How To Play The Recorder

Playing the recorder is easy once you master the basics of fingering, breathing and tonguing.

**Fingering**
The recorder has 7 holes down the front, and one hole in the back. Each finger on your hand is assigned a specific hole to cover. Your left thumb will cover the hole on the back of your recorder.

First, you must remember the "Golden Rule" of recorder playing: "Left Hand on Top." It doesn't matter which hand you write with, or how awkward it may feel, you must always place your left hand on the top holes.

When you place your fingers over the holes, you must create a flat, tight seal. Try to avoid curving your fingers under. Instead, imagine you are being finger-printed. The tips of your fingers should reach, and possibly hang over, the side of your recorder.

**Breathing**
Only the tip of the recorder should be placed in your mouth. Remember, you are going to play the recorder, not eat it, so make sure that your teeth are not touching the mouthpiece. If your teeth are touching the mouthpiece, you have the recorder too far into your mouth. Move the recorder outward until only your lips are around the mouthpiece.

Finally, you must breathe warm air into the recorder and NEVER BLOW!

**Tonguing**
To produce a clear beginning to each note, you must learn to use your tongue to begin and separate each note. The tip of your tongue should gently touch the back of your upper teeth at the point where the gum-line meets your front teeth. It is the same process as you use when you say the word "Tu". You may find it easiest to practice whispering "Tu, Tu, Tu" until you gain a feel for the concept and can produce the same action with only air (no sound).
Recorder Troubleshooting

Squeaking
Squeaking is one of the most frustrating obstacles you may encounter when beginning the recorder. Generally, there are three main culprits of the squeak: fingers, breathing and bubbles.

Fingers
Leaky fingers are the most common cause of squeaks. You must make sure that your fingers are completely sealing the hole. Always play with flat fingers, never curved ones. Imagining you are being finger-printed when you play may help you to flatten your fingertips. Also, (according to the size of your hand), the tips of your fingers will reach, or possible hang over the side your recorder.

Sometimes, squeaks occur when changing notes. This is due to one of your fingers moving enough to barely unseal a hole. When this happens, it is often the left thumb or your first finger that is moving. Repetitive practice moving between notes will help train your fingers not to move.

Breathing
If your fingers are sealing the holes tightly and you are still squeaking, you may be blowing too hard. Remember, you want to breathe softly, almost like you are whispering “Tu”, when you are playing. You may also want to check that you do not have too much of the mouthpiece in your mouth. The tip of the mouthpiece should be in-between your lips, not touching your teeth!

Bubbles/Saliva/Debris
Occasionally, a small condensation bubble may become trapped in your mouthpiece. These squeaks typically occur after you have been playing your recorder for a while, usually longer than 15 minutes. To clear condensation bubbles, cover the sound hole directly below the mouth piece by sticking one of your fingers in it (if you don’t, you’ll make a really loud sound and hurt your ears!) Place the recorder in your mouth as if you were about to play and blow as hard as you can to remove any bubbles, saliva or debris that can enter the recorder.
How To Read A Fingering Chart

The fingering charts are pictorial examples of a recorder. Just like your recorder, the chart has seven holes in a row that represent the seven holes on the front of your recorder. The single hole to the left represents the hole on the back of the recorder.

When reading a fingering chart, you will find the holes are white, black or a combination of black and white. If the hole is black, your finger should press down and cover that hole. Any hole that is white, it should be left uncovered.

Occasionally, you may see a hole that is one-half black and one-half white. These are called "Half-Hole" notes. Just as the picture and name suggest, you should move your left thumb so that it covers only the bottom half of the hole.