

# Playing the End Blown Flute

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(Ten Horses)



\$5.00

## Preface

In writing this book I found myself with many dilemmas. I'm not a writer, a teacher maybe, but here I was writing a book on what I loved the most, the flute. Because of this I would often set this project aside for long periods of time, until, a friend reminded me that I'm always saying that I'm not a musician, but I play the flute constantly with others as well as by myself. When I thought on this I realized that that I had also started making flutes, even though I had never worked with wood before. My early flutes were a disaster, but it didn't discourage me enough to quit trying. I guess all that is really required to do something is to feel the passion towards something to keep you moving on towards a destination. This is how I feel towards the flute. I hope all remember this that feel that way at some time in their life. Not only in learning the flute, but with all things in life.

This booklet is a shortened version of what I actually intend to write & more will be added over time with the Great Spirit willing. Not only a more entailed history on the flute, but all the songs that are on my CD....& more. The flute is my first true love, & I wish to share it with all that wish to know & play it.

I found many discrepancies on information over the years, one of which is evident on page 2. In getting help from a friend in the making of this book, they added a picture of what was suppose to be a NA pan flute. It turned out to be what we actually call a ocarina instead. I left this error in to show the many differences of thought on the flutes. Among most of us today we consider the pan flute an instrument made of multi length tubes, each creating a different note. The ocarina was usually made of a baked clay, with from 4 to 8 finger holes. The amount of open holes created the different notes, rather than specific holes. I hope you will enjoy the flute as much as I do.

Safe journeys. John

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# **A Minor History of the End blown flute**

The Native American style flutes which I make are basically the same as the end blown flutes which were developed independently everywhere in the world. The 5 hole Pentatonic scale flute is considered to be the first true instrument developed by man & was essentially similar everywhere except for the modes or keys. It is simply THEE oldest non percussion instrument on earth. The major difference with flutes developed in the Western hemisphere & elsewhere was: 1) In most of Native North America, prior to 1850, flutes as we know them today didn't exist. Before this time most flutes only had a maximum of 4 holes in the pentatonic scale. Most flutes were 6 holes but were what is called a grand father scale. Usually this was close to a whole note or diatonic scale. Flutes made in Central & South & Central America did use the pentatonic scales found elsewhere in the world though. In fact, the Peruvian & Japanese share the fact that only they developed a 5 hole flute with the 5th hole on the bottom as a thumb hole. 2) The main use for the flute was for courting and pleasure. The flute was an integral part of life that could be used in births, deaths, courting, marriage, hunting, warning sounds or just for pleasure. In fact a flute could be considered more an instrument of power to Native Americans than a weapon since it transcended the physical world into the spiritual one. Anyone hearing the eerie & hauntingly beautiful music of Native Americans could certainly understand this.

3) And the main difference of the NA Flute and what makes it special is the block or fetish used on most to transfer the air from the mouth piece to blow across the sound hole. (TSH) This was developed & used only by Native Americans.

The woods & manufacturing techniques used varied greatly depending on the region & materials available there. From river cane found around the Gulf of Mexico areas, to Sumac, Pine or Cedar in

others. The only common element in regards to materials was that only softwoods were used. This owing to the fact that no steel tools were available until the arrival of the Europeans. All tools were of stone or wood. Stone tools were knapped out of rocks such as flint or obsidian. These tools should not be considered primitive since they could in fact could be accurate & precise. Even today we have yet to develop steel tools as sharp as obsidian. We have even returned to using obsidian knives in certain surgeries such as heart & cosmetic since less scarring occurs from the clean cuts.

Flutes might have been plain, or an animal might be carved on the foot of the flute or as a “fetish” wind block which had special meaning to the owner.

The flute is often called the courting or love flute do to the fact that in some areas, mostly the plain states areas West of the Mississippi, a type of courting entailed that a young man to play the flute for the girl of his interest at night in front of her parents lodge. Very strict moral rules were common among all Native American peoples & it was quite normal to find that young men & women were not allowed to even talk to each other. By getting permission from the young lady’s parents to come play the flute, he knew that there was a possibility for more if the girl was interested. The parents of course would be at ease that the couple was sitting in front of their lodge at all times. Since this would only transpire after all work was done at end of day, & that the plains states often get cool at night, the man would also bring a blanket to place over their shoulders while he played. This is the tradition of the blanket & flute. Though some variations of course existed, the basic idea remained the same.

