

HOW TO PLAY

# The SPIRIT FLUTE

Music of the World at Your Fingertips



INCLUDES FINGERING CHARTS & DVD

*Welcome* to musical adventures with your Spirit Flute. The Spirit Flute is a magical instrument that seems to appear at just the right time in life. We hope this rings true with you and that this enchanting instrument will bring as much joy into your life as it has ours.

In our travels throughout the world we have always carried a flute. In the beginning it was simply for our personal entrainment, but we quickly learned that everyone connects with music, it truly is the universal language. No matter the country or culture, playing music inspires generosity and kindness, political or religious differences are set aside and people open their hearts, sharing moments of inspiration, creativity, and joy. The Spirit Flute has grown from these moments. Its simplicity and sweet voice bring the joy of creating music to life, connecting us to nature and spirit, to humanity and to ourselves.

We all need creative expression in our lives – a way to connect to people, nature, and spirit. Music fulfills these needs, it's a wonderful way to communicate emotions and feelings that often don't have another outlet. Traditional western instruments (guitar, piano, etc.) have a lot of technique to get past before one can feel free to simply create music. But Spirit Flutes are different, they are low tech and simple to learn. That's what makes them unique, without any musical experience anyone can create expressive melodies from around the world.

As you play your flute, keep in mind that the breath is your life force, a physical expression of your experiences and feelings, when you play you directly project yourself through this wonderful instrument, bringing it to life and bringing your life to the world.

Play lots, let yourself go, be creative, and most importantly, have fun. If you wish to share your Spirit Flute experiences, please write, we would love to hear from you.

Safe Journey,

*The Spirit Flute Team*

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# Guarantee

We stand behind our instruments completely. If the sound is affected by any structural defect because of checking (i.e. natural splits or cracks that occur occasionally), we will replace the flute within the first 30 days and repair the instrument thereafter. In case of accidental damage beyond these conditions, we will make every effort to repair it at a reasonable rate (plus shipping).

In our experience, problems are rare, but we want you to understand the nature of wood. Wood is porous so it naturally expands and contracts with changes in environmental conditions, especially humidity. Occasionally, expansion can cause check lines to form. To minimize this we take precautions like treating the entire instrument with multiple coats of hardening oil to seal it. These measures significantly reduce the occurrence of naturally forming cracks. If you have questions please don't hesitate to call or write to us.



# Introduction

The flute is an integral part of most cultures. Worldwide there are numerous styles of flutes, each associated with different regions, nationalities, and ethnicities. They are made from a variety of materials such as bamboo, reed, clay, wood and even bone. The playing style and decorations are equally varied, often reflecting a regions natural environment. Today we have the fortune of having the world's diversity within our reach, music from around the globe is just a click away, and now the Spirit Flute makes playing world music just as easy.

Many ancient cultures did not write down their music, everything was passed down by elders to younger generations through rituals and cultural practices. Personal styles were learned through experimentation and by imitating the sounds of nature. Without sheet music or notes to follow, the music they created often came spontaneously from the heart and was filled with feeling and emotion. The simplicity of your Spirit Flute makes it ideal for this style of improvisation, but at the same time, it easily adapts to the structure of written music.

Each of us is linked to a past in which nature was the dominant force of life and music expressed our individual and collective experiences. Creating music deepened our connection with community and the natural world around us. For many of us that connection is now weak and at some level we all feel its loss. Today, few things inspire those feelings of connection as strongly as music does.

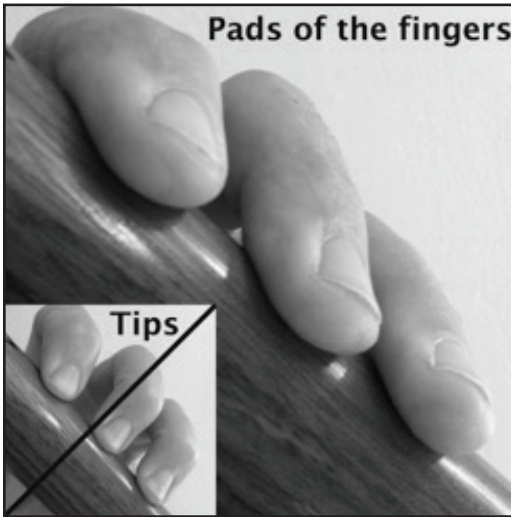
Much of what you are going to learn about this instrument comes from that which already resides within you. Music flows through all of us. Listen thoughtfully, be patient with yourself, laugh and have fun.



