

Cumann Buidhean Píobaire na hÉireann

Getting to Grips



Foundation Course

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Introduction

The playing of an instrument is one of the most important factors in a cultural identity, defining who we are or who we want to be.

Bagpipes of various types are played throughout the world, but the most prolific and well known is the Píob Mór or Great Highland Bagpipe (GHB).

In the early part of the 20th Century the playing of the bagpipe was made popular, in the south of Ireland, through the foundation of many piping clubs and bands, initiated by the Gaelic League and subsequently promoted by the Irish Volunteers.

Many current pipe bands in the Republic of Ireland have their 'roots' in these formations.

This educational text is aimed at supporting an important part of our cultural heritage and identity, by providing a structured guide to playing. Ideally the process should be supported and fostered by a tutor.

Getting to Grips is a tutor led guide for young people, to help develop correct fingering technique for the bagpipe, as well as introducing **fundamental skills in reading music**.

The text takes the learner through the basics of **music theory** and gives a thorough grounding in the **practical exercises and skills** required for good musicianship on the bagpipe.

All practical work is conducted on an instrument called a '**CHANTER**'. Students will learn the **scale**, ornamentations such as **grace-notes**, and later in the booklet, more technical and intricate embellishments such as **throws, doublings, grips** and **taorluaths**.

The tutor book also includes a number of short pieces of music.

There is a strong emphasis on **monotones**, which helps define the rhythm pattern of a given piece of music.

Getting to Grips has been designed for ease of use, a guide to reading music and playing the chanter with confidence and skill. It is a useful tool for anyone who wishes to learn more about a musical instrument, which is played world-wide and serves as an introduction to the phenomenon that is the Pipe Band World.



Before We Begin



The Staff - A series of 5 horizontal lines and four spaces arranged in a ladder like arrangement to show the **pitch** of a note.



Pitch - the **height or depth of a sound**.
The position of a note on a staff determines the pitch.
A note higher up the staff has a higher pitch.



Clef Sign - the clef sign used for piping music is called a **G clef**.



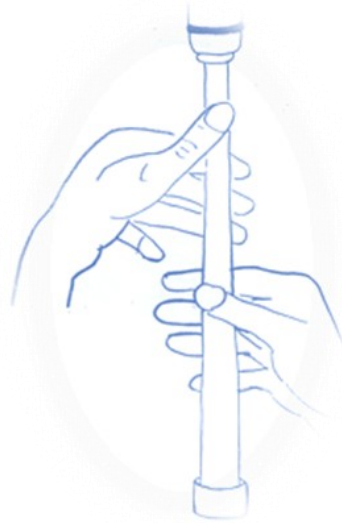
Leger Line - a short horizontal line placed above or below the staff to extend its range. In piping music we use a leger line above the staff—**high A**

Finger Placement on the Chanter

Front View



Rear View



Left Hand



Outer finger pad with impression of chanter hole on the left (top) hand

Right Hand






























Impression of chanter hole is on the centre pad on the right (bottom) hand

Finger Placement on the Chanter

contd.

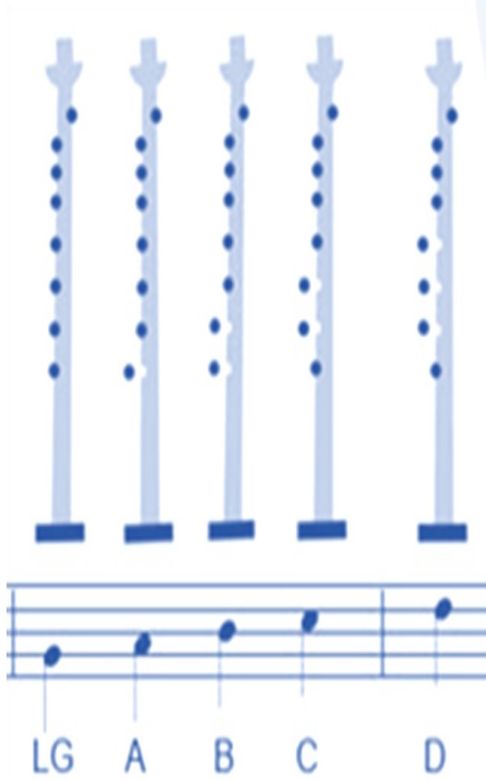
Diagram Key: ○ = open hole ● = closed hole

Note	Position	Diagram	Photo	Note	Position	Diagram	Photo
Lo-G				E			
Lo-A				F			
B				Hi-G			
C				Hi-A			
D				<div style="background-color: red; color: white; padding: 10px; border: 1px solid black;"> <p>Tip..... never use the tips of your fingers or curl your fingers around the chanter</p> </div>			

