

NOTES FOR TEACHERS

Merran Moir is a Primary School Teacher in her professional life. She is also a well respected teacher of the Highland Bagpipe and is involved with the Warrnambool Pipe Band in Victoria, Australia. This is a country band with a strong teaching ethic, which produces a very high standard of Piper. The attached notes were distributed during a seminar that Merran was involved with in South Australia. They accompany a tutor book, however on their own they are a valuable resource. Merran has kindly given us permission to reproduce her seminar notes.

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This learner's manual is provided for the young student to become familiar with basic theory as it applies to bagpipe music, as outlined in its introduction. The aim is for the student to take ownership of their book, and it is a quiet hope that as teachers, we try to **refrain from writing in their book at all!**

HINTS TO ENCOURAGE STUDENTS

Read through the book with the student as you move through it. The text is there to support the music being learnt. It's not for decoration, or just the bits to skip through!

Know your student! Find out what they already know about music. Many teachers fail to do this. Some of the basic introduction to notation can be dealt with quickly, just applying it to the bagpipe scale, and comparing it the instrument they play. However, BEWARE, experience has shown that even musical students still need work on timing and time signatures.

Refrain from playing a new piece until you have explored its structure together – eg. Ask about the time signature, repeated segments of music, general appearance of the melody and groups of notes. This adds to the students' observations skills, and builds an independence to tackle new music accurately. It's surprising how much can be learnt by looking before any attempt to play.

Ask of the student, **rather than tell** the student. Instead of 'this is low A on the staff', and teacher labelling it, ask "Can you find low A on the staff?" and the student labels it. While it may take more time initially, the outcome is pupils who can read music sooner.

Work ahead, ask the student to look at their new piece for the following week, and **THEY** are to write the names of the notes underneath for the next lesson. Don't waste valuable lesson time doing this.

Make sure the **students write their own directions** for how to do the embellishments... don't correct as long as they can explain the correct way to you. I've even had one student draw diagrams for this.

IN THIS MANUAL



This little icon appears throughout the book. It is a reminder – the student needs to respond to the activity- usually by writing, colouring, or discussing with the teacher. The italic font also accompanies this.

For new activities, this needs to be started during a lesson, when it is clear the student understands the task, the rest should be completed at home.



The accompanying CD is computer generated, using Piobmaster 2.2. It's purpose is to provide something easily accessible for the student, and free up immeasurable time spent recording basic pieces for students during lessons. In general the recordings are good quality, although for the young beginner, the execution of the doublings remains very fast even when the tempo of the recording is slowed down.

Good Bagpipe Teaching Practice-

1. **Be relevant** – teach on a need to know basis... there is so much to know, teach at the point of need so the new idea has meaning
2. **Be realistic** – when starting a new learner, expecting the ‘traditional’ 1/2 hour practise/day is not practical. The new beginner doesn’t have enough material yet to do this. Instead, suggest they need to play ‘it’ 10 times every day.
3. **Be explicit**- let the learner know what you expect them to do at home. Unless kids have already had experience through learning another instrument, explain to them what they need to do. Eg. Give them ideas to warm their fingers up, play some doubling scales....play favourite tune(s), play something new 5-10 times each session, finish with favourite tune.
The exercise book will help you to record this for them.
4. **Be encouraging**- give them SOMETHING new every lesson; if they haven’t practised make it something small, a new gracenote, a finger exercise, something.
5. **Be on time**- most primary schools today operate on short, sharp lessons which recognise children concentrate for short amounts of time. A lot can be covered in a well structured ½ hour lesson. Going over time may be ok when the student progresses further, but initial lessons should well and truly fit within ½ hour- especially if you are like most pipe bands and teach at night.
6. **Be organised**- use the weekly exercise book to check what was taught last week, refer to this. Have anything new ready, don’t waste lesson time looking for new tunes, this should be done between lessons. Get the kids to be prepared, bringing what they need to lessons, filling out notes etc on the next tune to be learnt.
7. **Be part of the band**- as early as possible, once the student can play a tune with you, the tutor, try to get them playing their tune(s) with others on chanter. This is a very different skill, and should be started as soon as you think they are ready. This also makes pipes a very sociable instrument as distinct from many others in the early stages, and we can use this to our advantage.
8. **Be inspirational**- kids today are growing up in a different world to the one we did. Educators teach them differently because of this. If we are to have a hope of keeping them inspired, we need to provide them with inspiration from ‘their’ world. Use these things at appropriate times eg. When they are having a flat patch.
9. **Be Resourceful**
 - good internet sites- Bob Dunsire forums (Soda Shoppe for younger players), piperdrummer.com, The College Of Piping, The Piping Centre..
 - youtube clips, search under names- Fred Morrison, Gordon Duncan, Ross Ainslie, SFU, FMM, any top name players, bands, events.
 - use mp3 recorders instead of tapes for recording tunes for home practise,

This keeps pipes as part of their modern world. We need to work very hard at this because of our geographic isolation.

Further information on teaching piping can be found in “The Complete Pipers Handbook” which is available here: <http://www.schoolofpiping.com/handbook.html>