TUNING IN BAND

Fundamentals first!!

* **MORE AIR SUPPORT**. Are you breathing and supporting from the stomach? Always aim for maximum air support. Air is the most important part of your oboe sound, by far.
* Corners forward in the embouchure, like a drawstring around the reed. Feel the lips meet.
* Aim for consistent strong air support and relatively still embouchure. You shouldn’t feel like you’re fishing around for every note if your basic set up is good.

Are you in tune now?

* What do your ears say?
* What do your eyes (tuners) say?

Are you in tone?

* Do you have a good, strong, centered sound right now?
  + Is your current sound flat and uncentered? If tone is flat (overtones not in tune), you’ll sound flat no matter what the tuner says.
  + Is your current sound bright and edgy?
  + Is your current sound weak or pinched?
* A bad tone won’t sound in tune
* Is your air support strong enough?

If your pitch is **flat**:

* Is your reed all the way in?
* Is your air moving fast enough? More air support is always the first response here, and for most things. Feel the abdominal muscles work, without collapsing your stomach (it is vital that you breathe well so you can support from the abdomen).
  + If your low notes are higher in pitch than your middle and higher notes, air speed is especially the most likely culprit.
* Aim the air forward or up (aim the air at the band director or something on the wall), not down the oboe. The higher the note, the higher you should aim the air.
* Try picking your head up. If your head is down, your pitch will drop.
* Where is the back of your tongue? Raise the back, not the front, of the tongue to raise the pitch, especially on higher notes. This helps speed up the air before it hits the reed.
* Push the reed more into the lower lip.
* Pull the top reed down into the reed and lower lip more. Make sure the corners of the lips are meeting, not one folding under the other
* Try taking a little more reed. You can be as far down as where the heart meets the windows. You should hear the tone center if you’re in the right spot, which won’t be the same on every reed or every day.
* Make sure the lips are not too far forward/out (corners should be forward always, but that doesn’t mean the lips should be pushed out at all). A good rule of thumb is to be sure the reed sits on the wet/dry line of the lower lip.

If your tone is flat:

* Same steps as for flat pitch, but with an even stronger emphasis on air support and air speed.

If your pitch is **sharp**:

* Don’t drop your air support!
* Make sure you don’t have too much reed in; if you do, your tone’s probably also a bit bright.
* **Corners forward**. Think about the embouchure being tall and pushing in from the sides, rather than having up-down pressure.
  + Remember how it feels to push your corners forward to push your reed out and drop your pitch in the reed siren—it’s the same feeling here.
  + This is your first response when the pitch is sharp. You should have a lot of flexibility from this alone, and should be able to drop your pitch quite a lot without losing tone, as long as you also keep your air support strong.
* Make sure your teeth are far away from the reed!
* Think about the front of the embouchure being very tall, even inside the mouth.

If your tone is bright:

* Do you have too much reed?
* Use the corners of the embouchure more.
* Make sure you’re breathing and supporting from the stomach.

If your tone is weak or pinched:

* More air support!
* Teeth away, corners forward! (these two points go together; students often bite so they can use less air support)

Is your reed in tune?

* When you crow it at the thread with strong air, you should get a high and a low note, and the pitch should be around a C, though a sharpish B is perfectly fine. If your reed crows flatter than a B, it’s flat. If the crow reeds C# or higher, the reed is sharp.
* Check the opening. A very open reed that crows a C is still in tune, but it’s going to be much more sensitive to air speed, and will take a lot of air support and air speed. You can CAREFULLY (if you do it wrong, the reed can crack) use the squish technique to close down the opening if it’s too open
  + Be sure the reed is soaked. Go ahead and dip it in the water again. Dry or drying reeds are much more fragile
  + Gently and gradually squish the tip of the reed shut.
  + WHILE HOLDING THE TIP SHUT, gently and gradually squeeze the middle (right at the top of the windows). If you feel much resistance, pause. Hold that for a few seconds.
  + Let go of the middle first, then let go of the tip. Check the opening again.