

# Crossing the Break Survival Guide



**Tips, tricks, and play-along duets**

Each duet pairs with a video lesson and  
play-along on the Clarinet HQ YouTube Channel



Clarinet HQ™

# Get the most out of this workbook



## 1. Watch the videos that pair with each duet.

Each duet has an accompanying video lesson and play-along. You can find them all on the "Crossing the Break Workbook" playlist on our YouTube channel. There's important information in both resources to help in the quest for more effortless crossing the break. While you're at it, take a look at the other videos on the Clarinet HQ YouTube channel.

## 2. Go in order, and take your time.

It would be great to go right to running 26 miles when you decide to start training for a marathon, but that's not how our bodies work. The same thing goes for clarinet. Make sure that you're comfortable with Duet No. 1 and the associated concepts before moving on to Duet No. 2. It's even a good idea to practice your part at a slow, comfortable tempo before attempting to play with the video. That'll make sure that your brain and muscles really have a chance to learn, and it will make you a much better clarinetist in the long run.



## 3. Get in touch with us.

Do you have questions? Are there topics you'd like us to cover? We want to hear from you! We didn't just write this workbook and leave you on your own. We're your partners in all things clarinet. Find us on social media or email us at [clarinet.hq@gmail.com](mailto:clarinet.hq@gmail.com).

## 4. Have fun!

Above all else, playing clarinet should be fun! Practicing becomes more enjoyable and frequent when you like what you're doing. Everyone has highs and lows. Enjoy the good days and don't be hard on yourself during the bad days. Take your time, and progress at your own pace.



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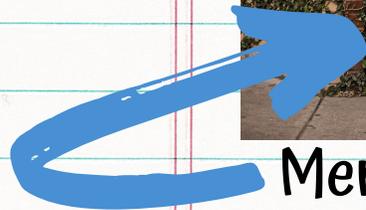
# Who are we?



Our serious faces



A little less serious



Meredith

Mike



Go to [www.clarinethq.com](http://www.clarinethq.com) to read our bios. We wouldn't blame you if you want to check our qualifications. We wouldn't trust a guy in a moose hat either.



Everybody needs a little help. Thank you to Katie Matsuura, Paul Schapker, and Kristen Dye for their feedback and advice.



All Clarinet HQ resources are 100% free. We don't even ask for any of your personal information. If you like our work, consider supporting us by subscribing to our YouTube channel, following us on social media, and donating at [www.clarinethq.com/freemusic](http://www.clarinethq.com/freemusic).

# What is a break?

**It's a physics thing.**



A break happens when you go from one partial to another.



**1st partial:**



**(The clarinet only plays odd-numbered partials.  
It's another physics thing.)**

**3rd partial:**



**(Yes, there's a 5th, 7th, 9th, etc. partial,  
but let's not get ahead of ourselves.)**

**Even if you don't know physics, you can figure out when you change partials because you put down more fingers, but the pitch gets higher. Think about going from throat B-flat to long C.**



The big leaps in the first duet might seem scary, but they're actually not. If you have a good embouchure, tongue position, and air support, you don't need to change anything. Just hit the register key to go from the 1st to the 3rd partial.



Watch the video called "Tricks for Crossing the Break" on the Clarinet HQ YouTube channel. You'll be playing large leaps and impressing people in no time!

## Crossing the Break Duet No. 1

(Find the lesson and play-along video on the [Clarinet HQ YouTube channel](#))

← Click here for the video

♩=85

Your thumb should be pointed at about 2 o'clock.

Don't lift your thumb to hit the register key. Just roll it a bit, and only hit the very end of the register key.



## Do you even practice bro?



Playing clarinet well means building a lot of muscle. Your embouchure is made of face muscles, your tongue is one big muscle, and developing fast and smooth technique requires building muscle strength and memory in your fingers.

Think about being a clarinetist like being an athlete. You would never prepare for the Olympics by training once a week. Make sure that you're building the muscles you need by practicing clarinet at least 5 days a week.



Try structuring your practicing like a workout. Don't just focus on one muscle group. Spend a little time working on your fingers, your tongue, and your embouchure.