Pentatonic Minor

# How to Play

The most challenging aspect of playing this flute is to close all of the holes completely. If you can do that you can learn to play this instrument. Use your little fingers and thumbs to stabilize the flute and the pads of your fingers (not the tips) to completely cover the holes (the larger surface area of the pads makes this easier). With all the holes closed, blow lightly into the flute, if the sound is weak blow a little harder.

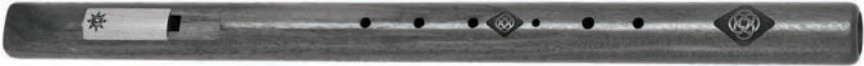


The sound you are listening for is a solid, deep, even tone that is pleasant to the ear. If you get anything else, it's because one of the holes is still slightly open or you are blowing too hard or possibly too soft. Just the slightest opening left by one of your fingers will result in a buzzy or off-sounding note.

If the bottom note sounds too high in pitch it's likely that one of the upper two finger holes is slightly open. Adjust your fingers, making sure you are using the pad, and try again until you achieve a deep bottom note with all the holes closed. A helpful tip here is to adjust your fingers instead of adding more pressure, too much pressure will only cramp your fingers. Hold off on playing the other fingerings until you achieve that bottom note because once you can play that note the others are a breeze.

Once you're comfortable playing the low note the next skill is to play up and down the scale. For those who have never played a wind instrument, we recommend that you do this in front of a mirror. Lift one finger at a time from the bottom up until all the holes are open and then close one finger at a time from the top down.

Please, do this slowly! Pause at each note to listen to its sound. If it sounds solid, go on to the next note. If not, lift your finger and replace it correctly (pad of the finger covering the hole completely). This will instill good muscle memory. After successfully playing the scale a couple of times, try doing it with your eyes closed, it forces you to develop your tactile skills. Another advantage to playing with your eyes closed is that the notes will envelope you, creating a deeper understanding of how they interact.



Diatonic Major

# Important Points

## Close Holes Completely

Any hole that is closed must be completely covered or you will get a squeaky sound, you will know it when you hear it.

## Play Slowly

Take your time with each note, it will help you develop good habits, fingering speed will come by itself.

## Close Your Eyes

This develops your tactile skills and your muscle memory, helping coordination develop more quickly.

## Breath

Breathe at normal intervals, do not wait until you gasp for air. Your breath capacity will develop naturally.

## Experiment

To learn the tonal range of each note, first, blow softly and then increase your breath until the note breaks.

## Tone

Each note has a sweet spot, if a note is shrill or breathy decrease the air flow, if it is wispy or weak increase the air flow to liven it up. Finding the sweet spot on the bottom note (all holes covered) can be challenging. It's more delicate than the other notes and if you blow too hard it will go to the next octave, producing a high-pitched sound.

## Play the Scale

Play the scale from the bottom up and then go back down. Slightly increase the air flow as you play up the scale and decrease it on your way back down.



Japanese Scale



# Creating Music

By now you have been playing the scale up and down and are more than likely comfortable with it. That's great! This means you've established the correct finger technique and muscle memory.

Now it's time to add some variation. Continue to play up and down the scale, but this time hold some notes longer and some shorter. Try repeating some notes, going back and forth between two or three.

When you pause to take a breath, change your fingering so you restart on a different note than you finished on. Listen to the way the notes interact and to the rhythms you create, when you hear a combination you like repeat it a few times.

This improvisational style will develop your understanding of how different notes interact to create melodies and the more feeling you put into it, the richer your melodies will be. Remember, the important thing is that it sounds good to you; this is for your own pleasure and entertainment. No pressure - just fun!

