

# Instrument Fitting Tips and Tricks



1. Start with the “small instrument” (brass mouthpiece, flute head joint, clarinet mouthpiece/ barrel, saxophone mouthpiece/neck). It is crucial that the tester place the mouthpiece in the correct position.
2. To get a sound on flute: place index finger under bottom lip and pout lower lip over the finger. Blow as if saying “pooh.” Once this is established, replace the finger with the head joint.
3. Double reeds: Use a synthetic reed for instrument fittings.
4. To get a characteristic clarinet embouchure, have the student pretend to put Chapstick on their lower lip.
5. I do not recommend using a hard reed as a method of “discouraging” students from playing saxophone, as you will wind up with students prone to forcing the sound. Instead look for students who can maintain a relaxed but steady air stream on a 2 or 2 1/2 reed.
6. To further distinguish your potential sax “superstars,” put the neck strap & instrument on the student and see if they can add a finger at a time and play from B down to low D. Some won’t like the weight of the instrument or will find this task too difficult and will gravitate to another choice.
7. Too many saxophones? Try them all on clarinet too.
8. If a student has trouble creating a sound on a trumpet or horn mouthpiece, “move up” to a larger mouthpiece. Many students will have an easier time, and then you can go back to the smaller mouthpiece once they get a sound going. *And you might gain a low brass player in the process!*
9. An enthusiastic and bright student who gets a nice sound on trumpet might make a fantastic horn player.
10. An bright student who is drawn to woodwinds may make good double reed players.
11. Students trying violin who cringe when playing on the E string can be good candidates for viola.
12. Students who struggle with the coordination of trying violin and viola might be more comfortable on cello.
13. Students with larger hands who like the cello should be encouraged to give string bass a try.
14. Don’t be afraid the guide the student toward other possibilities. The instrument fitting is about exploration!