Though in Native North America the 5 & 6 hole Pentatonic scaled flute was probably acquired by the interaction between Natives & whites through trade, the music played on them remained wholly Native.

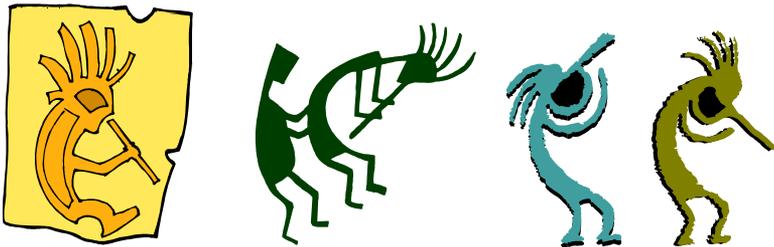
It’s not hard to understand why similar scales developed independently through out the world when you think of the fact that we are all one race & have the same hearing abilities no matter where our ancestors came from. We all have the same idea of what is a good

or bad sound. No one likes the sound of finger nails running across a black board. And the laws of physics allows only so many notes be created from an end blown flute. So in the end, people developed the same scales, which came from their flutes. No where is this more evident then in the Asian mode 2 pentatonic scale flute, & the 1st Celtic or Scottish mode 5 flutes. These scales were developed strictly by their race & used. The type of music that is unique to these 2 cultures & considered “their” music can easily be traced by just playing a flute tuned to the original scale. Playing just the straight open holes of the flutes gives one the feeling automatically of their relative ethnic origin. One should note that in the case of the original “Celtic” flute, this was not the so called “Irish” flute. The Irish flute is an open holed flute, not an end blown flute. Also it had it’s origin as it is today from Germany/Austria area. And before that it had it’s roots from Roman, & even earlier, Greek origins. The open hole flute is a marriage actually of an end blown & the pan style flute. Though an open holed flute has a much greater potential range, (depending on the players’ abilities) it is also a much harder flute to play. Some examples of open holed flutes would be the Irish flute, silver concert flute, even the pan flute itself among just a few. In the end blown flute category would be the Native American flute, penny whistle, & many others also.

As mentioned earlier, the end blown flute is the oldest instrument on earth. Tuned diatonic scale flutes have been unearthed within grave sites in China dating back 9,500 years that are still playable today. Through out parts of Europe & Asia, broken flutes of antelope bone have been discovered that show that they were tuned to scales in which we today recognize. These flute fragments have caused much consternation among archeologists since they have been dated from 35,000 to 85,000 years old, long before the so called ‘civilization’ of man. The one thing all can agree on though, where ever man has been, he has taken with him his flute.

# Kokopelli

All through out ancient Native American cultures stories abound of a flute playing Spirit or, as the White man misunderstood, a minor God. Most well known & recognized of these is Kokopelli, the dancing flute player. Though his image varied among cultures slightly, he is always recognized as a dancer, bent over & playing a flute. His image has been found in pictographs dating back thousands of years. Among some cultures he was considered a 'good' Spirit who brought rain & ensured a good crop. In others he was a bringer of merriment, mirth & music. Among others yet he was like the coyote trickster who created minor nuisances. Among all today though he is the unmistakable symbol.....ever dancing, ever playing the flute.



# Flute Care

The end blown flute is a true tuned instrument that is very fragile. I will try to list here some of the required care I feel is necessary.

Though a “cedar style” flute is made in 2 halves, many types of wood may be used today. No matter what type of wood used your flute has been sealed inside & out normally with some type of sealant to prevent moisture from seeping in to the wood by use. In my own flutes I use multiple coats of natural tung oil. I would suggest any type of natural wax or oil may be used to maintain the luster of the sealer that you feel comfortable having in your mouth. My personal preferences are natural & non toxic such as bees’ waxes, lemon oil or sesame oil. Read the label carefully first. Many time artificial & harmful additives could be added.