When you first begin creating music on your flute try to let go of any structured ideas you may have. It's not necessary to know any music theory or to read music to create songs on this flute.

If you feel you need more structure try using the verse-chorus form. In this form, you play something, repeat it once or twice, play something different, and then go back and play the first part again. No matter what method you use, keep it simple, beautiful songs don't need to be complex and before you know it your style will develop and diverse melodies will flow naturally.

Remember, there is no right or wrong way to create music, if it's pleasing to you that's all that matters. Be creative, have fun, and play and practice when you feel like it, playing your flute is not a chore that must be done, it's a joy to be celebrated!



# Other Techniques

When you are trying new techniques on the flute, stick to using the top two or three notes. The two bottom notes tend to be more delicate, making initial experimentation challenging. Once you feel comfortable with the way they play/sound on the top notes, apply your new techniques on the bottom notes too.



## Breath

In the beginning playing the flute is all about fingering. Those techniques will solidify fairly quickly. Once you feel comfortable with your fingering, the flute becomes all about your breath. Think of it like singing with your breath. When we sing we try to be melodic by using inflections in our voice, otherwise we sound monotone. The same holds true when playing the flute. If you just blow a continuous stream of air, it's somewhat monotonous, but if you vary your breath pressure to create inflections it brings color and feeling to the notes.

Without the flute in your mouth, try creating a short melody with your breath by varying breath pressure (like whistling without sound). Now, using just a couple of notes, do the same thing into the flute. Applying this technique while playing the scale or any simple melody will bring your playing to life.

Any way that you devise to change the airflow from your mouth will change the sound on the flute. Try moving your tongue rapidly in front of the mouthpiece, or try trilling or snapping your tongue. Altering the airflow in any way will produce unique effects. We all have different abilities and styles, so be creative.

## **Tonguing**

Tonguing is a technique used to create rhythm by stopping and starting the air flow to the flute. To perform this technique, the tongue quickly touches the roof of the mouth just behind the front teeth, like making the sound “ta”. Without the flute say “ta”, notice where your tongue touches the roof of your mouth. Now say, “ta, ta, ta, ta”, now “ta,\_ta,\_ta,\_ta,ta,ta,ta,\_ta,\_ta.” Repeating the second or third line over and over creates a rhythm. On your flute, try this on a single note first, then try changing notes at the point when the breath stops (at each “ta”). Tonguing can be very fast and deliberate or slow and subtle as well as all ranges in between. Use this variation, it will bring feeling and life to your melodies.

## **Fingering**

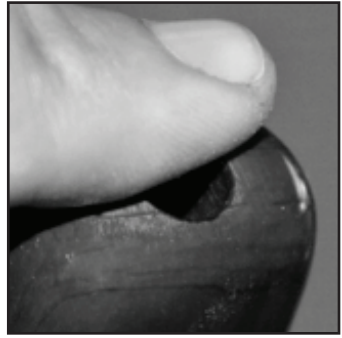
Fingering affects the sound of the flute as well. Slipping your finger slowly off a hole will change the note with a sliding effect. Rolling a finger partly off a hole and then re-covering it will produce a moody or blues quality. Covering a hole only half way produces a different note. Experiment and develop your own unique style and techniques.

## **Embouchure**



The mouth position used to play an instrument is called an embouchure. When first playing a Spirit Flute, the natural tendency is to place the whole mouth end of the flute into ones mouth and blow. This technique has a few downfalls; it creates excess moisture in the flute, hinders breath and tonguing techniques, and reduces the ability to control airflow.

Instead, close your lips then place the flute against them. Allow your upper lip to close about half of the air hole (e.g. image →) and place the lower lip just slightly underneath the air hole.



In this way backpressure is created and the air passage from the mouth is reduced. This technique provides a better sound, less moisture buildup, and more control of the flute.

Experimenting with different fingering and breath techniques is fun and rewarding. If you feel you are getting bored with your playing or feel like you have reached a plateau, take it as a positive sign that you have mastered your present techniques. At this point it's time to get experimental. Put what you know aside, make strange sounds, move your fingers turtle slow or rabbit fast, mimic bird songs or the wind in the trees. These types of experimentation will enhance your style and push you beyond your plateau. We have had the pleasure of playing flute with many people and are always amazed that no two sound the same; everyone has his or her own individual style.



