

Clarinet Embouchure

Embouchure is how one holds the instrument with the mouth and face.

For good tone and control, I recommend remembering the following:

P	A	C	C	T	T
Posture	Air	Chin	Corners	Tongue	Thumb

Pronounced “Pakuhkuhtuhtuh”
(*Pa* sounds like *cat*; *kuh* and *tuh* sound like *duh*)

Posture means sitting on the edge of your chair, feet flat on the floor, knees bent at a 90° angle, shoulders up-back-drop, head level, elbows slightly away from your body. The bell of the instrument should be about even with your knees, but this may need to be adjusted slightly, depending on your height and over/underbite.

Air means taking a large breath from your diaphragm and physically pushing the air through the instrument. If it just feels like normal breathing, your reed is too soft.

Chin means pointing the chin down and away from the reed in order to remove excess upward pressure from the reed. The chin and lip affect tone and response. The bottom lip should be spread like you’re putting on chapstick. For more subtone, the bottom lip should act like a pillow. Always make sure you can still see your bottom lip when playing. If too much lip is inside the mouth, it muffles the reed, constricting its vibrations.

Corners means having strong, solid corners of your mouth. To build these muscles, think about them being strong as you play. Practice your embouchure away from the instrument, look in the mirror, and use your finger to feel your corners for strength.

Tongue means both tongue position and how you touch the reed with your tongue. Both affect tone and intonation. Generally, tongue position should be “ee” for low notes, and “oh” for high notes. When articulating, use the very pointed tip of the tongue to lightly tap just below the tip of the reed.

Thumb means push up with your right thumb. This stabilizes the instrument, ensures you keep enough mouthpiece in your mouth, helps the response of the high notes, and improves tone and intonation.