# Crossing the Break Duet No. 2

(Find the lesson and play-along video on the [Clarinet HQ YouTube channel](#))

$\text{♩} = 85$

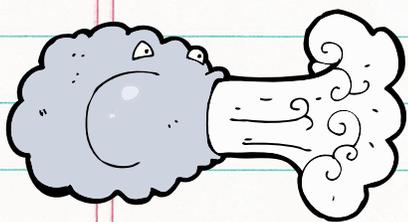
10

18

27

36

43



## It's all about air!

It doesn't matter what dynamic (volume) you're playing or whether the music is articulated (tongued) or slurred. You should always have a **fast airstream** focused by a high tongue position. Be sure to watch our videos titled "[3 Steps to the Perfect Embouchure](#)" and "[The Clarinet's Register Key](#)" to make sure you're focusing your air correctly.



# Under Pressure



These notes are so close together, but why do they feel so different?

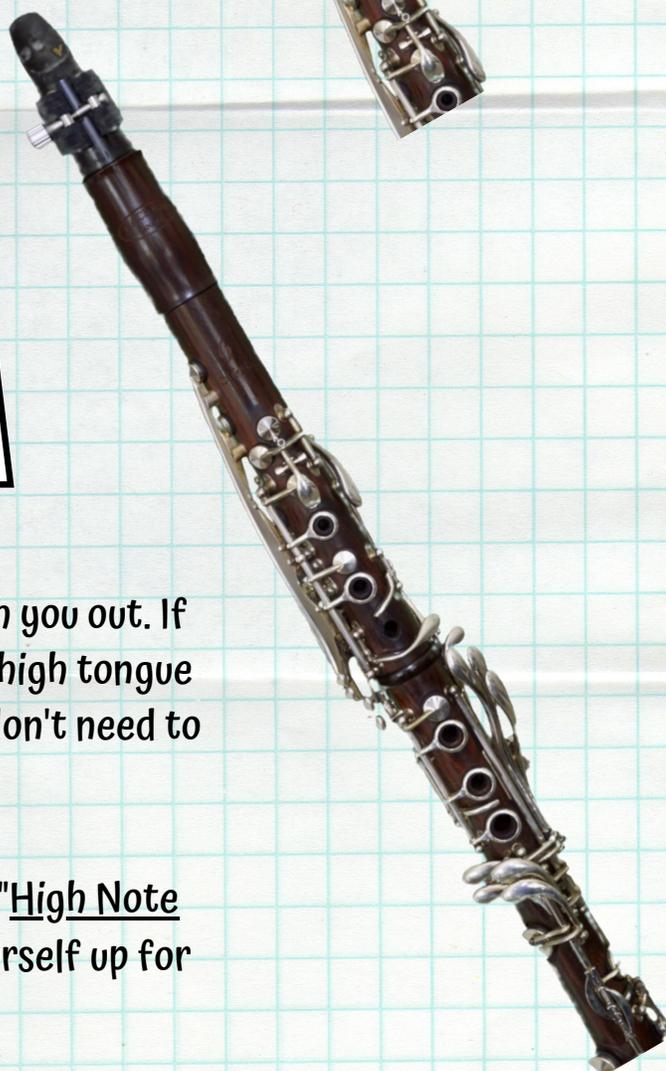


When you play a B-flat, it's like your clarinet is only this long because all the air escapes out of the open tone holes.

Your instrument is a lot longer when you play a C, so it feels way more resistant.

Don't let that change in pressure psych you out. If you're playing with good air support, a high tongue position, and a great embouchure, you don't need to change anything.

Check out our YouTube playlist called "High Note Hacks" to make sure you're setting yourself up for success.