Pentatonic Minor Spirit Flute

# Side Blown Spirit Flutes

The Side Blown Spirit Flute is unique because it plays sideways like a transverse flute (e.g. silver flutes) but doesn't require you to learn the technical mouth position (embouchure) to do so. By simply blowing directly into the side positioned mouthpiece, this design allows everyone to easily play a transverse style flute, no musical experience necessary.

Play is what music is all about and the Side Blown Spirit Flute is an innovative new way to do this. These Spirit Flutes are appealing because they give the physical experience of a side blown flute without a lengthy learning commitment. They are a creative way to easily learn a style of flute that is normally challenging to master.

## Techniques for the Side Blown Spirit Flute

All of the topics discussed in this booklet apply to both End Blown and Side Blown Spirit Flutes. The following techniques are specific to the Side Blown Spirit Flute:

### Hand Position

With Side Blown Spirit Flutes the flute's position is fixed, the flute always points to the right side of your body. This requires that the left hand play the high notes (notes closest to your mouth)



and the right hand play the lower notes (notes furthest from your mouth).

All of the fingers are active in this position including the thumbs and little fingers, which assist in holding the flute.

In the beginning, it's best to play in front of a mirror. While doing so

check your finger positioning, make sure the holes are completely closed, and determine the best position for your thumbs and little fingers to support the flute while playing.

### **Embouchure**

The side positioned mouthpiece is easy to blow into but it is important to remember that playing the flute is not about air volume, it's about air pressure. In a similar manner as described for the End Blown Spirit Flute (see page 8), place the flute against your closed mouth and then pretend you are softly kissing it. This mouth position creates a smaller opening increasing the air pressure and providing better technical control and tone quality.



Diatonic Major Spirit Flute - Side Blown

# Moisture Buildup

When blowing into the flute, condensation from your breath builds up in the air chamber. After playing a while this could clog the air passage and prevent air from flowing easily. Until the tongue and mouth become used to the mouthpiece moisture buildup can be frequent. One solution is to place a finger partially over the sound hole (to mute the flute) and blow hard into the flute to push any water out. Then hold the flute by the bottom end (opposite of mouthpiece) and shake it out. Creating an embouchure (see page 8) when playing will also help in reducing the moisture buildup.

# Larger and Longer Flutes

Most of us start off with a shorter flute because they are easier to play, are a smaller investment, and we want to see if we connect with the instrument. But everyone loves the sound of the deeper tones. If you decide to purchase or have purchased a deeper toned Spirit Flute, then you will be playing a larger instrument. On larger flutes the breath control and style of play is more subtle and sensitive, so going from a smaller to larger flute can take some adjustment. However, this is easily compensated for by the mellow, warm, expressive feel of the deeper tones create.



Pentatonic Major - Key of "D"



Pentatonic Major - Key of "C"



Pentatonic Major - Key of "G"

# Flute Care

After making a Spirit Flute we treat it with several coats of nontoxic oil that hardens the wood. This will not have to be done again unless the instrument is heavily used. If the flute starts to lose its luster we recommend using a nontoxic oil to bring back the finish. When re-oiling, use wooden salad bowl oil or any other refined food grade oil that you like the taste of. Apply a coat of oil to the inside and outside of the bore. After letting it sit for ten minutes, wipe off the outside of the flute but let the oil inside of the bore soak in (don't wipe it off).



Pentatonic Minor - Side Blown

## Troubleshooting

### **Cannot get any sound**

- Make sure that the channel is not clogged and the fipple (cutting edge) is not damaged.

### **The sound is weak or buzzy**

- If the flute has been played a lot, check for moisture buildup.

### **The low (bottom) note breaks to a high note or is squeaky**

- Make sure you're completely closing all the fingering holes. Use the pads of your fingers instead of the tips.
- Use less air pressure when you play the note. If you blow too hard on that bottom note it will break to the next octave.

