



The FairDays is a cooperative festival amalgamating two traditional local events- Aldergrove Festival Days and the Aldergrove Agricultural Association Fall Fair. This will be our third year working together, although it is the 97<sup>th</sup> Agricultural Fair and the 24<sup>th</sup> Festival.

FairDays is an umbrella organization dedicated to facilitating events that are exciting for residents as well as attractive for visitors. Our goals are entertained visitors , town-proud residents, and flourishing local businesses.

## Tin Whistle Tutorial by Mike Simpson

The tin whistle is a great instrument. It's simple enough for a complete beginner to learn in a short time, yet it is capable of an incredible range of expression, from the most subtle, delicate tune, to a dazzling display of virtuosity. It is extremely versatile and has been used in many different kinds of music for a long time, and is continually being refined and adapted to new music. Last but not necessarily least, it's cheap, small, durable, and completely portable.

When practicing, there are a several things you can keep in mind which will increase your skill much more quickly:

First, **GO SLOWLY**. The importance of this cannot be overemphasized. You should practice slowly enough that you are making mistakes less than ten or fifteen percent of the time. If you are finding it hard to play a certain figure right, then slow down until you can play it correctly. Speed will come later.

Second, **RELAX**. Keeping your upper body, especially your stomach and hands, relaxed will help you play faster, cleaner, and more accurately. It will also help you avoid running out of breath, and will enable you to hold your concentration better. Relaxation is most important for speed - you simply will be unable to play well quickly if your fingers are not relaxed.

Third, don't be afraid to **EXPERIMENT**. You'll find your own style that way.

### Good Form

To play a tin whistle well you must use good form. To start, hold the whistle so that your thumbs are on the bottom, and your fingers are covering the holes. Your left index finger should cover the top hole, and your right ring finger should cover the bottom hole (if you are left-handed, you can reverse these directions). Your other fingers should cover the respective holes in between. From here on in this manual, I will refer to your fingers from the top down according to their corresponding holes (i.e. "first finger", "second finger", etc.) Do not arch your fingers much; you should cover the holes with the pad of the finger, not the tip. If necessary, let your fingers extend over the holes so that the holes are under the middle joints of your longer fingers.

Keep your fingers relaxed; too much tension will slow your playing and make it difficult for you to learn to cover the holes easily. Now, raise the whistle to your lips. No special way of gripping the mouthpiece is required; some players hold the whistle between their teeth, and some use only the lips, so find a method which is comfortable, and stick with it (if using your teeth, over time you will wear indentations into the mouthpiece. This can be an advantage in that it helps you grip the mouthpiece, but you may need a new whistle a year or two down the road).



Keep your back straight, your shoulders and stomach relaxed, and blow very gently. You should hear a low, steady tone. If you are doing everything correctly, this will be a low D. More likely, however, you will hear a wavering, squeaky sound. This means one of two things: either you are not covering the holes well enough, or you are not blowing with the right pressure (or both). To sum up the elements of good form:

- \* 1. Fingers flat, not arched.
- \* 2. Fingers relaxed.
- \* 3. Back straight, shoulders and stomach relaxed.

If you are not getting the sound you want, then either:

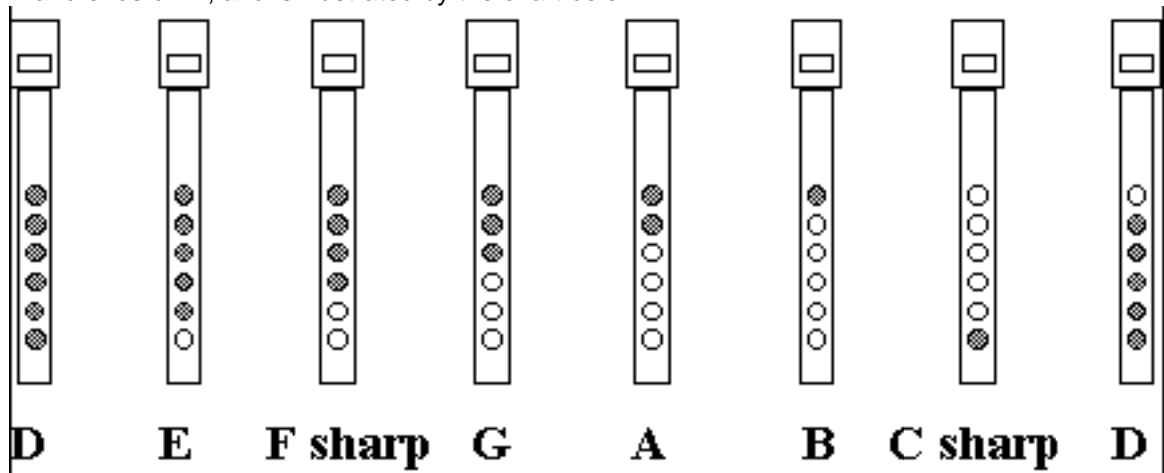
- \* 1. You're not covering the holes well enough, or
- \* 2. You're not breathing with the right pressure.

