

AMERICAN LONG SCRAPE \* PHILADELPHIA STYLE



FREE RESOURCE

# THE Reed *RESCUE* KIT

*Three diagnostic tools every oboist needs.  
Before they touch a knife.*

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*Diagnose any reed problem in 60 seconds.*
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*The most common American long scrape problems solved.*

# THE REED RESCUE KIT

*Three Diagnostic Tools Every Oboist Needs*

*Before They Touch a Reed Knife*

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[makingoboereeds.com](http://makingoboereeds.com)

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*The most common American long scrape problems solved*

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# TOOL 1 — THE REED RESCUE CHECKLIST

*Diagnose any reed problem in 60 seconds*

*Before you scrape anything — run through this checklist. In order. Every time.*

## STEP 1 — IS THE REED CLIPPED UP TO PITCH?

Crow the reed in playing position. It should give you a C.

|                      |   |
|----------------------|---|
| Crow is a B or lower | CLIP IT. Stop. Do not pick up a reed knife. Come back when it crows a C. I've seen players scrape for an hour on a reed that needed one clip. |
| Crow is a C          | Good. Proceed to Step 2.  |

## STEP 2 — THE 4-STATUS DIAGNOSIS

Two questions determine everything:

- Is the reed Hard or Weak? (resistance)
- Is the reed Sharp or Flat? (pitch)

| Condition                    | What it means  | Action                                | Prognosis                   |
|------------------------------|--|---------------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| <b>Hard &amp; Sharp (HS)</b> | This is where you want the reed to be when you start adjusting | Start evaluating and adjusting        | <b>GOOD — proceed</b>       |
| <b>Weak &amp; Flat (WF)</b>  | Needs to be clipped  | Clip first, then reassess             | <b>FIXABLE — clip it</b>    |
| <b>Weak &amp; Sharp (WS)</b> | Old reed, bad cane, wrong tie, bad planet alignment            | Move on                               | <b>HOPELESS — let it go</b> |
| <b>Hard &amp; Flat (HF)</b>  | Usually structural   | Unless oversoaked — try closing first | <b>USUALLY HOPELESS</b>     |

### STEP 3 — CROW QUALITY CHECK

Thread crow — lips over thread, not playing position.

- Start soft, increase air gradually
- High C should speak with minimal air
- Second octave C comes in with more air
- No rattle. No strange sounds. No extra pitches.

|                               |  |
|-------------------------------|--|
| <b>Clean two octaves</b>      | Proceed to playing issues. You have something to work with.  |
| <b>Rattle / extra pitches</b> | Scrape sides of tip and corners. Clip until rattle is gone. Fix crow before addressing playing problems. |

### STEP 4 — PLAYING ISSUES

Only ask these questions after the crow is clean:

- Response/attacks — does it speak cleanly?
- Upper register — stable and in tune?

- Lower register — full and responsive?
- Stability — is the upper register sounding with little or no embouchure change?
- Pitch — holding up under dynamic changes?

**The Golden Rule:** The crow is the whole ballgame. Not a warmup step. Not a quick check. A good crow — two clean octave C's — means the reed is in the ballpark. Everything else is fine tuning.

## TOOL 2 — THE CROW GUIDE

*What your crow is telling you — and what to do about it*

Most oboists treat the crow as a warmup ritual. It isn't. The crow is a complete diagnostic system. Learn to read it and you'll know exactly where to put the knife before you make a single stroke.

### THE TWO CROWS

There are two different crows and they tell you different things. Most oboists only know one of them.

#### *Crow #1 — Playing Position Crow*

Lips on the reed where you'd normally play. Blow freely. What pitch do you get?

| What you hear      | What it means   |
|--------------------|---|
| <b>C or C#</b>     | Reed is at pitch. Proceed to resistance and crow quality.   |
| <b>B or lower</b>  | Reed is flat. Clip it. Every bit you clip raises pitch. Clip, crow again. Do not scrape a flat reed.                                    |
| <b>D or higher</b> | Reed is very sharp. Scraping will bring pitch down. But check resistance first — if it's also weak, you may not have much to work with. |

#### *Crow #2 — Thread Crow*

Lips over the thread wrapping — not in playing position. This is your resistance and quality test.