### **The flute sounds off key or makes unpleasant sounds**

- Make sure you're completely closing all the fingering holes. Be sure you are using the pads of your fingers and not the tips.
- Increase or decrease the breath to make the note sharper or flatter.



Pentatonic Major - Side Blown



# The SPIRIT FLUTE



*strength*

# Spirit Flute Diversity

The Spirit Flute makes world music accessible and exciting to explore. Each flute is tuned to a distinct cultural scale so simply playing straight up and down the notes has you playing a unique style. We make a variety of world beat styles, each in multiple keys and in an End Blown or Side Blown option. Be sure to check out other Spirit Flutes on our website ([www.spiritflute.com](http://www.spiritflute.com)) or feel free to call us at 800.394.1523.



Middle Eastern Scale - Side Blown

## Fingering Charts

The following charts provide the basic fingerings and notation for both End Blown and Side Blown Spirit Flutes. Some Spirit Flutes can play other scales as well and those fingering charts can be found on the Spirit Flute website ([www.spiritflute.com](http://www.spiritflute.com)).

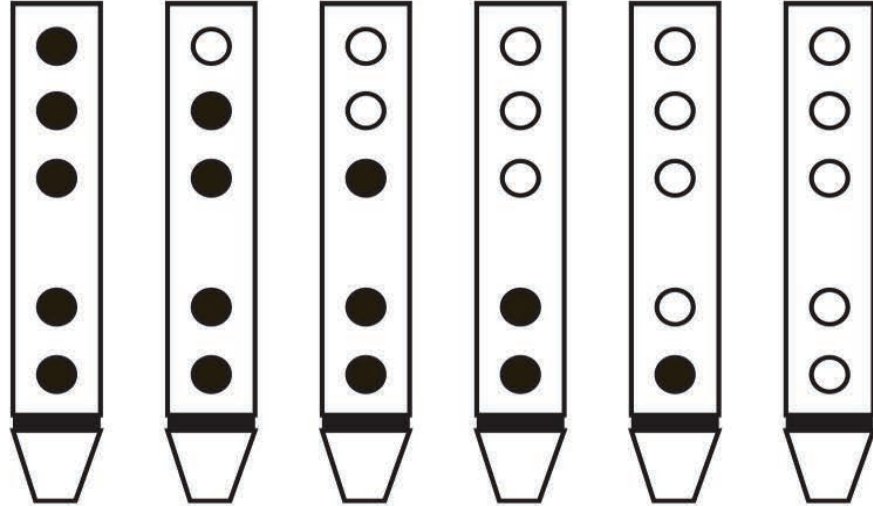
On the charts, the black dots indicate closed holes and the tapered end of the drawing indicates the mouthpiece. Under each fingering diagram is the corresponding note. Please remember that with all wind instruments the amount of air pressure exerted will determine the accuracy of the note, more pressure will sharpen the note, while less pressure will flatten it.

We provide fingering charts because many people are interested in the information they provide but you don't need them to enjoy playing music on the Spirit Flute. In many cultures people never learn music theory, they create beautiful melodies simply "playing by ear".



Japanese Scale - Side Blown

# Pentatonic Minor Scale



Key of "D"

D

F

G

A

C

D

Key of "C"

C

D#

F

G

A#

C

Key of "G"

