

Focus On:



“I thought it was me!”

We’ve all had the experience of working and working on a hard spot. It seems it will never get better. A friend offers their flute, and **WOW!** “It wasn’t me after all!”

It was probably your flute. Maybe it was out of adjustment. Or maybe you’ve out-grown your instrument.

“How can I tell if I’ve outgrown my flute?”

Here are some good indications to help you decide if you’ve grown beyond the capabilities of your instrument:

1. You know what you want to do with a phrase, but the flute “gets in the way”.
2. You have trouble getting the low notes out.
3. You want to “sing your heart out” but the notes overblow & crack.
4. You have trouble evenly leaping from note to note.
5. You have to wait for your keys to catch up with your fingers.
6. Quick tonguing comes out *thwatt-thwatt*.
7. You have to be a contortionist to tune each note.

If you are 8 or 98, “**Step-up**” **student, pre-professional, or professional instruments** will all help improve these problems. This issue focuses on step-up flutes and gives you concrete technical information for you to tell their differences and advantages.

Hand-cut Headjoint: makes the biggest difference between brands; it will make it play more like a pro instrument. It will open the high notes, and make them less stuffy or shrill, make leaping from note to note smoother, and make the lower octave more succulent.

Student Step-Up Flutes, 101 (For Moms & Dads too)

Stepping-up from a beginner instrument will make the biggest difference of all. Getting a better flute of any brand or model lets you progress further, faster, and just plain makes it more fun. If students get frustrated, the music isn’t music anymore. It’s just a chore.

If you’re a teacher, take a couple minutes during your next lessons to play your kids’ flutes. You’ll be surprised. **Any** flute should easily play **all the way down to low C**.

What is a “Student step-up” Flute?

Basically any production line instrument better than a “chrome finish” beginner flute qualifies for the “step-up” category. Quality varies, but a good one ranges in price from \$800. to \$1700.

Benefits—

Solid silver head: makes high notes bigger, freer, and less fuzzy.

Solid silver body: a good one adds more refinement to the sound.

Open holes: most popular and gives more volume and good hand position, though many adult students still go for closed or “plateau” keys. You do have more of a choice of models if you choose open holes.

B-foot: a good choice (it adds one note to the bottom). More importantly, it has a huge effect on high notes by making the sound bigger, more open, and the notes just easier to get.

Continued on page 2.

***What makes One Flute
Better than Another?
Handwork!***

Stay with manufacturers that show more handwork in

Level	Description	Price
Beginner (up-grade model)	Silver plated throughout.	\$400.—\$700.
First Step-up	Solid silver head-joint (usually open holes, B foot)	\$850.—\$1,000.
Second Step-up	Solid silver head, body, foot (usually open holes, B foot)	\$1,200.—\$1,700.

their flutes. Here's how you tell:

- *Gently* try to move each key side-to-side. They should be very tight.
- Pads should be very firm. Look at the G# pad. There will be a very *slight* indentation from the pad pressing the tone hole. If it is anymore than "very slight", the pads will need much more maintenance than firm ones.
- Smaller key diameters help make your finger technique quicker.

- Hand-cut headjoints are a great boon to "Student flutes"! The process of hand-cutting a student head is just what manufacturers do when cutting a head for a professional flute. It requires a lot of skill and experience. The embouchure hole is cut a little, play tested, cut a little more, and play tested again until the head-joint sings! Only by hand-cutting little by little, can you expose a head's true potential. (Merely looking in the embouchure hole won't tell you if it is hand-cut. Look for the manufacturer's description of the instrument you are considering.)
- **Ask us to send you our fliers "How to Shop for a New Flute" and "Enie, Meeny, Miney, Mo!" (our guide to trying bunches of flutes).**

All these things take the manufacturer more time to build your instrument, and this translates into a flute that plays better. The amount of handwork increases in each "step-up" category. The instruments' prices also reflect the amount of handwork. Some companies borrow designs from pro flute manufacturers. Refinement like this might not allow a fall from the bleachers, but would be a much better playing flute to progress on.

Reprinted from The Forte Newsletter Aug. 2000
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