several variations of the following names: Throw, D-Throw, Throw-on-D, Light-Throw, etc.



Steps for playing a Throw:

- 1: From the starting note, drop to low-G
- 2: Play a D (briefly)
- 3: Play a C-tap and return to D

*This movement is used exclusively to land on D, the target note will always be D.



---play these measures nice and slow, (don't worry about time signature,) to get a feel for the movement---

Throws

Chapter 8



Ex. 8.1

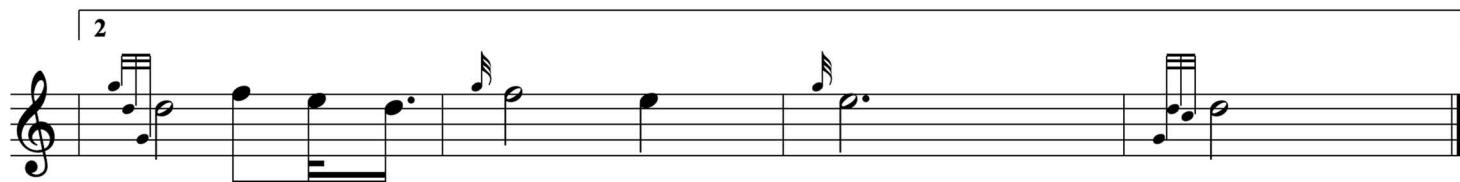
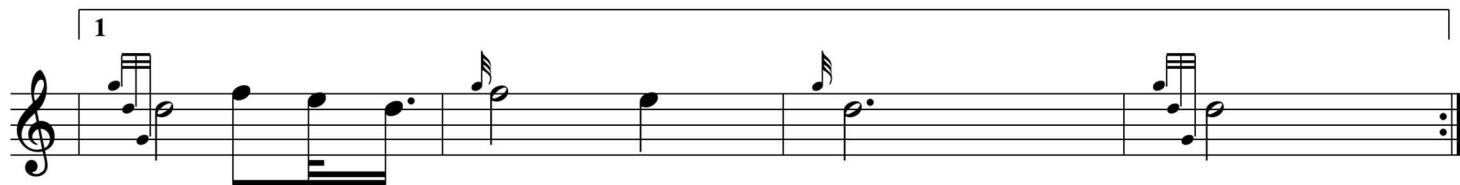


Ex. 8.2



Amazing Grace

WUSPBA Setting



*Note: in the following pages, you'll learn songs known as, "common marches". These are tunes that many pipers all over the world learn, and they're often heard in Massed Bands at competitions, Highland Games, etc. Because these tunes are played by many, many bands, there are many versions. The versions in this book are the versions used by the Western United States Pipe Band Association.

Throws

Chapter 8



This is a Heavy Throw



This embellishment is also known by several names, such as:
Heavy-D-Throw, Deep-Throw-on-D, Heavy-Throw, etc.



Steps for playing a Heavy Throw:

- 1: From the starting note, drop to low-G
- 2: Play a D-gracenote, (lifting only the lower pointer-finger)
- 3: Return to low-G
- 4: Play C (briefly) and land on D

*This movement is also used exclusively to land on D, the target note will always be D.



---play these measures nice and slow, (don't worry about time signature,) to get a feel for the movement---

Throws

Chapter 8



Ex. 8.3



Ex. 8.4



The Grey Cock





The Brown Haired Maiden

WUSPBA Setting





Scotland the Brave

WUSPBA Setting





This is a Birl



Steps for playing a Birl:

- 1: From the starting note, drop to low-A
- 2: Play a low-G tap, staying on low-A
- 3: Play another low-G tap
- 4: Remain on low-A, Birls always end on Low-A

*There are several ways to achieve these rapid low-G taps, some are described below, your instructor may have other strategies, techniques, etc. Try it a few ways to find what works best to you, and listen to your instructor/Pipe Major.



Method 1: "Double Tap"

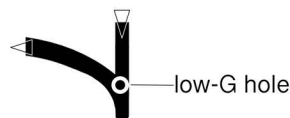
Just bounce your pinky on the low-G hole twice as quickly as you can

Method 2: "Brush-By"

Place your pinky on the chanter, in the space between your ring finger and the low-G hole. Brush your pinky past the low-G hole completely, then brush it back up to where it started. As your pinky passes over the low-G hole, it produces the two low-G taps shown in measure one above.