G

A#

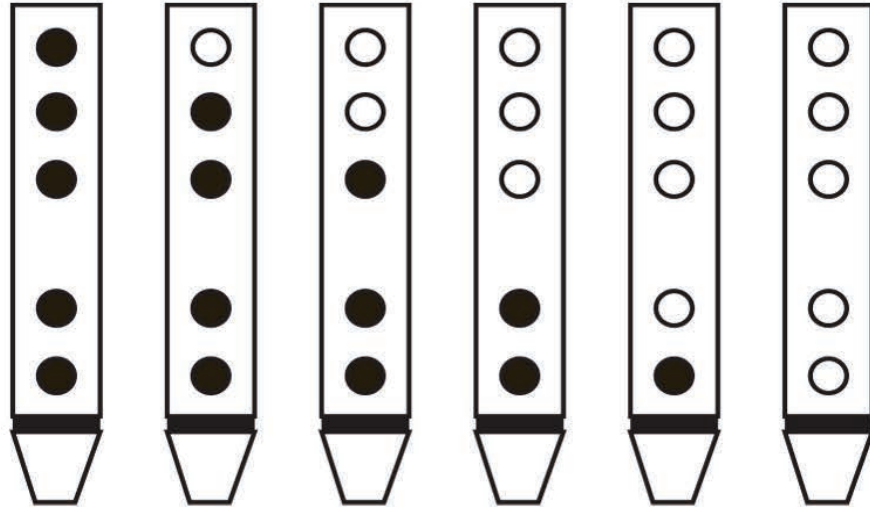
C

D

F

G

# Pentatonic Major Scale



Key of "D"

D

E

F#

A

B

D

Key of "C"

C

D

E

G

A

C

Key of "G"

G

A

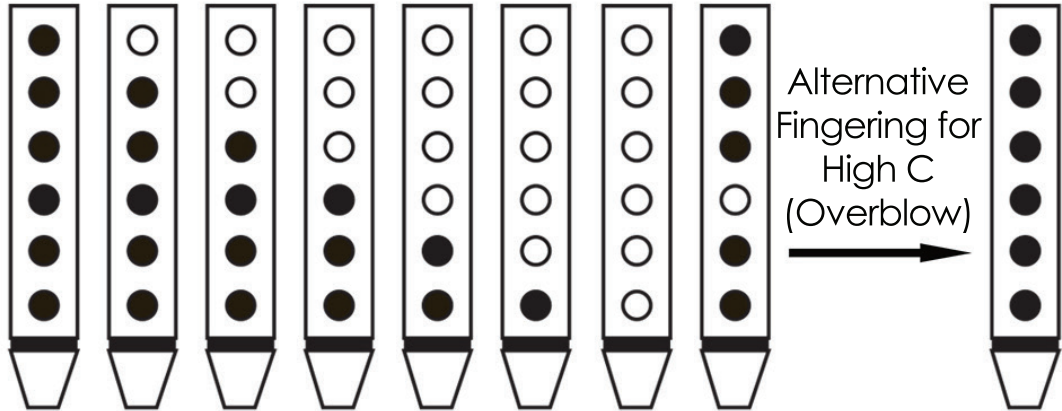
B

D

E

G

# Diatonic Major Scale

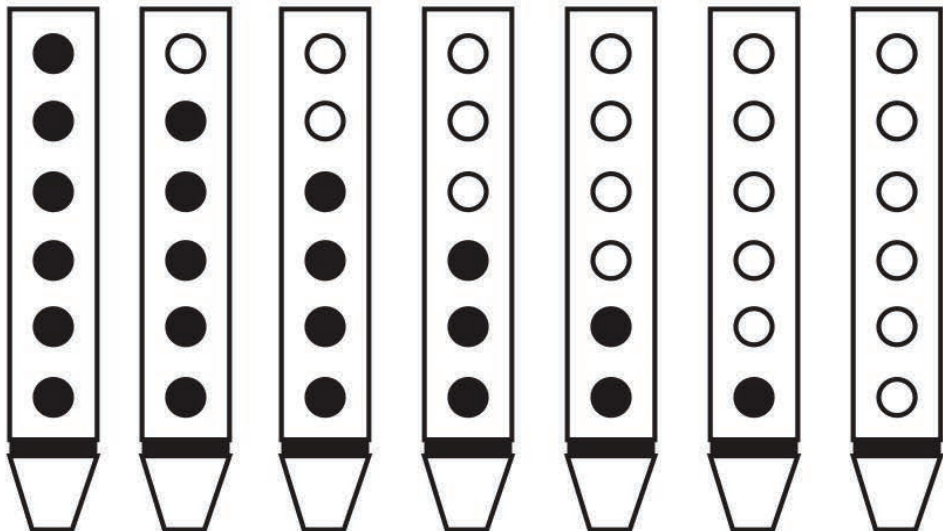


Alternative  
Fingering for  
High C  
(Overblow)