The block on top, (fetish, bird), is not a volume or tone control & should rarely need to be moved. Its normal position is lined up with the back edge of the true sound hole (fipple), or very slightly in back of it. The only time this would change would be when the flute became so moist it would start to squawk on you, then move the block slightly further back.

Certain instances of moisture & heat can be deleterious to your flutes health & should be avoided. To protect your flute from possibly cracking from heat or moisture build up in the rear air chamber try to follow these simple rules:

- 1) Do not leave flute in direct sunlight.
- 2) Whether after playing or in displaying try to keep flute angled w/mouth piece tilted up to allow heat & moisture to escape.
- 3) Shake out excess moisture from rear chamber after use.

You may wish to make a solid case to protect your flute. Types of tubing such as PVC or stove pipe which has been lined with padding and even covered on the outside are both good.

After years of use your flute may need to be resealed inside the mouth

chamber with a single coat of what was used originally, but with proper care this may be many years.

Do not over tighten or tie your thong in a knot, this will decrease the air flow & make your flute impossible to adjust. You may experiment with a different thickness of spacer, (roost) beneath the block, the ones I use is strictly to my preference.

## Starting Tips & Tricks

First off I have a recommendation for those of you with 6 hole flutes. These days almost all 6 hole flutes are what is called DUAL MODE Pentatonic scale flute tuned to the mode 1 & 4. In most instances either the 3<sup>rd</sup> or 4<sup>th</sup> hole from the top will be covered at all times. Hence the name, “dual” mode. It is actually a 5 hole mode 1 & 4 flute. Though a few options can become available using all 6 holes when you have learned to play....you will find them a hindrance for ease of learning. This is why I would suggest you seal over the 3<sup>rd</sup> hole from the mouth piece with a portion of tape for now & use the area for a finger rest spot as if it were a mode 1 only 5 hole flute.

Practice developing a breath technique for playing. Playing a flute shouldn't make you gasp suddenly for breath, a normal set of intervals of breathing & playing will be found to your preference where a song will never have to be “paused”, so you can breathe. With most flutes you never have to blow harder then you would normally exhale to make it play correctly. Having been a smoker for over 35 years you would think that I would have trouble doing so, but at some shows I do I play for 7 to 8 hours with only slight breaks. Practice the amount of air needed for your flute to get the correct sound. If you blow too softly, the flute may sound flat. Too much air & it may sound sharp or even squeal.

At 1<sup>st</sup> keep all your holes covered & sealed well to practice your breath, then slowly lift your fingers up fully to run up the scale....& then back down & reseating your fingers over the holes. This reseating won't happen over night, it will in 2 to 3 weeks become a reflex reaction, but not at first. You shouldn't be surprised to hear your flute squeak nastily at you because a hole isn't completely covered or seated. Don't be discouraged; take your time till it develops.

You will find, depending on your flute, that some notes may be harder to play & require a slightly different breath pattern then others. This will often be most noticeable on the bottom hole which is usually the

hardest note to play. In time it also becomes reflex to change your needed breath as required.

Often practicing in front of a mirror will help develop a fingering technique.

Lastly. Though your flute is a true instrument, do not at first try to play it as such. Play what you feel & build up a reflex reaction to your fingers with the hole positions in the process. Practicing the scale even will help this. Over the years I have found that singers learn to pick up the flute faster than musicians, I believe this being a case of inexperience being a positive. Also try to stay away from half hole notes & over-blow notes until you have mastered your breath & fingering techniques.

# Creating & Playing Music

As I mention in the last section, don't try to pick up the flute & immediately play a particular song. Play what you feel & let the songs start to fall in place with the notes as you play. There will be plenty of time later for a particular song that you wish to play. I probably hindered my own learning of the flute years back because I immediately tried to play songs that I knew from playing a key board. I became frustrated quickly till I backed off & started to just play what I felt. It's not that a well made flute isn't capable of playing both Native & Western types of music from other instruments; it's that a flute is so far removed to most other instruments that you have to learn a different language so to speak to play them. The closest instrument I would compare the end blown flute to would be the harmonica. With both you will find all the notes in harmony to each other that can be play with the open holes.