# Crossing the Break Duet No. 3

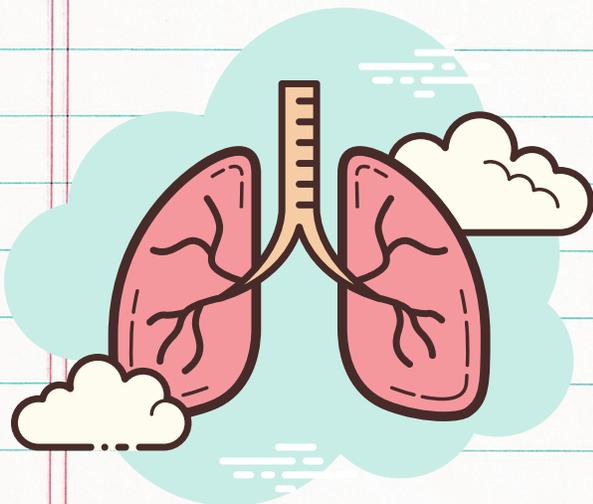
(Find the lesson and play-along video on the [Clarinet HQ YouTube channel](#))

♩=84

12

22

31



In this duet, the quarter rests are a great opportunity to breathe.

You will also see breath marks that indicate when to take a breath.

Remember page 3? Intervals like these might seem far apart, but it's still just going from the 1st to the 3rd partial.



# Crossing the Break Duet No. 4

(Find the lesson and play-along video on the [Clarinet HQ YouTube channel](#))

♩=84



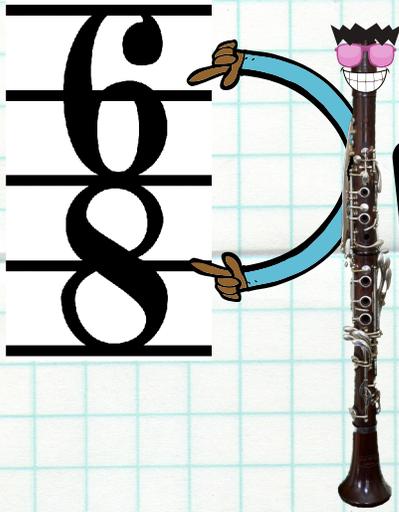
If you hear a 'bump' when crossing the break, try adding a crescendo! This extra boost of air will help connect the partials.



Isolate difficult passages and play them slowly, even if it means only playing two notes at a time. Slow practice and patience will save you time in the long run.



# Time signatures



The top number tells you how many beats are in a measure, and the bottom number tells you what kind of note gets one beat.

In 6/8, there are 6 beats in a measure (top number), and the eighth note gets the beat (bottom number). If you get confused with the bottom number, think of it like a fraction.  $1/8$  is one eighth (eighth note),  $1/4$  is one quarter (quarter note),  $1/2$  is one half (half note).

**The note that gets one beat may change, but the relationship between the notes is always the same.**

In any time signature with an 8 on the bottom, these notes get the following values:

$1/2$     1    2    4    8 (beats)

In any time signature with a 4 on the bottom, these notes get the following values:

$1/4$      $1/2$     1    2    4 (beats)

Note values double   Note values halve

Get more 6/8 practice in the Duet No. 5 video lesson!



# Crossing the Break Duet No. 5

(Find the lesson and play-along video on the [Clarinet HQ YouTube channel](#))

♩=100

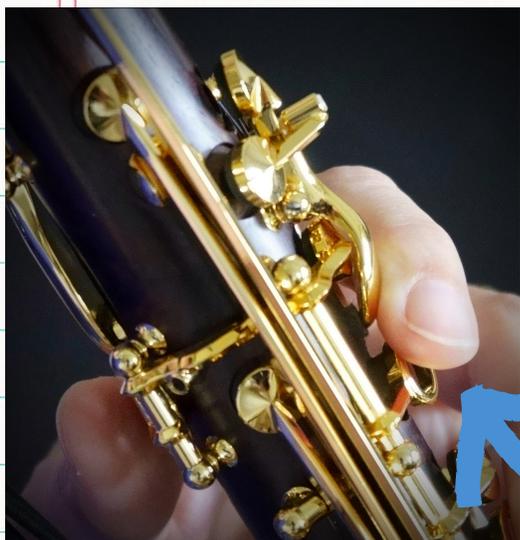
## A miner



## A minor



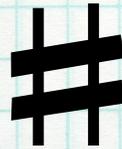
No flats.  
 No sharps.  
 But, G sharps are a common accidental.



Remember that your index finger should rotate to play the A and G-sharp. Don't lift it. Make sure that your index finger stays hovering over that first tone hole.



