

JMU School of Music

Playing the Piccolo WITH CONFIDENCE!

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1. Piccolo playing will help your flute playing! It will help you to develop control and refine your tone, articulation, breath control, and endurance!
2. Start with a good quality instrument! If you can afford or have access to a wooden piccolo, this is best. The sound is warm, rich, and more flexible than metal and plastic piccolos. If you are purchasing an instrument, please be sure the high B responds. An excellent, responsive headjoint can make a dramatic improvement on a mediocre piccolo body.
3. Approach the piccolo as you do your flute. The piccolo is really just an extension of the high register of the flute.
4. The piccolo should be placed higher on your lip than your flute, and it should be slightly more rolled in.
5. Everything on the piccolo is more compact than on the flute. The slightest change or movement in placement of the lip on the headjoint, embouchure, articulation, etc., makes a HUGE difference on the piccolo.
6. BLOW! Try this exercise. Finger a middle D. Start with your lips together. Let the air build up behind your lips and then gradually separate your lips. Think lower partials. Cheek puffing is not usually beneficial.
7. Stand up. Think up. Breathe from above. Approach high notes from above, as if you are playing DOWN to them.
8. In reality, the throat should be slightly closed. Not tight, just a smaller opening, resulting in a more controlled airstream.
9. Not ALL flute fingerings work equally well on the piccolo, especially in the upper register. Get a good piccolo fingering resource. High G-sharp/A-flat requires the addition of RH (right hand) 2&3, like the commonly used alternate fingering on the flute.
10. Use a tuner! The pitch tendencies are different than they are on the flute.
On piccolo:
low register=flat low-mid=sharp high-mid=flat/sharp (varies) high=flat

Use a tuner slowly to check simple intervals. If you have a tuner with a digital meter, you may have to set it on “fast” to register high timbre/pitches.
11. Practice articulation. This will also help your flute playing! Remember that on the piccolo, less is more. Tongue movement should be kept to an absolute minimum. Blow THROUGH articulated passages, so that you are focusing more on tone than tongue.
12. Practice vibrato. Generally, the vibrato speed should be even faster than on the flute.

13. Playing in the stratosphere—play with lots of good air! You may need to play slightly sharper in the top register in ensembles. Remember, the piccolo is flat in the top register.
14. Place cotton or an earplug in the RIGHT ear only during practice sessions. This will protect your hearing for the long-term. Many piccolo players suffer from hearing loss, so take precautionary measures.
15. MOST IMPORTANTLY—play with CONFIDENCE! The piccolo is usually one of the most exposed instruments, and if you back off, it will be out of tune with a weak tone. FORGE BOLDLY AHEAD in those piccolo passages! ☺

PICCOLO RESOURCES

Use any of your flute study materials to practice on the piccolo, including tone studies, scales, arpeggios, finger exercises, etudes, etc.!

Tanzer, Stephen. *A Basic Guide to Fingerings for the Piccolo*. Franklinville, NJ: Sopranino Press, 1990.
[NOTE: Amazingly, this book does not list the high G-sharp fingering any differently than the standard flute fingering!]

Morris, Patricia. *The Piccolo Study Book*. London: Novello & Co. Ltd., 1998.

Wellbaum, Jack. *Orchestral Excerpts for Piccolo*. Bryn Mawr, PA: Theodore Presser Company, 1999.

Wye, Trevor, and Patricia Morris. *A Piccolo Practice Book*. London: Novello & Co. Ltd., 1988.

www.piccoloist.com