

Primary Notes

Here are the letter names we'll use in this book for the eight **primary notes** of the whistle, the notes that are most easily played and the ones you'll need to learn as a beginner. Using the widely accepted symbol for "sharp" (#), and progressing from the whistle's lowest note upward, step by step, these primary notes are:

D, E, F#, G, A, B, C and C#

These note names might mean nothing to you now, but as you progress through this book **it's crucial that you learn and memorize them**. While it's certainly possible to become a fine whistle player without learning note names, unless you do this book will be of limited use to you.

Non-Primary Notes

There are four *non-primary* notes as well — E-flat (E \flat), F-natural (F \natural), G-sharp (G \sharp) and B-flat (B \flat) — but they are not as easily played on the D whistle, as they require techniques called "half-holing" or "cross-fingering." We won't be concerning ourselves with those four notes in this book. We can play plenty of music without them.

Since we cannot easily play these non-primary notes on a D whistle, whistles in keys other than D can come in very handy. Let's say you want to play along with a tune that's in the scale, or key, of F major. (This scale contains the non-primary notes F \sharp and B \flat .) It's difficult to do this on a D whistle, but quite natural on a whistle that's pitched in F or C. You may want to consult "Charts of Tin Whistle Keys and Scales" to find out which whistle or whistles can play easily in any given key or scale. You can download this document using the Audio/PDF url on the title page of this book.

Two Registers

Each of the tin whistle's notes can be played in two ways — as a low note (in the whistle's *low register*) or as a high note (in the whistle's *high register*). These low and high forms of each note are one **octave** apart, and they share the same letter name. An octave is the interval or distance between two notes such that the frequency of vibration of the higher note is twice that of the lower one. Note that the root of the word "octave" refers to the number eight. In most of the scales we use, the higher form of the note is eight scale steps above the lower one.

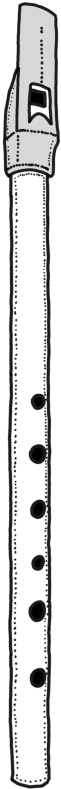
We whistlers are very lucky that the low and high forms of almost every note (for example, low G and high G) are fingered in exactly the same way. This is not true with most musical instruments.

Different Note-Naming Systems

In many countries, each note's name is a letter of the alphabet. In this book I use the letter names employed in the United States. Some of these note names are modified by the added word "sharp," "natural," or "flat."

Some musicians in Germany and other European countries use the letter "H" for the note I am calling "B." For these musicians, "B" refers to the note that is called "B-flat" in the United States.

In still other countries, notes are named by using solfège syllables, such as *do, re, mi, fa, sol, la, and ti*. In India and some other south Asian countries many people use the syllables of the *sargam* system: *sa, ri* or *re, ga, ma, pa, dha* and *ni*. In China, and some other countries, the *jianpu* numerical notation system is popular. At greylarsen.com/tw you can access the tunes in this book notated in these various letter, solfège (fixed and movable "do"), and numerical (*jianpu*) systems.



② Holding the Tin Whistle

The Relaxed Whistle Hold

It's crucial to keep your hands, arms, lips and jaw relaxed whenever you hold and play the whistle. Unnecessary muscle tension, and squeezing or clenching of any kind, will greatly interfere with your learning and enjoyment.

The cause of such tension is usually one's apprehension (conscious or not) about dropping the whistle when most or all of the finger holes are uncovered. Once you've learned this relaxed whistle hold, there will never be a reason for that worry to arise, and no reason to ever grip or squeeze the whistle.