

Section One: Flute-Friendly Tunes

The bulk of the tunes in this collection are “flute-friendly,” tunes which favor the flute’s natural capabilities while steering clear of its limitations.

Note that flute-friendly tunes fit well on the tin whistle and uilleann pipes as well.

Many of these tunes were no doubt made by players of Irish flute, uilleann pipes and tin whistle, the three simple-system wind instruments of traditional Irish music. Others seem to be more idiomatic to non-wind instruments, but nevertheless meet the following flute-friendly criteria:

- The tunes fall within the comfortable octave-plus-a-sixth range of the standard Irish flute, never venturing below low D or above high B.
- The tunes flow naturally under a flute player’s fingers, and present no special fingering challenges.
- The tunes do not include frequent and/or rapid jumps from the high register down to the low, a maneuver which can be challenging on the flute (but doesn’t seem to be for the high D whistle).
- The only notes that occur in these tunes are D, E, F \sharp , G, A, B, C \natural and C \sharp , the notes that are easily played by completely covering and uncovering the Irish flute’s six finger holes. The tunes do not contain notes that require cross-fingerings (with the exception of C \natural), half-hole fingerings, or the use of metal keys.
- The notes that most naturally invite ornamentation are the ones that Irish flute players can embellish with variety and ease: namely E, F \sharp , G, A and B – and not C \natural or C \sharp .

Since the crann on D (and E) can be challenging for all but the advanced flute player, it could not be considered a flute-friendly technique. However, because cranns are such a beautiful element of flute ornamentation, I include five tunes in Section One that call for their use (numbers 29, 30, 71, 72 and 92). Cranns were adopted by Irish flute and whistle players at least as early as 1925, and probably earlier. For players who are not yet comfortable with playing cranns, there are melodic alternatives that can be employed. See pp. 22-23 for information on these.

Section One contains 30 jigs, 42 reels, 11 hornpipes, 2 slip jigs, 1 hop jig, 2 polkas, 2 slides, 1 march, 1 set dance and 2 harp pieces.

