

3. The mouthpieces of inexpensive whistles are often not made very well. You may end up with a whistle that has a weak, shrill or raspy tone, one that is difficult to control, or both. This can be discouraging, making learning more difficult, and can lead you to believe you are doing something wrong when you may not be.

Better-quality whistles are always tunable and they reward you with pleasing and solid tone, easier control, notes that are well in tune with each other, and a stable and dependable response to changes in air speed and pressure. Even the most expensive handmade small D whistles are less expensive than most other musical instruments.

The highest notes of the whistle can be rather loud and shrill. This can present a challenge if you have particularly sensitive hearing. Some brands and models are louder than others, so you may want to try different whistles and seek out other players' observations about them. Some whistles are designed to have high notes that are less loud. Their lowest notes are usually a bit less strong as a result.

A number of whistle makers offer whistle sets that include one mouthpiece plus several bodies in differing keys, all of which fit that one mouthpiece. Such whistle sets help lower the cost of owning whistles in a variety of keys. For information on why non-D whistles are useful, see "The Names of the Notes" on pp. 6–7.

Anatomy of the Tin Whistle

As shown in the diagram on the right, the whistle has two main sections: the **mouthpiece** and the **body**. With the type of whistle depicted here, the fipple is built into the mouthpiece and is not visible.

The **windway** is the air channel inside the mouthpiece. It's represented in the diagram by dotted lines. It shapes and concentrates the air you are blowing and directs it past the **window** to the **labium** (blade). The labium's knifelike edge splits the airstream and creates turbulence, which causes the air column inside the whistle's body to vibrate. This vibrating column of air creates the whistle's musical sound by transmitting its vibrations into the surrounding air, and to your ears.

Finger Holes and Finger Placement

The whistle body has six finger holes. The top three holes (those closest to the mouthpiece) are covered and uncovered by the middle three fingers of the top hand, which, for most players, is the left hand. (See "Why Use the Left Hand as the Top Hand" on p. 8.) These holes are labeled T1, T2 and T3 in the diagram, "T" standing for "top." The index finger covers and uncovers T1, the middle finger T2, and the ring finger T3.

The top hand thumb rests very gently on the back of the whistle, usually somewhere between T1 and T2.

Note that the top hand pinky never touches the whistle while you are playing.

The bottom three finger holes (those farthest from the mouthpiece) are, in the same manner, covered and uncovered by the middle three fingers of the bottom hand, which for most people is the right hand. These holes are labeled B1, B2 and B3, "B" standing for "bottom."

From this point on, I will use the labels T1, T2, T3, B1, B2 and B3 for the finger holes and for the fingers that cover them.

The bottom hand thumb also rests gently upon the back of the whistle, usually somewhere between B1 and B2. But the bottom hand pinky, unlike the top hand pinky, *does* touch the whistle (at a point below B3), and plays a