Though you have only 5 holes.....there are a lot more then 5 notes. Many more. Through using combinations of holes, half holes & over blows you have a full scale with flats & sharps like other instruments. Examples of fingering patterns are in the back of this book. The range of a decent 5 hole flute you will find to be 1.6 to 1.7 octave. A 6 hole "dual mode" flute you will find to be as much as 2.1 or 2.2. One note not listed on the charts is available for those that have a flute with out "tuning" or sound holes towards the bottom of the flute. If yours is such, try this. With all holes covered & sitting, lean forward while blowing the flute with all holes covered. Partially cover the end of the flute against your leg. You will find that the flute will drop in harmony, exactly one note.

Now to some tricks to change the sound coming from your flute by your breath control augments. Most common is of course is to vary your air into the flute by fluttering the air flow by your exhale to create a vibrato effect.

Another is to gargle in the back of your mouth while blowing into the flute which creates a chirping type sound. A similar type of sound would come if you raised your tongue against the roof of your mouth as if rolling the words you might speak. A last trick to varying your sound by breath control comes by using any of these above techniques, & cutting off the air flow into the flute with your tongue quickly. Try these & practice how you would like to create a particular sound.

Fingering techniques can be used by both by themselves or in conjunction to the above breath techniques to create more variations. With a steady air flow & sound, slowly lift your finger over the bottom covered hole with a rolling type movement, and then recover the same way. This should create a wavering type sound. Next, take your same finger flutter it quickly over the hole. This effect reminds me of a bird singing. Another interesting finger movement creates a popping sound at the end of a music section. Blow strongly with all your holes covered, quickly lift you bottom 3 fingers & stop your air flow into the flute with your tongue. You can also add on to this by then covering the holes back, & again stop your air flow. These different tricks should help to not only add to your music, but is how many animal sounds are imitated.

# Playing with other Instruments

To play a flute by itself, it doesn't require a well tuned instrument, though, only a flute whose notes are in harmony enough with each other will sound good even by itself. I should say though here that if a flute isn't tuned well enough, the two over blow notes available will not work. Either one or both will not be available to play. But to play your flute with other instruments such as a guitar will require a very well tuned flute. Other wise one or both instruments will sound out of key. No flute can actually be said to be perfectly in key owing to the nature of wind instruments. The player themselves has a lot to do with how close to a perfect pitch a flute will be. Also, as with all wood wind instruments, temperature & humidity have a lot to do with how close to "in tune" a flute will be.

Instruments such as guitars & keyboards have multi octave range, & the ability to change what key a song is played in. A flute player is not so fortunate in this area. To play with other instruments you have to have a flute that is in the key of the song being played, or a compatible key as shown in the chart on page 16. This is why, just as with harmonica players, some flute players will have several or more flutes in different keys so they may switch to the proper key as necessary.

## **Music**

When I started playing the flute years back, I found after much searching only 2 books which had Native American music. These days the popularity of the flute has grown such that many sources are available. Many links can be found on the web site of the National Flute Association, much of which use the flute tablature system developed by Carlos Nakai. This means that the average person who doesn't read music can read & play them without the needing to spend the greater time discerning the notes.

The flute is a very versatile instrument; you can play not only

traditional Native music, but rock, country. Only ones imagination is the limitation.

Some of the sheets following here show the notes of different scaled flutes and compatible or clash keys which can help you determine how & with which flutes you can play with other instruments.

