8 Skill Levels for the Clarinet Embouchure

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Making a good clarinet embouchure can be a challenge for students and teachers. This has little to do with the possession of extraordinary musical talent, but relies more on the area of muscle development, muscle memory and sensory skills.

**Embouchure Description**

This sequence of 8 skill levels can be used to habitualize any kind of embouchure, but I offer the following description as a basic single lip clarinet embouchure:

1) The upper teeth are placed on top of the mouthpiece.

2) The upper lip is against the upper teeth and the mouthpiece with a slight downward pressure.

3) The lower lip is folded over the bottom teeth with about one half of the lip in the mouth, the other half out.

4) The chin muscles are pulled down and firm against the chin and bottom teeth.

5) The muscles of the corners of the mouth are well developed with a slight feeling of pressing inward to counteract the tendency of the corners to spread out or smile.

**The 8 Skill Levels**

These exercises introduce small attainable goals as note durations and dynamic directives increase in sequence. Students should practice these daily at home with the goal of being tested by the teacher and checking off each level when completed. I recommend insisting on a perfect embouchure for each exercise, with no chin quivering, for all 8 repetitions before checking the completion box.
□ Level 1  
\[ j = 60 \]

Standing in front of a mirror, formulate and blow through the embouchure \textbf{without the clarinet}. Say “hu” with with an exhalation of air 8x with a perfect, stable embouchure. Make sure that the chin is held firmly and steadily (no quivering) for the duration of the exercise, including the rests. At first, you can use your little finger to touch your chin. However, the goal is to perform the exercise without the assistance of the finger.

□ Level 2  
\[ j = 60 \]

Standing in front of a mirror, formulate and blow through the embouchure \textbf{with the mouthpiece and barrel only}. Play an open G 8x with a perfect, stable embouchure. Make sure that the chin is held firmly and steadily (no quivering) for the duration of the exercise, including the rests. Again, the little finger may be used as a temporary aid for keeping the chin flat.

□ Level 3  
\[ j = 60 \]

Standing in front of a mirror, formulate and blow an open G \textbf{with the clarinet}. Play the open G 8x with a perfect, stable embouchure. Make sure that the chin is held firmly and steadily (no quivering) for the duration of the exercise, including the rests.

□ Level 4  
\[ j = 60 \]

Perform the remaining exercises in the same manner \textbf{with the clarinet} until 8 repetitions have been done with a perfect, stable embouchure. Remember that a level should not be passed until the player can perform all 8 repetitions without the chin quivering.