How to do it:

- Start very soft — barely any air
- The high C should speak immediately with almost no pressure
- Gradually increase air — the second octave C should come in
- How hard you have to blow to get the second octave = your resistance level

| What the thread crow tells you                 | What it means for you   |
|--|---|
| <b>Speaks immediately, two clean C octaves</b> | Excellent. This reed has good structure. Work the zones for playing adjustments.  |
| <b>Hard to start, needs a lot of air</b>       | High resistance. Reed is hard. You have material to work with. Start in the tip.  |
| <b>Speaks easily but sounds thin/hollow</b>    | Low resistance. Reed is weak. Not much left to scrape. Focus on what tone you can still get.  |
| <b>Rattles, extra pitches, duck sounds</b>     | Tip is uneven or too thick on sides. Scrape sides of tip and corners until crow is clean. Do not move on until this is fixed. Clip back up if needed. |
| <b>Third octave / rattle</b>                   | Looseness in the reed structure. Often a tying problem or the cane is too thin. Limited recovery options.   |

## WHAT EVERY SCRAPE DOES

*Every scrape drops pitch and softens resistance. That's the fundamental trade-off. You're always trading hardness and sharpness for tone and playability. Controlled degradation in the right direction.*

This means:

- Start with a reed that is Hard & Sharp — that is where you want to begin
- Work gradually — test after every single stroke
- Use almost no pressure — think polishing the surface, not cutting
- Scraping in one place affects all the others — go slow

## **TOOL 3 — 5 REED PROBLEMS. 5 FIXES.**

*The most common American long scrape problems — diagnosed and solved*

These are the five problems I hear from oboists most. Every one of them has a solution — if you approach it systematically.

### **Problem 01 I Can't Make Two Good Reeds in a Row**

#### **ROOT CAUSE**

*You don't have a technique problem. You have a system problem. You're making decisions by feel and memory instead of by a repeatable diagnostic process.*

#### **THE FIX**

Run the checklist every time — in order. Crow in playing position first. Thread crow second. Playing issues third. Never skip steps. Consistency comes from process, not talent. The oboists who make consistent reeds aren't more gifted — they do the same thing every time.

### **Problem 02 My Reed is Flat and Hard**

#### **ROOT CAUSE**

*This is the worst situation. The reed is hard but the pitch is already low. Every scrape will make it flatter. You have very limited options.*

#### **THE FIX**

First — is the reed oversoaked? Let it dry partially and try again. Sometimes an oversoaked reed closes up and comes back. If it's still hard and flat after proper soaking: this reed has a structural problem. Wrong gouge, wrong tie, bad cane. The kife won't save it. Cut your losses.

### **Problem 03 My Low Register is Horrible**

#### **ROOT CAUSE**

*Low register problems are almost always a combination of the heart to tip integration and back-of-reed problem. The back controls the low notes. Most oboists never touch the back because they're afraid of it.*

#### **THE FIX**

Test first: articulate low G and low A at different dynamics. See if you can articulate rapidly low d. If not, the blend needs work. When that is fixed, scrape the channels of the back — the lower third of the reed — in light, even strokes. Test

after every stroke. Also check the heart area)— it directly stabilizes the upper register and lowers E and F.

## **Problem 04 My Reed is Stuffy — No Air is Moving**

### **ROOT CAUSE**

*Stiffness means the reed isn't vibrating freely. Usually this is a tip problem — the tip is too thick or uneven and not responding to the air.*

### **THE FIX**

Thread crow first. If you're hearing extra pitches or squeaks — clean the crow before anything else (sides of tip, corners). If the crow is clean but the reed still feels stuffy in playing: Scrape the heart verly lightly. It will allow vibrations from the tip to reach the back. be careful.

## **Problem 05 The Attacks are Slow and Unclear**

### **ROOT CAUSE**

*Attack problems come from the tip. The tip has to respond instantly to the tongue. If it doesn't, the tip is too thick, the sides are uneven, or there's too much resistance overall.*

### **THE FIX**

High C test: with normal embouchure and minimal air, articulate high C repeatedly. A little or no delay on the attack means good response. If there's delay — the tip needs work. Start at the edges of the tip— this is the first place to go for attack problems. Take light strokes and test after each one.

# THE GOLDEN RULES

These apply every time you pick up the knife. No exceptions.

- Almost no pressure with the knife — think polishing the surface of the reed, not cutting into it
- Start from the top of the reed and work back bit by bit
- Test after a few strokes — one stroke can change everything
- One spot on the reed affects all the other spots — you cannot isolate one area completely
- Go slow or you will be making another reed tomorrow, which you should be doing anyway

*The body of the reed must vibrate as one thing — not in separate parts. Every adjustment you make either helps or hurts that unified vibration. That's the whole game.*

## Want the complete system?

The Making Oboe Reeds Online Course covers all 14 zones, the full diagnostic framework, and 56 step-by-step videos built on 40 years of professional performance experience.

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