

# Finding Your Sound

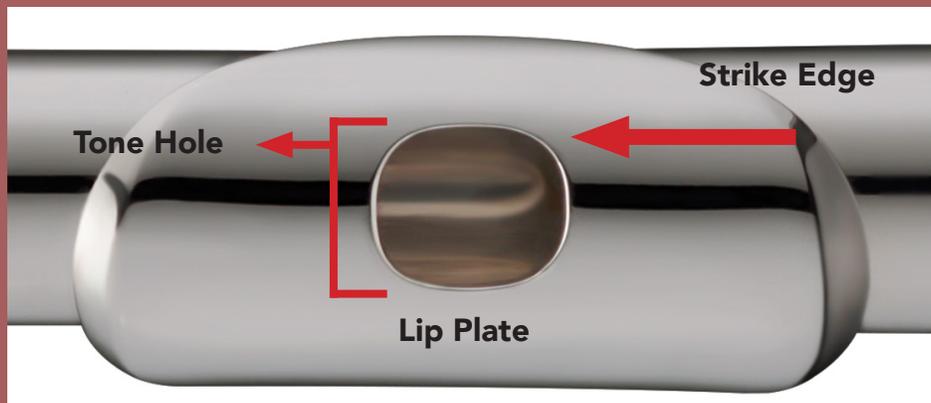
Your sound is your musical voice. It is what gives the notes on the page life and meaning. Your tone is something that is unique to you. It takes time, patients, and diligent practice to find exactly what your musical voice is.

## What is tone?

Tone is a musical or vocal sound in reference to its pitch, quality, and strength.

## How and where is sound produced on the flute?

This is a question that I find many flute players do not know the answer to, but it is extremely important to know on your journey to finding your musical voice. A sound on the flute is produced by placing your bottom lip on the lip plate of the flute and directing your air to hit the opposite edge, or strike edge, of the tone hole. Your air hits the strike edge and splits. This split is what causes the vibration and sound waves to occur, thus causing a sound to be produced! Contrary to popular belief, the sound of the flute does not occur at the end of the flute, it occurs right at the lip plate.



It is important to remember when we blow into the flute, we don't want our air to skim over the top (like blowing into a bottle), but rather we want to aim our air stream to directly hit the strike edge.

## Headjoint Alignment

Where your headjoint is aligned has a big effect on your sound. If the headjoint is too rolled in, you may produce of a very pure tone, but the sound lacks depth and projection. Alternatively, if your headjoint is too rolled out, your air may not be able to hit the strike edge, thus not producing a sound at all or a very thin sound.

Most young flutists play with their headjoint rolled in towards them because that is the easiest way to make a sound. But, like I said, the sound is usually small and lacks any depth. A good place to for your headjoint is aligning the tone hole edge that is closest do you with the right edge of the keys when you are looking down the flute from the cork.



## Embouchure Shape

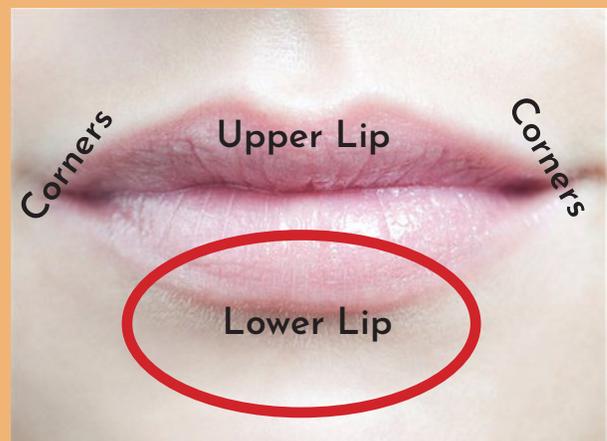
Our embouchure is the shape of mouth needed to create a sound. There are many different styles of embouchures flute players have that create a beautiful sound. Some embouchure shapes create a better tone than others. The most important thing that I have learned, though, is as long as your embouchure is not causing tension and producing a beautiful sound, whatever shape you use is up to you. I will be discussing the embouchure shape that I use. I encourage you to experiment with the shape and find what works best for you.

### Embouchure Terms

Upper lip: The pink part of the top lip

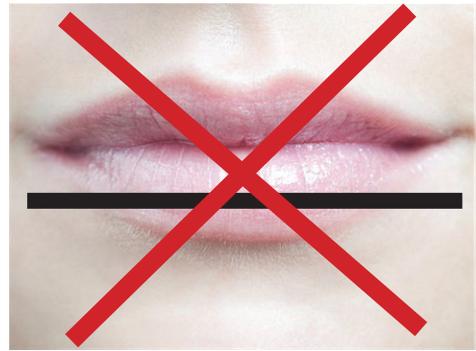
Lower Lip: The pink part of the bottom lip and skin directly below that until the chin begins to protrude.

Corners: The left and right areas where our top and bottom lips meet.

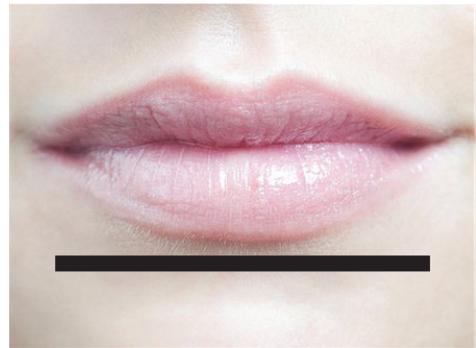


## Flute placement

The first step in establishing the foundations for a good sound is knowing where to place the flute on your face. One of the most important aspects of a good tone is lots of low lip contact with the lip plate, so we want to place the flute where we can get the most lower lip contact. The apex of the curve of the lip plate should be placed on the skin part of your lower lip, **not** on the pink part of your lower lip. You should feel the pressure of the lip plate directly below your teeth and not on your teeth. This placement may be much lower on your face than you are used to, but that is okay! It creates a bigger distance from your aperture hole to the strike edge which is what we want.



too high



apex of the lip plate curve is low enough on the lower lip to create pressure right underneath the teeth

## The Lower Lip

The more your lower lip can be in contact with the lip plate, the better. This allows you to have more control over your embouchure and your sound.

First, work on placing the flute on your face while your face is completely relaxed. You should feel that there is a lot of lower lip contact with lip plate.

Next, try to make a sound on the flute without engaging any facial muscles. Odds are, no sound or no "good" sound came out. That's because we need the help of our upper lip to make a sound.

For now, I want your lower lip to remain relaxed and in full contact with the lip plate.

## The Upper Lip

The upper lip helps control where your air goes. Remember, air has to hit the strike edge to make a sound.

With your flute set aside, I want you to place your hand with your palm facing you a couple inches away from your mouth. With your lips together, blow air through your lips so they part naturally. You should feel the air hit somewhere in the middle of your hand. Now try and guide your air stream to the lower part of your palm and then back up using your upper lip.

Keep everything as relaxed as possible. Once you are able to do this, place the flute back on your face keeping the lower lip relaxed and try to make a sound. Use your upper lip to aim your air at the strike edge (this will feel like you are blowing down).

Before trying to make a sound with the entire instrument put together, try making a sound on the headjoint only. You can hold the headjoint with one hand and cover the opening with the other.

Making a sound on the flute takes time a patients. But with a little bit if practice each day, you'll be able to have a beautiful tone in no time!