Finger Placement on the Chanter

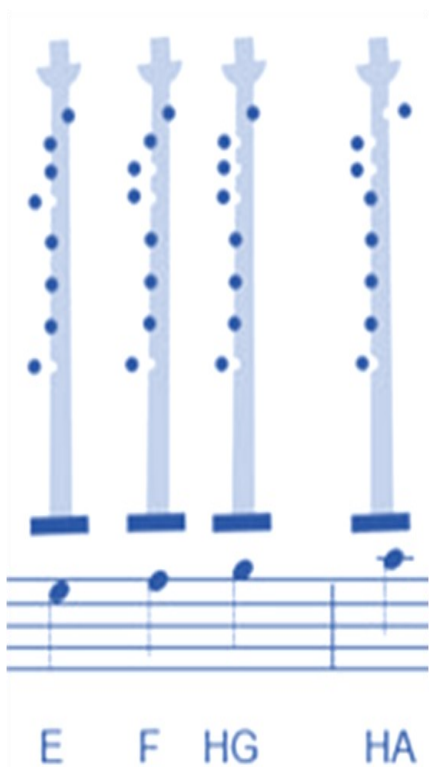
contd.

the right hand (bottom)



Tip.....
keep your fingers straight
across the chanter

the left hand (top) hand)



A Good Start

The Scale

The chanter scale consists of nine notes. All notes are named after the **first seven letters** of the alphabet **A,B,C,D,E,F & G**.

The notes on the lines of the stave are
E G B D F



The notes in the spaces of the stave are
F A C E



A Grace Note is played by **raising and lowering** a finger quickly.

The first grace note we look at is the **G Grace Note**. This is played by raising and lowering the first finger (G finger) on the left hand

G Grace Notes



E Grace Notes - played by raising and lowering the 3rd finger (E finger) on the left hand



D Grace Notes - played by raising and lowering the 1st finger (D finger) on the left hand



Bar Lines - are short up and down lines running across the stave.

1. They divide the music into equal portions.
2. They tell us when the strong accent is - directly **after** the bar line.



Double bar lines are put at the completion of a piece of music.















Repeat marks are placed at both the beginning and end of a section of music, which is to be

Tip.....

A Grace Note is played just before the theme note

Table of Relative Values

Names & Notes	Relative Duration	Rests
	Semibreve or Whole Note	
	Minim or Half Note	
	Crotchet or Quarter Note	
	Quaver or Eighth Note	
	Semiquaver or Sixteenth Note	
	Demisemiquaver or Thirty-Second Note	

Time Signatures

A **Time Signature** tells us two things

Top Figure - tells us the number of beats in a bar

Bottom Figure - what the beat note is



Above: Time Signature **2/4**

2 beats in a bar - beat notes are 1/4 notes - crotchets - accents S W



Above: Time Signature **3/2**

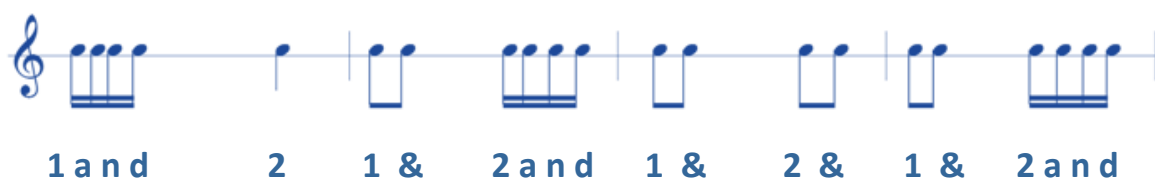
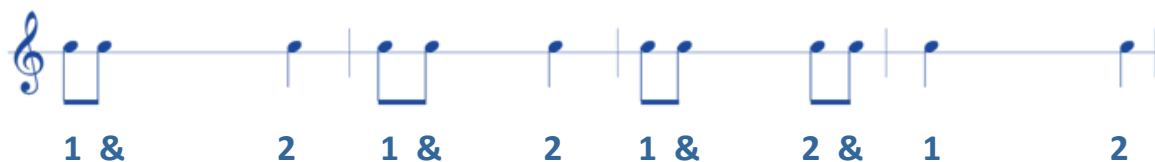
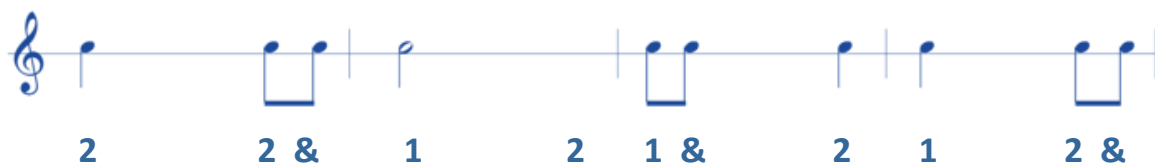
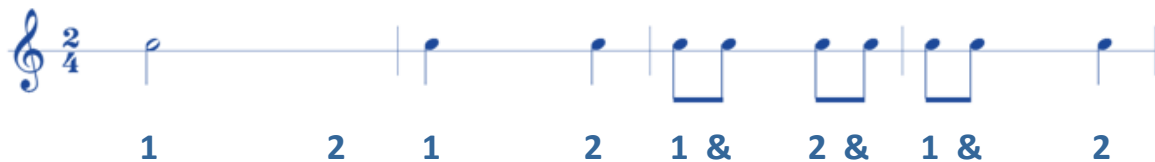
3 beats in a bar - beat notes are 1/2 notes - minims - accents S W W