Method 3: "Sideways Seven"

Like the, "Brush-By," place your pinky in the space between your ring finger and the low-G hole. Brush your pinky down to get the first low-G, then curl your pinky off the chanter as it brushes back up, across the low-G hole. The end of your pinky will trace a sideways, "7":



Birls/Tachums

Chapter 9



Ex. 9.1

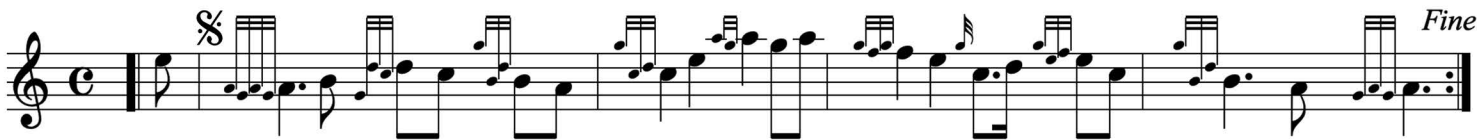


Ex. 9.2



Notice that, because the preceding note is an A,
this birl is notated without the first A seen in all other
cases on this line.

The Minstrel Boy



At the end of this arrangement you'll notice the abbreviation, "D.S." which means, "Dal Segno," or in English, "to the signal/symbol/sign". This indicates that you should go back to wherever you see this symbol: $\text{\textcircled{S}}$, and play until you encounter the end, "Fine".

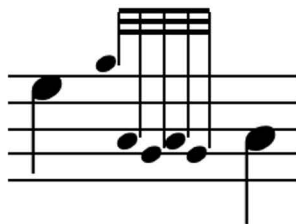
So, in this case, play the first line twice, then play the second line, and finish by playing the first line, omitting the E eighth note that comes before the, "segno".

Birls/Tachums

Chapter 9



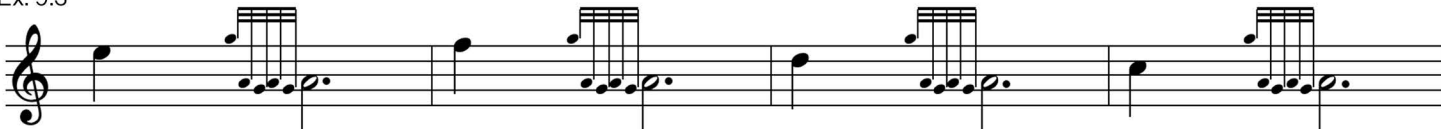
This is a Great Birl



To play a Great Birl, simply start-off your Birl with a G-gracenote
(unless the note you're coming from is a high-G, in which case you'll use a high A-gracenote)



Ex. 9.3



Ex. 9.4





Corriechoille's Farewell



Birls/Tachums

Chapter 9



These are Tachums



Tachums always move C to A, or B to G, as seen above



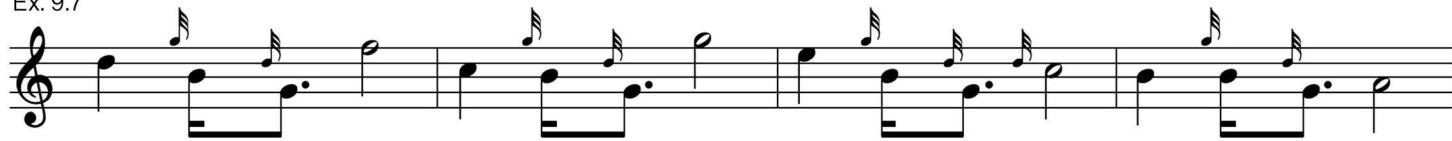
Ex. 9.5



Ex. 9.6



Ex. 9.7



Ex. 9.8



Birls/Tachums

Chapter 9



Ex. 9.9



Ex. 9.10



Ex. 9.11



Additional Tunes



Cornwath Mill

WUSPBA Setting

Bonny Dundee

WUSPBA Setting

Additional Tunes



The Green Hills of Tyrol

WUSPBA Setting

The musical score is written on four staves in treble clef, 3/4 time. The first staff begins with a repeat sign and contains 12 measures. The second staff contains 12 measures. The third staff begins with a repeat sign and contains 12 measures. The fourth staff contains 12 measures. The melody is composed of eighth and sixteenth notes, with some measures containing beamed sixteenth notes. The key signature is one flat (B-flat).

Additional Tunes



When the Battle's O'er

WUSPBA Setting

The musical score is written on four staves in treble clef, 3/4 time. The first staff begins with a repeat sign and contains 12 measures. The second staff contains 12 measures, ending with a repeat sign. The third staff begins with a repeat sign and contains 12 measures. The fourth staff contains 12 measures, ending with a repeat sign. The melody is composed of eighth and sixteenth notes, with some measures containing beamed sixteenth notes.

Additional Tunes



The Highland Laddie

WUSPBA Setting

Additional Tunes



Rowan Tree

WUSPBA Setting

The musical score for 'Rowan Tree' is presented in four staves of music. The key signature is one sharp (F#) and the time signature is 4/4. The melody is written in treble clef. The first staff begins with a repeat sign and contains 10 measures. The second staff contains 10 measures. The third staff begins with a repeat sign and contains 10 measures. The fourth staff contains 10 measures and ends with a double bar line. The music features a mix of eighth and sixteenth notes, often beamed together, and rests.