



# Bamboo Gardens And Music

Handcrafted Bamboo Musical Instruments

## Learning to play the Native American flute

**Lets start with all fingers off the holes.** To define, top of flute is blowing end. Opposite end is bottom. For five hole "A" pentatonic all holes open is "A" (880 hertz pitch). All holes closed is the lower octave "A" at 440 hertz.

**How to hold and place fingers.** The top two holes will be covered with index and second finger of left hand. Thumb on opposite side acts as a brace to hold flute. Pick it up as you would hold a pencil with index finger left hand covering top hole. Fingers are at an angle to the flute body not perpendicular. Right hand is used for the bottom three holes. Use first, second and little finger. Little finger covers bottom hole. We will use the pads of the finger not the finger tips. Your third finger acts as a brace between the bottom two holes and your thumb is on opposite side of barrel between index and second finger.

**Playing the flute.** Lets blow a steady breath into the blowing end. You can do this by sealing the air from escaping with your lips. Keep all holes open. The right hand third finger and thumb will help balance the flute so you do not drop it. Left hand third finger and thumb help stable the balance. Pick up flute now with left hand, cover top two holes with left hand index and second finger. The third finger (left hand) will align itself for ergonomic bracing. Now you know to hold and align fingers. Blow into end. Steady air pressure. Your ear will tell you how much pressure as you will hear a clear sound. All holes are uncovered. Listen. This is the top note "A", an octave above the fundamental "A" and one octave lower which will be all holes closed. Brace and blow (Like a balloon) with uncovered finger holes and learn this pitch. Next cover top hole left hand (index finger). Use finger pad. Any leak around pad on hole will prevent sound resonance. It will sound squeaky if there is a leak. It should have a clear sound. Lets open and close this only till you get the pitches "A" (All open) and "G" (top hole closed). Go back and forth opening and closing this hole only. Do not continue instructions until you have this easy.

After this becomes easy and air pressure (breath) is adjusted for clearest tone, add the second finger left hand closing the second hole down. This is "E" pitch. Practice closing these holes all open, first hole covered, and second hole covered. Remember when second hole is covered the first hole remains covered. Walk up and down these notes blowing smooth and slowly. Adjust air pressure for tone quality. Watch out for air leaks at finger pads on holes. If you get dizzy slow down and learn to breathe correctly. Slow down. No hurry. (be happy) The breath should be relaxed and meditative. Focus on the sound and breath. When first finger right hand covers third hole down, the above first, second holes remain covered in left hand. This note is "D" You are making the flute longer each time you cover the next hole down. The length of vibrating air column is the pitch that you hear. Walk these pitches up and down till easy. Thumbs and third finger left hand steady brace the instrument. It should not move much as you open and close holes while playing. Second finger right hand covers forth hole down. This is "C" pitch. (This note is one octave above middle "C" on piano.) Watch for leaks as you now have five holes covered which may leak. Use pads of finger to cover completely or open completely. Remember all Top holes above are covered as this second finger right hand hole is covered for "C". **Logical/Linear?** Final bottom hole is covered by third or little finger. See which is more comfortable and use other for additional bracing. All holes closed is "A" 440 hertz. It is the "A" above middle "C" on piano.

Walk the scale starting all holes open A G E D C A. Now start all holes closed and go up the scale Low "A" C D E G A. This is mode one pentatonic in "A" aka minor pentatonic (Relative of C major Pentatonic) You can move in this scale from any note to any note and it will be pleasing to the ear. Music therapy at its best. Any pattern of pitches, any order of notes can sound pleasant. Music in many cultures utilize this scale.

Remember if third hole is covered the above two remain covered and so on for each hole. If top hole is open all are open. Enjoy!

Contact info: Greg White Hunt

476 Masada Drive

Cohutta, GA 30710

(706) 280-9862 [www.gregwhitehunt.com](http://www.gregwhitehunt.com)