## 5 HOLE PENTATONIC SCALE FLUTE NOTES

(BASE) ALL HOLES 1ST 2nd 3rd 4th 5th  
 KEY CLOSED OPEN OPEN OPEN OPEN

### MODE 1

F	F	G	A#	C	D#	F
F#	F#	A	B	C#	E	F#
G	G	A#	C	D	F	G
G#	G#	B	C#	D#	F#	G#
A	A	C	D	E	G	A

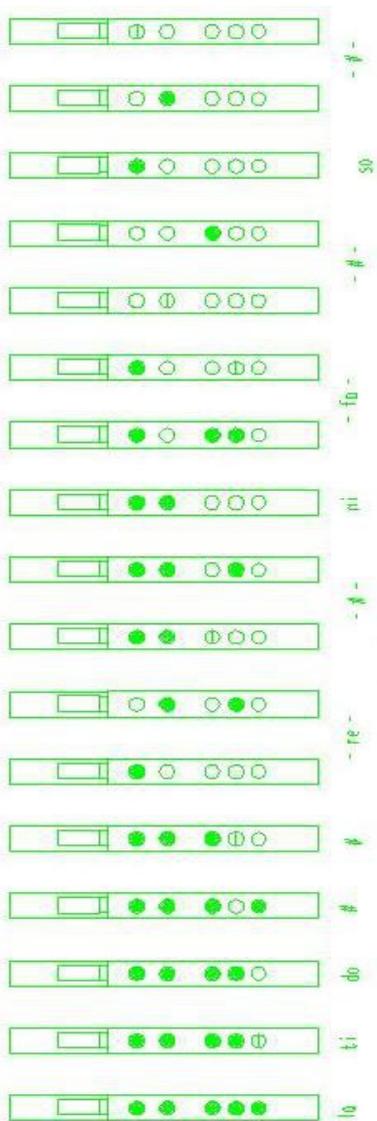
### MODE 4

F	F	G#	A#	C#	D#	F
F#	F#	A	B	D	E	F#
G	G	A#	C	D#	F	G
G#	G#	B	C#	E	F#	G#
A	A	C	D	F	G	A

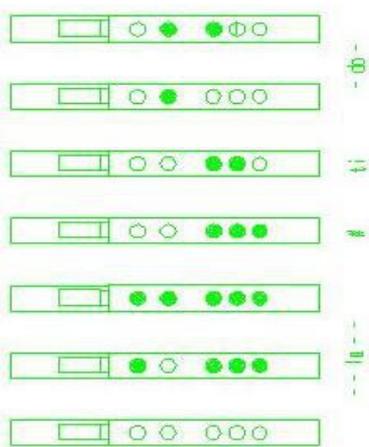
### MODE 5

F	F	G	A#	C	D	F
F#	F#	G#	B	C#	D#	F#
G	G	A	C	D	E	G
G#	G#	A#	C#	D#	F	G#
A	A	B	D	E	F#	A

1st Octave



2nd Octave



5 Holey - Mode | Pentatonic



Here is a list of keys that sound well together:

E & A

D & G

F# & B

F# & C#

C & G

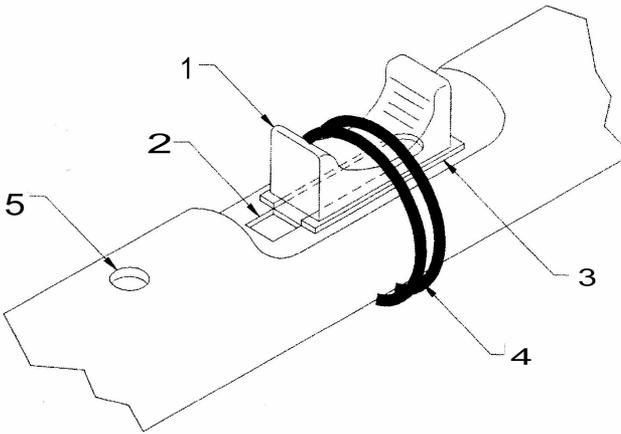
F & C

A & D

B & E

- 1) Block, fetish or bird
- 2) Fipple or true sound hole
- 3) Roost or spacer
- 4) Leather tie & rubber band (Optional)
- 5) 1<sup>st</sup> finger hole

If you disassemble your flute for any reason such as resealing or replacing the spacer, you will probably find it a bit cumbersome on reassembly. To remedy this problem simply place a rubber band around first to hold pieces in place while you tie your leather strip around flute & assembled pieces. You can either then cut the band away...or just leave it hidden under your tied leather strip.



