

Crossing Noises

A serious technical issue

For the purposed of this article, we will define crossing noises, or hand changing noises in three different categories. Poor timing when changing between notes causes all of these issues. This is usually, but not always, between top and bottom hand. Some pipers have a special ability to play some form of crossing noises between almost any note changes.



**No
crossing**

The first of the crossing noises we will look at is also sometimes known as a “catch”. It is usually a timing issue between the top and bottom hand, although not always. If you play for example D to E you may hear a small low G or low A in between. That is a “catch’ or “crossing noise”. They can occur between most top hand to bottom hand notes and vice-versa, but they are also common between E and High A, caused

by the mis-timing of the E finger. Most of these changes should be a seesawing action during which all fingers should not be down on the chanter at the same time. There are a lot of exercises available to help sufferers of this condition, but the best remedy is to identify when they occur and work on the method of changing between notes to rectify the problem. Like many habits, it is first necessary to identify and admit that you have a problem and then learn to hear it and remedy the fault.

The second form of crossing noise is caused by not lifting the correct fingers at the correct time. Often caused by peeling fingers up one at a time rather than lifting all of them together. Common between low G and B where the piper sneaks in a wee low A in between. Again these are easily identified and once the piper has learned to listen for the fault it is usually easily rectified with a little attention to detail.

The third type is a little more insidious. Usually executed by the paranoid piper who is trying hard not to play the first type of crossing noise and is too slow to return fingers to the chanter. Often heard between C and E. The piper plays E but is slow to return the bottom hand to the A position and a false note appears. Sometimes it is a B finger that is slow to return when moving from B to a top hand note, sometimes D. For some reason the C to E combination is the more obvious one and some chanters can highlight the false note more than others. This is harder to hear than the first two, but must be listened for and eliminated. Again, it is a timing issue between top and bottom hands, but often this fault can be eliminated easily by lifting the fingers a little higher and smarter during hand changes.



So to improve your changes, the main points are to learn what each of the crossing noises sound like and be aware of them. If they are occurring, STOP, analyse the problem and resolve it. Correct note changing technique is imperative to produce a good clean sound. As they say, timing is everything!