



BASSOON REEDS

Manufactured Reeds

Manufactured reeds are mass-produced with machinery. Because cane is an organic material, every piece is different in terms of hardness, density, flexibility, etc. Therefore, mass producing reeds on machines results in inconsistency. Manufactured reeds are also an unfinished product; the final stages of finishing and scraping are left undone to allow the player to tailor the reed in its final stage according to their personal taste. This results in the student unknowingly playing on an unfinished reed. Unfinished reeds are typically flat in pitch, harsh in tone quality, unwieldy, and unresponsive. Manufactured reeds tend to cost between \$17 and \$25.

Hand-Made Reeds

Hand-made reeds are constructed by professional bassoonists and are ready to play on arrival. These reed makers have standards for cane selection, making the product as consistent as possible. Hand-made, finished reeds are typically better in tune, responsive, stable, with a characteristic tone quality. Some professional reed makers I recommend include:

Weasel Reeds (\$23)
tjbassoon.com/reeds/

GoBassoon Reeds (\$22)
www.gobassoon.com

Raffe Reeds (\$30 including shipping)
erynoft.com

Purchasing

The average bassoon student will need 3-5 reeds per semester.
Reeds typically last between 3 to 4 weeks.
Rotating between reeds regularly will make them last longer.

Assessing and Basic Adjustments

A well-made bassoon reed will have:

- A symmetrical, almond-shaped tip opening
If too open (football shaped), soak well and pinch the tip closed with vertical pressure
If too closed, soak well and apply gentle sideways pressure to the tip
- A smooth finish (for tone quality)
If finish is rough, use a very light grit sandpaper to remove pithy fibers
- A thin, well-tapered tip
If the tip is too thick, scrape it downward 3x on a light-grit sand paper. Repeat as needed

Care

Always soak in water, never saliva
Store in a well-ventilated, safe place (preferably, a reed case)
If a reed is cracked, chipped, or moldy, it should be thrown away.