

# Changing from low to high

Once your basic embouchure is well established the next logical step with embouchure development is to learn how to move successfully from the low register into the second register on the flute. Most of the fingerings stay the same so something has to be going on in order for you to play one octave higher on the same fingering.

In order to help understand the change from the low to middle registers, let's draw an analogy between your airstream and lips with using a garden hose to water two pot plants.

Imagine that the first plant is a metre in front of you and the second plant is twice that distance away. You are happily watering your first pot and would now like to water the second pot. What are your options? You could turn up the water; you could cover the end of the hose with your thumb to squirt the water further; you could simply step forward so you are closer to the second pot or you could lift the end of the hose.

If we simply turn up the water, we may well reach the second pot but the water might be too strong and blast the plant out of the pot. On the flute this would be the equivalent of just blowing harder to get to the higher note. This means your higher note may well work but it will be louder. We don't always want to play louder as we ascend on the flute, sometimes but not always.

Altering the end of the hose with our thumb, to squirt the water to reach the second pot plant, is the equivalent on the flute of changing the shape of your lips, to speed up the air for the higher notes. This can be a very effective option and to do this I like to think of going from an elliptical aperture in the lower register to a more rounded aperture for the second octave.

We also have a third option of moving forward with our hose to water the second pot. This is the equivalent of moving your lips forward to reach the higher note on the flute, which is another good option. As you move your lips forward, they get closer to the back wall of the sound hole on the flute. This means the air is now striking the back wall faster causing the note to go up the octave. I think of relaxing the lips forward while remembering not to over-cover the embouchure hole on the flute. It's kind of a gentle pout with the lips moving off the teeth.

Other options that people talk about are raising the airstream, which is the same as lifting the end of the hose. I am sure when I change from low to high my airstream lifts, however, I find if I consciously do this my sound becomes diffuse. If it works for you, great.

Some people suggest moving the jaw forward for the second register and back for the lower register which can also be useful, I am however, wary of overemphasising and focussing on jaw movement due to TMJ. (Temporomandibular Joint Disorders. Do a web search on this one)

In reality I use a combination of all these options to make a smooth transition from the low register into the second. A nice way to sum it up is to think of an *eee* (as in *pea*) mouth shape for the lower register and an *oooh* (as in *shoe*) shape for the second register. All this must be in conjunction with excellent breath skills and anchoring from the whole body. When exploring these options always remember that anything to do with producing a good flute sound requires good air. As one of my young students wisely pointed out, *it ain't called a wind instrument for nothing*. So be sure as you explore these options you are remembering to blow well.

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