**These are accidentals. Are you playing them correctly?**



A sharp raises a note by a half step



A flat lowers a note by a half step



A natural cancels out a sharp or flat

**This is how it's written**



Accidentals apply to the entire measure, so the second C is also a C-sharp. The accidental doesn't apply anymore once you cross into a new measure.

**This is how it's played**



Key signature

The key signature applies to the entire piece, so every B is a B-flat. However, the natural in the first measure cancels out the flat for any following B in the measure.



**I'm trapped!**



Accidentals are only good for the measure in which they appear. No matter how hard they try, they just can't get past the bar line.

# Crossing the Break Duet No. 6

(Find the lesson and play-along video on the [Clarinet HQ YouTube channel](#))

♩=72

It's very rare to play two notes in a row with the same pinky. Avoid it whenever possible.



Right B

Don't lift your pinkies this high. I'm only doing it so you can see better.



Left C-sharp  
(Only the left pinky is necessary)

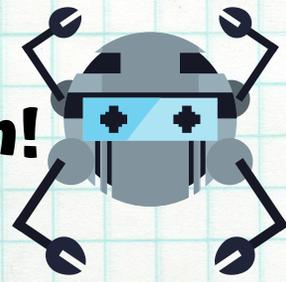


Left B  
(Only the left pinky is necessary)



Right C-sharp

# You're not a robot. Play with expression!



A phrase is a complete musical idea. Think of it like when you're speaking a sentence. There's a clear beginning and end, and you change your inflection (tone) depending on if it's a question, statement, or exclamation.



When you shape a phrase, think about your favorite movie. The story builds to the most exciting moment (the climax) then relaxes at the end. The climax tends to be in the second half of the movie. After all, it would be a huge letdown if the most exciting part of the movie was at the beginning.

**Crescendo**

**Climax**

**Decrescendo**



Be sure to keep your really good embouchure and tongue position through any crescendos and decrescendos.

# Crossing the Break Duet No. 7

(Find the lesson and play-along video on the [Clarinet HQ YouTube channel](#))

♩=80

Problems going over the break are frequently caused by fingers not completely covering the tone holes. Check out our YouTube video called "[The Clarinet Pinky Trick](#)" for a great hack.



Keep your hand relaxed and use the pad (cushy part) of your fingers to cover the tone holes.

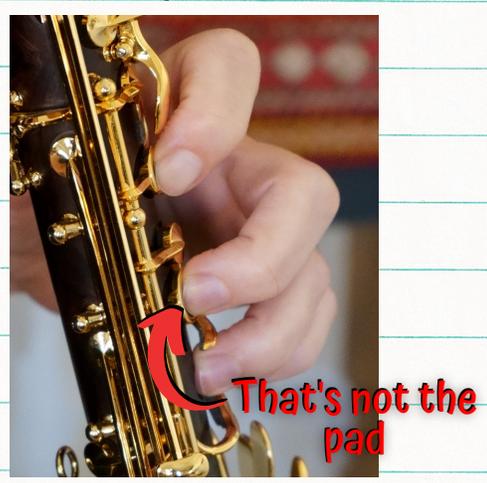


## Finger Fails

### The Leak



### The Pointer



### The Splint



# Crossing the Break Duet No. 8

(Find the lesson and play-along video on the [Clarinet HQ YouTube channel](#))

$\text{♩} = 92$

1  
6  
12  
17

*mp* *mf* *p* *mp* *f* *mf* *mp*

1 2 + 3 4 + 1

*mf*

Be sure to count through the rest.  
Otherwise, you won't come in on time.

A dot adds half of the note's value back to the  
note. Let's do some math!



