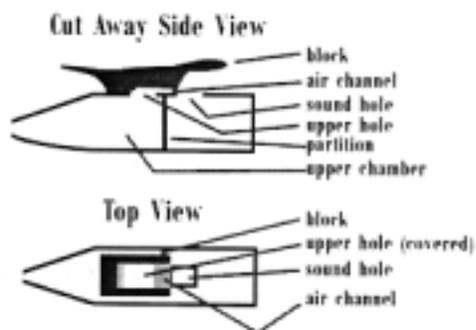


The material printed here is posted on our web site, www.shamanicvisions.com, and is derived from *The Native American Flute Book* by Bob Edgar.

The Native American Flute Player's Guide

This little guide is excerpted from my "The Native American Flute Book". This book contains more detailed information about playing the flute and reading music. It also has the word, scores, and the flute fingering for a number of Shamanic chants and songs. The book can be obtained from the flute-maker Stephen John DeRuby who can be reached at 1-800-4-FLUTES. He is a very fine flute maker and I wrote and published the book for him to sell with his flutes and for the many people who are drawn to buy a flute and then not know how to play it.

Aligning the Block:



Before you play, make sure that the block is properly aligned and tightened.

As the figure indicates, there is an internal partition separating the upper chamber from the flute body. The air leaves the upper chamber through the upper hole. The block serves to divert the air across the top of the sound hole. This causes the air in the flute body to vibrate.

The alignment of the block is critical to getting a pure sound from your flute. Position the block so that it covers the upper hole and the edge of the block is aligned with the upper edge of the sound hole, not back from it or covering it.

You can do this by sighting along the upper side of the flute from the bottom end. Make sure the channel under the block is aligned with the sound hole. Secure the block firmly in place. If it is held on by a leather tie grasp the two free ends of the tie close to the knot and twist them about a quarter of a turn. This should tighten the tie and hold the block in place.

How you blow has a critical effect on the sound you produce. In the beginning, just try to get a good clean sound. Listen carefully to the sound you produce and how the sound is influenced by your blowing. Don't breathe continuously. Let each note have a beginning and an end. Don't overblow unless your intent is to produce a desired affect. Over blowing produces harmonics, an octave or more above the true note. Over blowing is a more advanced technique that takes practice to do well.

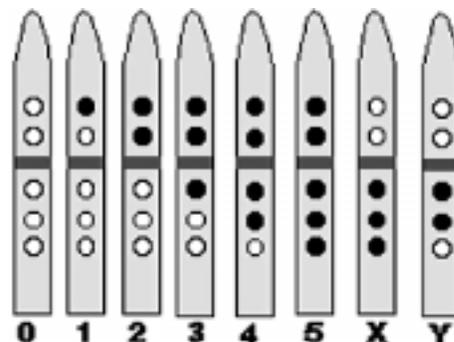
Playing by the numbers

For simplicity I will call the 8 notes of the Native American extended scale, 0, 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, X & Y. In the figure above, open holes are shown as gray, covered holes as black. The numbers indicate how many holes should be covered (always from the top down). Thus, all holes should be open to play note 0 while the top two holes should be covered to play note 2.

Start by playing the sequence, 0, 1, 0, 1, 0, 1, over and over until you feel you know these two notes and the seating of your finger pads over the holes.

Next, play the sequence 1, 2, 1, 2, 1, 2. then 0, 2, 0, 2, 0, 2. Work your way down the scale in this manner, 2, 3, 2, 3, 2, 3, and 0, 3, 0, 3, 0, 3, until you can play each note and can reliably cover and uncover all the holes.

Now you can try jumps such as 0, 5, 0, 5, 0, 5, and 1, 4, 1, 4, 1, 4.



Remember, a 1 is the top hole covered, a 4 is the top four holes covered. You must go smoothly from the top finger on, to all top four fingers on.

Now try sequences such as 0, 4, 2, 0, 4, 2, 0, 4, 2, or 5, 1, 3, 5, 1, 3, 5, 1, 3.

When playing X & Y you have to blow a little harder to get the correct intonation. (These notes are not available on some flutes, or may require alternate fingerings.)

