



# ClariNotes



## Crossing The Break

### The Keys to Ease with Changing Registers

#### Right Hand Down

- The right hand has little effect on the throat tones, especially with fast passages. For open G, G#, A, and Bb, the right-hand holes can be covered to prepare a smooth transition across the register.

#### First Finger: Rock-and-Roll

- The index finger on the left hand is crucial for crossing the break smoothly. The finger should rock back and forth as it moves from the A key to the first finger F#. Practice these notes alone, as well as Bb to E.

#### Exercises:

- Register Change Warmup - This exercise ensures that the embouchure, air, and tongue placement are correct for changing registers. It is also a great exercise for practicing thumb placement on the register key, which should touch the register at the very bottom. The thumb should be angled toward 2 o'clock.



- Crossing the Break Exercises



- Bach Exercise - Use right side B-natural for this passage. Keep the fingers as close to the instrument as possible. You can only leave right hand down on the A and open G. I would like to see Bach play this on the clarinet!



"NOT THE BREAK!" MAYBE WE SHOULDN'T CALL IT THAT

The break on the clarinet refers to going from throat tone Bb to B-natural, where the fingering changes from having no holes covered to all of the holes covered. The word "break" carries a negative connotation and can cause much anxiety for the beginning player. If the holes are missed, even slightly, a wonderful squeak will result. Register change is a better term and should be practiced with descending intervals first. It is much easier to go down over the register change than up. Keep the right hand down as you descend. Then, once that is smooth, go right back up to the top note. Repeat this pattern until it is easy and the break will be much less scary.

#### Contact the Author

Dr. Adam Ballif  
ballifa@byui.edu  
[www.adamballif.com](http://www.adamballif.com)