

Vandoren®  
PARIS

# REED CARE AND ROTATION

*Tips for Improved Reed Performance*



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# INTRODUCTION

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Welcome to the world of reeds. It's been our passion since 1905. Vandoren is a fourth generation company that wants to give you the tools you and your students need to keep your reeds in prime condition and sound your best.

Proper reed care and rotation improves the longevity and performance of your reeds, and anyone can do it.

This is our guide to get you and your students started.

# THE BREAK-IN PROCESS

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## WHY BREAK IN?

Cane reeds are a 100% natural product made from the Arundo Donax plant. With this in mind, it's important to treat them gently right out of the box to maximize their performance potential. This is where the break-in process comes into play.

A good break-in process allows reeds to adjust to their new environment and gradually get used to making music. In the end, you'll notice your reeds lasting longer and sounding better. Here's what to do:



# HOW TO BREAK IN REEDS

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*It all starts with a new box of reeds.*



1. Remove reeds from packaging.



2. Wet your reeds.



3. Play each reed for a few minutes.



4. Remove from mouthpiece, wipe down, store.



5. Play reeds progressively longer each day for a week.



# TEACHING BASIC REED ROTATION

## **WHY ROTATE?**

A rotation is a key component of basic reed care and hygiene. The basic goal is to play a different reed each day or playing session. An effective rotation ensures the maximum lifespan and performance of that reed while also minimizing the gunk and germ buildup that results from poor reed care. It will also ensure your embouchure stays in tip-top shape along the way.

Long story short, **EVERYONE** should be rotating their reeds. Classical musicians. Jazz musicians. Beginners. Pros. Follow our 5-step process on the following page to get started.

# 5 STEPS TO START YOUR REED ROTATION



## OPEN

Open your reeds from the FlowPacks and carefully remove from the packaging. Start by breaking in 2-4 reeds.



## LABEL

Label your reeds to keep track of which reed you just played and which is next in line. This can be done in a variety of ways (numbers, letters, colors, etc). This example uses days of the week, which works wonders for beginners.



## ROTATE

Rotate your reeds according to the days of the week.



## STORE

Next, wipe off excess saliva and store reeds in a quality case between sessions. Inspect daily for damage or filth. Discard damaged or gross looking reeds immediately regardless of their age.



## REFRESH

At the beginning of each month, "refresh" your rotation by replacing your old reeds with fresh, broken-in reeds. **This is the key to a successful and hygienic reed rotation.**

## PRO TIPS

**Pro Tip #1:** Grow your rotation! Professionals routinely have 5-10 reeds in rotation to ensure success regardless of variables at play.

**Pro Tip #2:** Replace reeds based on performance - not the calendar. Professionals replace reeds based on what they hear, feel and see.

# WHEN TO CHANGE

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## CHIPS

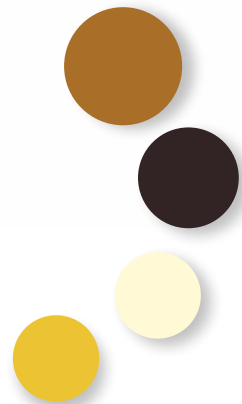
Chips are inevitable. But any woodwind player can tell you it severely affects the sound. Replace immediately.



## MOLD

Mold can be white, brown, black, and yellow and can appear on the front and back of the reed.

Gross! Discard and replace immediately.





# REED STORAGE

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## QUAD PACK

The Quad pack holds 4 reeds and is an excellent introduction to beginner reed rotation. Holds 4 B♭ clarinet or Alto saxophone reeds.



## VANDOREN REED CASE

Our Traditional blue case has a hard shell exterior, designed to give you an affordable case with protection.



Grooved ridges promote air circulation.

## HYGRO REED CASE

The Hygro Reed Case uses air circulation and a small sponge to maintain reeds in optimal humidity conditions to prevent warping and deterioration. Each case holds 6 reeds, with numbered slots for easy organization and rotation.

TOO DRY  
ADD WATER

OPTIMAL  
HUMIDITY



# REED TIPS AND TROUBLESHOOTING

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## REED TOO HARD/SOFT?

Many students (and players!) often associate reed strength with skill level but this is false. Reed strength can be dependent on many factors, like mouthpiece facing, tip opening and even climate. Here are a few tips for both too soft and too hard reeds.

### Soft Reed Strength Troubleshooting | What You'll Hear

- Intonation issues
- Unfocused or nasally sound
- Thin upper register

\* Move the reed higher on the mouthpiece facing so that it is inline or slightly passed the tip rail.

### Hard Reed Strength Troubleshooting | What You'll Hear

- Muffled tone
- Low register is not speaking clearly
- Consistently sharp

\* Move the reed slightly lower on the mouthpiece facing.

**Soft Reed  
Fix**



**Hard Reed  
Fix**



# RESOURCES

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## REED CARE, BREAK IN, AND ROTATION

Enjoy our presentation? Here it is on video. Watch it again or share with your students or fellow directors.



## DOWNLOADS


View our wide array of handouts, checklists, how a reed is made, and posters. All of these items are free for you to download, save, and share with a friend.



## WAVE: OUR EDUCATIONAL NEWSLETTER

Receive four weekly educational articles delivered straight to your inbox. Topics range from general music education to clarinet and saxophone-specific topics.





WITH  
YOU  
EVERY  
STEP.

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