Sounding the Notes

Once you feel comfortable playing the notes, you may want to experiment with the quality of the sounds you produce to add color and texture to your flute playing.

You can make vibrato effects on your flute. These are tremulous or pulsating effects produced by small and rapid variations in the pitch of a note. They considerably enhance the quality of sustained notes if done well. I think some operatic singers over do it! To create a vibrato effect you generate puffs of breath while sustaining the note. Try a belly laugh while playing a note. Vibrato is most effective if done in a subtle manner.

Tonguing helps to shape notes. As you blow, silently say too, or doo. When done successfully, your notes will have a nice pure sound. On some flutes, tonguing is necessary to get a clean sound, especially from the high notes, X and Y.

A **trill** is a fluttering or tremulous sound, like the song of some birds. Trills are made by "fluttering" your finger, or fingers, when going from one note to another. Trills are sometimes called grace notes or ornaments because they are not part of the song but simply embellish some of the notes in the song. For example, in the sequence 2, 1, 2, 1, 2, the small notes are the trill. They should be played very fast, with a constant breath, and slurred together with the main note (big note), that you are trilling on.

To make a **wailing** sound, start each note softly, then more and more loudly, and then softly again. Here you can overblow to enhance the wailing effect.

Bending refers to sliding from one note to another. While blowing 0, hold your index finger on the flute, just below, and to the side of the first hole. Still blowing 0, very slowly slide the finger into position over the first hole to make the slide from 0 to 1. Repeat, 0, 1, 0, 1,

Hopefully, these examples of different ways to play notes will encourage you to freely "voice" yourself through your flute. For example, saying tika while blowing a note produces a nice effect. Also, try caressing a hole while blowing.

Cleaning your flute

Moisture will tend to collect in your flute during extended playing, especially on cool days. Try to keep it dry. If the notes begin to sound fuzzy, moisture has collected in the air channel. There are various remedies. Cover the sound hole with your finger and blow hard to force the moisture out of the air channel under the block. Moisture can also be removed from inside the body of the flute by holding it by the bottom end and swinging it vigorously. Dismantle your flute and wipe the parts. It is best to leave the block off to air-dry the upper chamber after extended playing.

Protecting your flute

An occasional light coat of oil will feed the wood. Be careful not to damage the fine beveled edges on the upper hole and sound hole when handling your flute. Avoid extreme temperature changes as this may warp or crack the wood. Flutes will crack, most commonly at the seam near the mouth end. This may occur when the flute is wet and cold and you blow into it hot, damp air, your breath! Some flutes are made with the upper chamber of the flute treated with a preservative which helps some with the cracking problem.

A Compact Fingering Chart

For those of you who can read music I place below a compact fingering chart with the fingering for all the notes

Fingering Chart
The Native American extended scale

	0			1			2			3			4			5	X	Y
F L U T E K E Y	●●●●			●●●●○			●●●●○			●●●●○			●●●●○			●●●●○	●●●●○	●●●●○
	E	F	F#	G	G#	A	A#	B	C	C#	D	D#	E	F	F#	G	F#	G
	F#	G	G#	A	A#	B	C	C#	D	D#	E	F	F#	G	A	A#	A#	B
	G	G#	A	A#	B	C	C#	D	D#	E	F	F#	G	G#	A	A#	A#	B
	A#	B	C	C#	D	D#	E	F	F#	A	A#	B	C	C#	C#	C#	D	D

The halftone notes you can play

you can get on a five-hole flute with proper half-tone tuning. Some six hole flutes will behave like five hole flutes if the 3rd hole from the top is kept covered at all times.

At the top I put the 8 notes of the Native American Pentatonic scale. Restricting yourself to these 8 notes facilitates playing Spirit songs that are appropriate to the Native American flute and improvisations played with others that have flutes tuned to the same key will sound great!.

Native American flutes are most commonly tuned to the keys of E, F#, G or A. (The key is the low note with all holes covered.) Which notes are sounded by a particular fingering combination on a flute of a particular key is shown in the middle section of the chart. For instance, covering the top two holes creates a B on an E flute and a D on a G flute.

At the bottom of the chart are shown all the half-tone notes (15) you can play.

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