

Reed Finishing

Your reed blank is made. Now what?!?

Clip the Tip

1. Once your blank has fully dried (1 day minimum), soak it in warm water for 2-4 minutes
2. Now clip the tip at 28mm from the shoulder
3. Lightly sand (7-10 strokes) both sides of the tip as well as in-between the blades with very fine sandpaper (400-600 grit)
4. Clip an extremely small amount from each corner of the tip. This prevents injury to your tongue with the sharp edge.

Check shapes and seal

1. The seal of the reed around the bocal is very important. When playing the reed, a hissing or gurgling sound will result with a reed that is leaking. Two techniques will almost always solve this issue:
 - Check that the butt end is completely circular. Oftentimes you will see a portion that is not, especially where the two blades meet on the sides. To fix this place the reed on a mandrel and crunch the cane at the bottom with pliers again. This may need to be done multiple times to seal the leak.
 - Look to see if the butt end is uneven. This happens when the cane was originally folded over and the ends do not meet exactly. To remedy this, sand the butt end of the reed with coarse sandpaper or a flat file until the ends are even.
2. The throat shape will change the resistance and tuning of the reed. Look into the reed from the butt end. The throat is the shape that is made when the light meets the dark, and should look similar to that of an eyeball: a combination of round and oval.

Adjust the second wire to change the shape:

- Squeeze on the sides to create a more round throat
 - Increases resistance and Raises pitch
- Squeeze on the top and bottom to create a more oval throat
 - Decreases resistance and Lowers pitch

The great thing about this is that you can always undo what was just done by changing the wire again!

3. The shoulder should be very defined. After the cane is profiled there is usually a gradual change in thickness from the hard cane of the throat into the shaved part of the blade. Clarifying the shoulder opens up the reed for a more vibrant quality in sound. Not much cane should be removed to clean up the shoulder, so be careful!

You can do this in one of two ways:

- Forward scrape with a reed knife
- Backward scrape with an X-ACTO or other straightedge-cutting knife.

When done properly, a clean drop off from the hard cane to the shaved cane is seen.

4. The tip shape/closure is very important and should look like a mouth opening, neither smiling nor frowning. Any shape can be adjusted to look like what is needed by scraping the tip.

In addition, the tip should close evenly from the corners to the middle. To check this, dip the tip in water and shake off the excess. While watching the tip opening, slowly squeeze the reed closed with your fingers on the shoulder.

If the tip closes unevenly, a part of the cane is stronger or less flexible than the other, causing it to close later. To fix the problem, scrape the wing of the tip on this side of the reed to create a thinner and more flexible area so that the tip closes evenly.