Things you can do to prepare before you start oboe lessons:

**Tone Concept**: Enclosed is a CD of high-quality oboe playing by a variety of professionals. Please listen to it to get an idea of what sort of sound you will be aiming for eventually.

**Breathing**: Put a hand on your stomach. Practice breathing so that your stomach expands when you breathe in. Your sides and back should also expand slightly. The goal is to get the new air to go as low as possible. Your shoulders should move very little when you breathe in--you can check this with a mirror.

**Air Pressure**: Because the reed is so small, playing the oboe is more dependent on the pressure of the air used than the amount, and can involve a lot of backpressure. Many students find this uncomfortable at first, and let down on their air support when they feel the backpressure. To get used to pushing against the back pressure rather than stopping, practice blowing up the enclosed balloon.

**Embouchure**: Your embouchure, the way you hold your mouth around the reed, is very important in oboe playing. To build embouchure muscles, use the enclosed wooden pencil. Make a face like you're whistling, then, using that embouchure, hold the wooden pencil in your mouth. Use only your lips to hold the pencil--your teeth should not be involved, and should be kept far away from the pencil. Focus on keeping the embouchure round--it should feel like you're pushing the corners of your mouth forward towards the pencil. See if you can work your way up to holding the pencil for a minute at a time.

**Finger Independence**: With your fingers curved, set your fingertips down on a flat surface. It's important to use only the very tips of your fingers and to make sure none of the joints are collapsed. Now, see if you can spread your middle and ring fingers a little further apart from each other--playing the oboe will require these fingers to be a little further apart than is natural. Make sure to keep your fingers curved for all of these exercises. Also, please ensure that your pointer, middle, and ring fingers are in a straight line, as they will be on the oboe. Avoid angling your wrist up toward the pointer finger—keep it closer to the pinky.

1. Try moving each finger up and down very slightly by itself. Don't allow any other fingers to move.

2. Try moving combinations of fingers (i.e. the middle and ring fingers of your left hand, the middle and ring fingers of your left hand plus the pointer and middle fingers of your right hand, etc.) up and down together. Try to make sure the fingers move up and down exactly together and that no extra fingers move with them.

3. Try moving each pinky (one at a time) in wide circles, while keeping your other fingertips in place. Your wrists and hands can move some, but the tips of the fingers should stay put, so that if they were covering dots on a piece of paper, the dots would stay covered.

4. Try pivoting the pointer finger of your left hand back and forth, as if it were covering and uncovering a small dot on a piece of paper, without moving your other fingertips. Again, your wrist and hand can move a bit, but the fingertips should stay in place. Make sure to use a pivoting motion, rather than a sliding one, and keep your fingertip in contact with the surface at all times--don't pick it up.

**Music Reading**: Please go to http://www.musictheory.net/lessons . See if you can complete the sections under "The Basics" this summer. Also, please try to complete these exercises:

[www.musictheory.net/exercises/note/bfsyrybybyy](http://www.musictheory.net/exercises/note/bfsyrybybyy)

<http://www.musictheory.net/exercises/keyboard/999dyb>

<http://www.teoria.com/exercises/measure.php> (The automatic settings are fine)

<http://www.teoria.com/exercises/ritmo-ear.php> (Again, the automatic settings are fine, although, for advanced practice, you might try unchecking the "do not use syncopation" box and checking the box below it.)