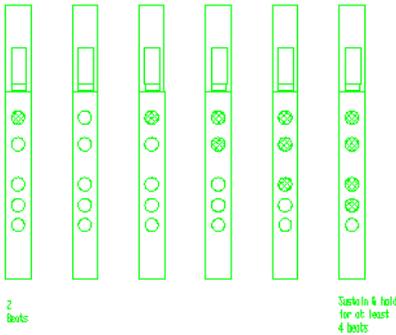
# Traditions

A tradition is a word I often think is over used these days. It's true we want to keep the past alive & in our minds. To forget the past is a great loss, & makes us prone to repeat past mistakes. But to stubbornly hold on to a certain aspect of a tradition & say that this is how it was & has to be locks us onto a path that leaves us stagnant. I bring this subject up because of what I often hear said about women playing a flute. I will hear someone say that a woman never played the flute....so they shouldn't today. This is a good example of centering ones mind on a certain area of history, & being ignorant or ignoring the rest. It's true that in the plains states area of Native America that woman didn't play the flute. This was because, like with the large drum in all of NA, the woman's spirit was considered too strong, & bad luck would ensue if they did, for the flute was considered a spiritual instrument. But in other area of Native America, women might play the flute. In most other areas around the world women also played. Gladly I will say that there are many women that play today, for there are a number of excellent ones out there.

Though the number one use for the flute was for courting, it wasn't the only use.

In the area of ceremonies is another thought that comes to mind. It's true that the flute was not used in ceremonies in NA of old with the drum. The first use of a flute in a drumming ceremony of any kind was in the mid 90's. About a year later I myself was asked to participate in one also. So these weren't traditions of the past....but maybe it will become so sometime in the future. THIS is how traditions are created, and maybe we today are a part of what will be considered traditions in the future.

# Danny Boy

Hopefully I've picked a song that everyone will readily recognize here. Danny Boy, though sounding like an old Irish song, is actually an old American dirge.

Parts of the song should be repeated to lengthen it, & later you can augment where ever you like to create a desired effect to make it sound as you wish.

When seeing a tablature such as used in this song, solid circles mean fingers covered fully. Open circles mean fingers uncovered fully, and though not used here, a horizontal line through the center means a half hole.



*Author Ten Horses (John Allen) playing one of his cedar flutes at a recent Rendezvous.*



## **Good informational sources:**

worldflutes.org (INAFSA)

oregonflutestore.com spottedeagle.com

loomisflute.com stellarflutes.com

(A multitude of links through these sites)

Books: by Carlos Nakai, Lew Paxton Price,

& Douglas Spotted Eagle

flutetree.com (tabulated music, links, history & more)

## Notes:

In this version I have corrected I hope what were a few errors in the original book both by myself & the friend who edited the original. Below are the correction notes I added later:

I had wrote that there were no 5 or 6 hole Native American flutes prior to 1850. What I actually meant is that there were no pentatonic flutes as used today. 5 & 6 hole flutes existed, but there were traditional scales that could possibly be described as being whole note scales. There were many different ones. Also, this was West of the Mississippi where the flute was most widely used. Western influence had already had an effect on flute scales in the East. Most of this time table of flutes has been lost because of the disinterest of the white man of those times. The flute is a fragile instrument that cannot survive the 500 years of time that the white man has been present. Though some flutes were carved of bone, most have been wood. This precludes us from accurately knowing the pre-history of early NA flutes. The picture of an ocarina was mistakenly labeled as a pan flute.

Dedicated to the many people who have inspired, encouraged & in other ways helped in my following of the flute & the writing of this book:

Richard Kapusta (Black Hawk)

Douglas Spotted Eagle

Tom Speckman (Woodchip)

Al Jeweler

Reuben Fast Horse

Patrice Winfield

Fred & Gail Prough

Margaret Moquin

& all those friends out at the Rendezvous that just said

"DO IT"

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