Above: Time Signature **4/4**

4 beats in a bar - beat notes are 1/4 notes - crotchets - accents S W M W

Monotones



Simple tunes with Grace Notes and Strikes

Polka

Tip.....
Monotone the tune before playing it

The Polka tune is written in 2/4 time. It consists of four staves of music. The first staff begins with a repeat sign. The melody is simple and rhythmic, featuring eighth and quarter notes with grace notes. The second staff continues the melody. The third staff also continues the melody. The fourth staff concludes the piece with a double bar line and repeat dots.

The Boys of Fairhill

The Boys of Fairhill is written in 4/4 time. It consists of two staves of music. The first staff begins with a repeat sign. The melody is more complex than the Polka, featuring eighth and sixteenth notes with grace notes. The second staff continues the melody and ends with a double bar line and repeat dots.

Coulter's Candy

Coulter's Candy is written in 4/4 time. It consists of two staves of music. The first staff begins with a repeat sign. The melody is simple and rhythmic, featuring eighth and quarter notes with grace notes. The second staff continues the melody and ends with a double bar line and repeat dots.

Monotones

contd.

3/4

1 2 3 & 1 & 2 & 3 1 and 2 3 1 & 2 and 3 &

1 & 2 & 3 1 2 3 & 1 2 3 1 and 2 3

1 and 2 and 3 and 1 and 2 & 3 & 1 & 2 3 & 1 2 & 3 and

1 2 3 and 1 & 2 & 2 & 1 & 2 and 3 1 and 2 3 &

Tip.....

Beat your foot when getting to grips with Monotones

4/4

1 2 3 4 & 1 2 & 3 & 4 1 & 2 3 4 & 1 & 2 3 & 4

1 & 2 & 3 4 & 1 & 2 & 3 & 4 1 2 3 and 4 and 1 & 2 & 3 & 4

1 2 & 3 4 & 1 & 2 and 3 4 & 1 2 3 & 4 1 2 & 3 & 4 &

1 and 2 and 3 4 & 1 & 2 3 & 4 & 1 and 2 3 and 4 1 and 2 and 3 4

The Practice Chanter



Practice Chanter Reed



Mouthpiece



Ferrule



Chanter Bowl

Reed Chamber

The **Practice Chanter** is made up of a number of parts

1. The mouthpiece and reed chamber form the **Blowpipe**
2. The **Chanter**
3. The **Reed**

Caring for your **Practice Chanter**

1. After playing, get rid of excess moisture
2. Remove mouthpiece, leave to dry
3. When opening use both hands to grip the chanter bowl and ferrule
4. Remove with care and lift straight off
5. Do not turn chanter from the bottom as this may damage or break the chanter
6. Take care not to damage the reed blades

Do not leave your chanter lying around, where someone might accidentally sit on it

Chanter

Tunes

The Minstrel Boy

monotone before playing

Musical notation for 'The Minstrel Boy' in 4/4 time. The piece consists of three staves of music. The first staff begins with a treble clef and a 4/4 time signature. The melody is written in a single line, featuring a mix of eighth and quarter notes with various rests and phrasing slurs. The second and third staves continue the melody, ending with a double bar line and repeat dots.

The Mountains of Pomeroy

monotone before playing

Musical notation for 'The Mountains of Pomeroy' in 4/4 time. The piece consists of four staves of music. The first staff begins with a treble clef and a 4/4 time signature. The melody is written in a single line, featuring a mix of eighth and quarter notes with various rests and phrasing slurs. The second, third, and fourth staves continue the melody, ending with a double bar line.

Exercises

High A or *thumb* Grace Notes



Throws



Grip Development

note the B Grace Note when played from D



Birls



Taorluaths