N	+	N/2	=	D
Note Value		Note Value divided by 2		Dotted Note Value
	+		=	
2		1		3
	+		=	
1		0.5		1.5
	+		=	
0.5		0.25		0.75

# Crossing the Break Duet No. 9

(Find the lesson and play-along video on the [Clarinet HQ YouTube channel](#))

$\text{♩} = 85$

mp

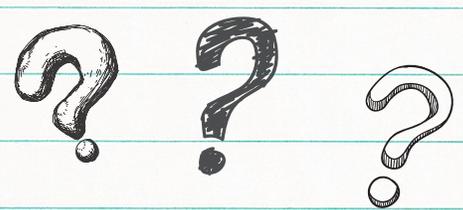
7

f

14

mp

19

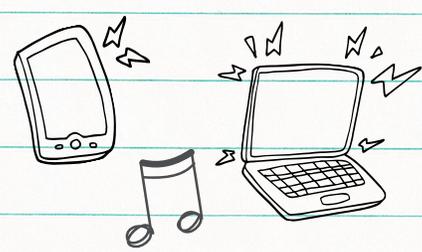


Try playing this slurred and then tongued. Your air should be the same both times. Don't let your tongue stop your air!



Think about the tips and tricks covered so far. Which ones can you apply to this duet?

Let us know what other topics you'd like us to cover! Find us on social media or email us at [clarinet.hq@gmail.com](mailto:clarinet.hq@gmail.com).



# Give Your Foot a Break!



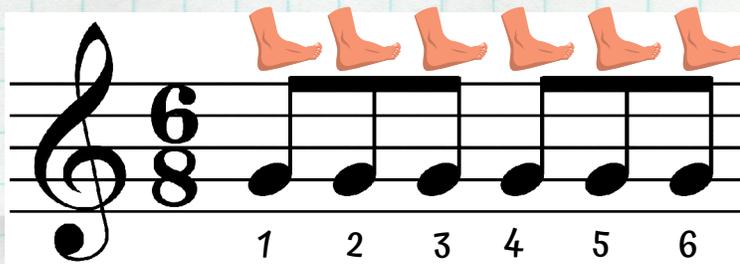
Remember what these numbers mean? Take a look at page 10 for a refresher.



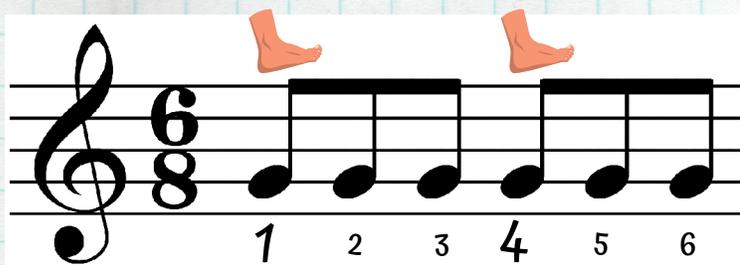
When you played Duet No. 5, you probably tapped your foot to each eighth note since the eighth note gets the beat in 6/8 time. However, what happens if the tempo is faster? It would be really hard to tap your foot that quickly.

**When you play in 6/8 with a faster tempo, you can tap your foot twice per measure.**

When playing in 6/8 at a slower tempo like in Duet No. 5, you tap your foot on every beat.



When playing in 6/8 at a faster tempo like in Duet No. 10, you tap your foot on 1 and 4, so there are two big beats and four little beats.

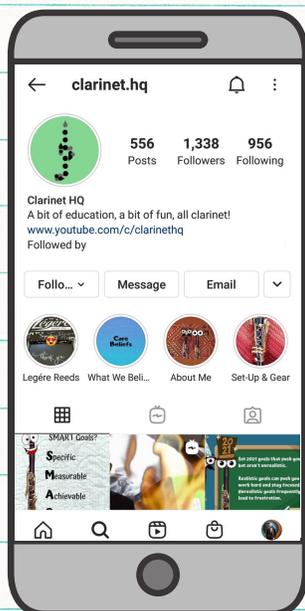


Even though you only tap your foot twice, you should still feel all six beats in your head. It's very important for playing rhythms correctly.



# Now you're a master at crossing the break!

Okay, maybe you're not a master yet, but you're on your way. Remember that you master something through quality repetition. Even after you've finished this workbook, it's beneficial to go back through every now and then to sharpen your skills and get even better and more comfortable with all of the material we covered.



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- Send us a message via social media or [clarinethq@gmail.com](mailto:clarinethq@gmail.com)

Way to go!  
You made it!



Good luck  
in your clarinet  
endeavours!