**EXERCISE 1: Low D**

After reviewing the above instructions, practice simply blowing a low D. Continue until you can make a steady note at will. Remember not to squeeze the whistle tightly between your fingers; use a minimum of force, and try to keep your fingers fairly straight, but not tense. Your pinky fingers should be up and out of the way. Don't let them curl up underneath. At this stage, you may find it hard to space your fingers properly to cover the holes, but this will quickly get easier with practice. Also, keeping your stomach relaxed should help you control the amount of breath pressure you are applying.

**The D Scale**

The D, G, and A scales are the most commonly used scales in Irish music. You may find it helpful to know the notes in each scale; this will not be difficult as there are only one or two notes' difference between them. We will start with the D Major scale (your whistle should be in the key of D; if not, don't worry - you can keep going.) This scale starts on D and ends on D, and is illustrated by the chart below:



As you proceed up the scale, you will need to use progressively more breath pressure to get the note cleanly. The high D, or middle D as it is called, can also be played with all the holes covered if it occurs in a fast passage of notes as the tone is virtually the same. The scale above covers one octave, and the next octave can be played by simply starting with the middle D above and continuing up with the same fingering. You will need to blow harder, however, and the high D requires quite a lot of pressure. It is also very loud!








## EXERCISE 2

Memorize the fingerings for each of the notes in the D scale. Practice each note individually as in Exercise 1, then start on low D and proceed up the scale all the way to high B, and then go back down. When doing this, **DO NOT STOP TO TAKE A BREATH** until you run out of breath. Blow continuously, and do not use your tongue to separate the notes, but use only your fingers to do so. Be careful on the transition from B to C#, and from C# to middle D, that you do not get additional notes. The change should be clean and smooth. Practice **SLOWLY** until you can do the complete exercise in one breath, at will.

## Reading Music

The music is divided into bars by vertical lines, each of which represents the same length of time, and contains the same number of beats. But you must also know the length of each note. This is indicated by the type of note; each has a different appearance, and is played for a different length of time:

- One whole note:  equals two half notes.
- One half note:  equals two quarter notes.
- One quarter note:  equals two eighth notes.
- One eighth note:  equals two sixteenth notes.
- One sixteenth note:  equals two thirty-second notes,

Dotted notes are equivalent to one and a half times the normal length of the note. For example, a dotted half note is the same length as three quarter notes.

Multiple endings are bracketed bars with numbers in the corners:



These are referred to as first and second endings. When you get to the first ending, play it, then repeat from the last repeat sign (or the beginning), as indicated by the repeat sign. When you reach it again, skip the first ending and play the second.

By now, you are probably thinking that it is impossible to read music and that musicians actually make it up as they go along. With a little practice, however, you will be able to learn a tune from the music, even if you can't yet play it straight from the music.



## Breathing

Many beginning players wonder where they're supposed to take a breath, especially in the middle of a fast tune. It's not written into the music (normally), so it's pretty much up to the player to decide. Experienced players use a couple of ways to make space for a breath.

First, you may shorten a long note. If you see a quarter note or a dotted quarter note, you can shorten it by an eighth note and take a quick breath there. Second, you can leave out a note. Be aware that taking a breath will put a break in the tune, and choose where you do so accordingly.

Practice helps!

Have fun and then come along to the Fair and get some more practice on Saturday 25th and the morning of Sunday 26th.

We will then be ready to set a new Guinness world record for the largest Tin Whistle Ensemble.

Thanks for participating.

If there is anything we can help with or any questions we can answer, please call or Email.

Finally, looking to stay in Aldergrove?

Then call up the wonderful people at The Super 8 at Gloucester (ph 604 856 8288). They are our very enthusiastic sponsors for this event and so let's help them in return.

Kind regards

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