Key of "D"	D	E	F#	G	A	B	C#	D	D
Key of "C"	C	D	E	F	G	A	B	C	C
Key of "G"	G	A	B	C	D	E	F#	G	G

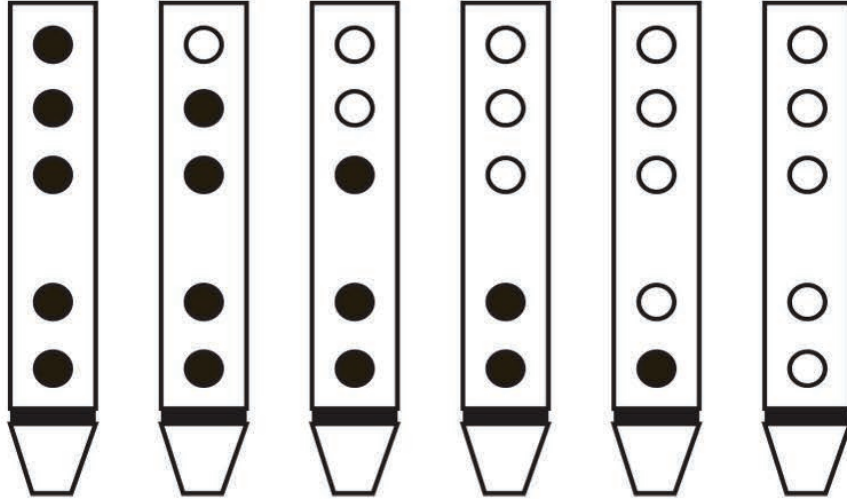
# Blues Scale



Key of "C"    C    D#    F    F#    G    A#    C

Key of "G"    G    A#    C    C#    D    F    G

# Japanese Scale



Key of "C"

**C**

**D**

**F**

**G**

**A**

**C**

Key of "G"

**G**

**A**

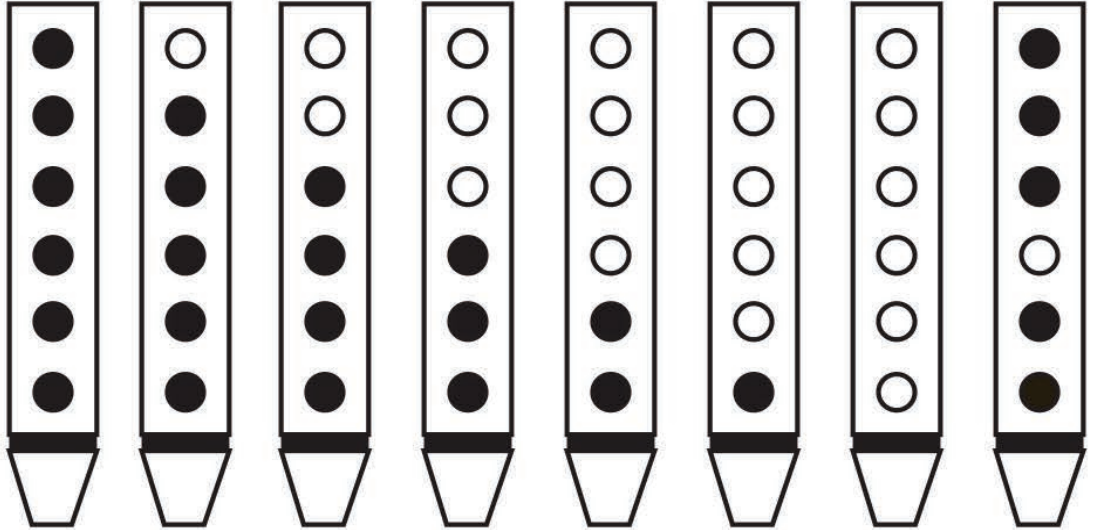
**C**

**D**

**E**

**G**

# Middle Eastern Scale



Key of "C"

**C C# E F G G# B C**

Key of "G"

**G G# B C D D# F# G**



