

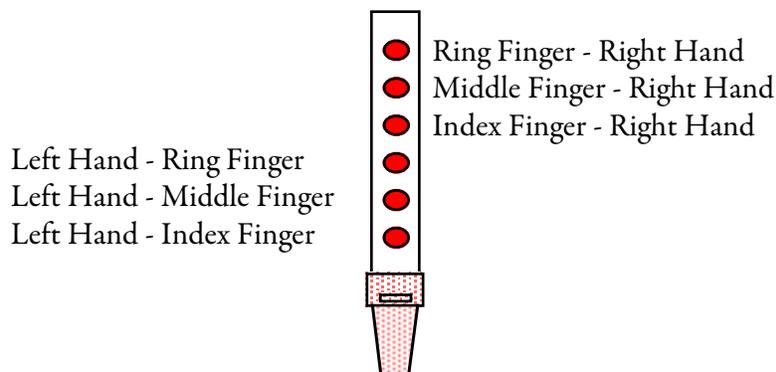
Pennywhistle Instructions

Note: These pennywhistle instructions were written to accompany the Christmas Carol diagrams found at "A Pennywhistle for Christmas." (<http://www.mugglinworks.com/pennywhistle/>)

If you would like to play these Christmas songs on the pennywhistle, here's how to start.

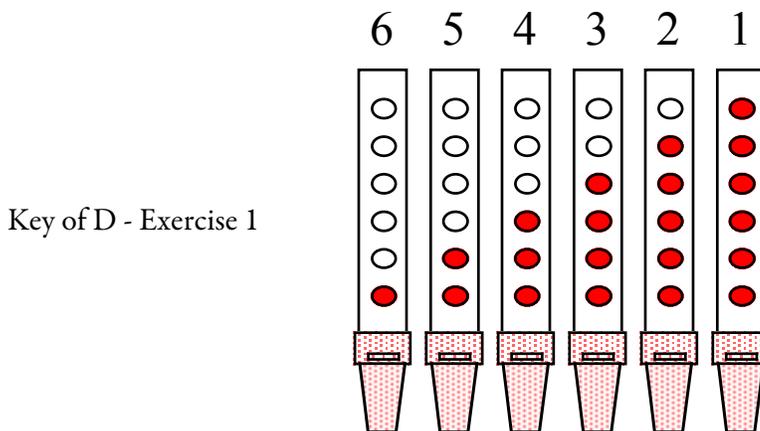
1 - You'll need a pennywhistle. I suggest one in the key of D. There are many models available. For beginning students, I usually recommend the Sweetone or the Meg. (When I'm buying them for my students, I order from www.thewhistleshop.com. I'm not affiliated with them, but I like looking at what they have to offer.)

2 - There are six holes which you will cover with your index, middle and ring fingers of each hand. Allow your fingers to be relaxed. Your left hand is closer to your mouth than your right hand. The fingers in order are left index, left middle, left ring, right index, right middle, right ring.



3 - The pennywhistle plays in two major keys. D whistles can be played in the "main key" (D) and in the "alternate key" (G). The key of D is quite easy to learn. (The key of G has one note that takes a little extra work.)

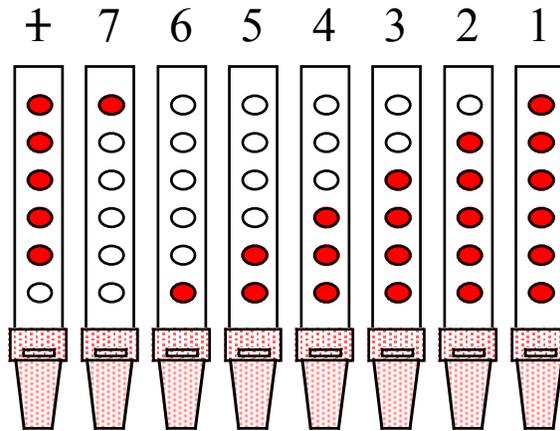
4 - The first challenge, especially for younger students, is making sure the holes are covered completely. Even a small part of a hole not quite covered will change the pitch of the note being played. The second challenge is blowing softly enough to get the lowest notes to sound. Here is an exercise to help with these two challenges. Blow softly and play the following sequence of notes.



Practice this a few times until you begin to feel comfortable. Then move on to Exercise 2.

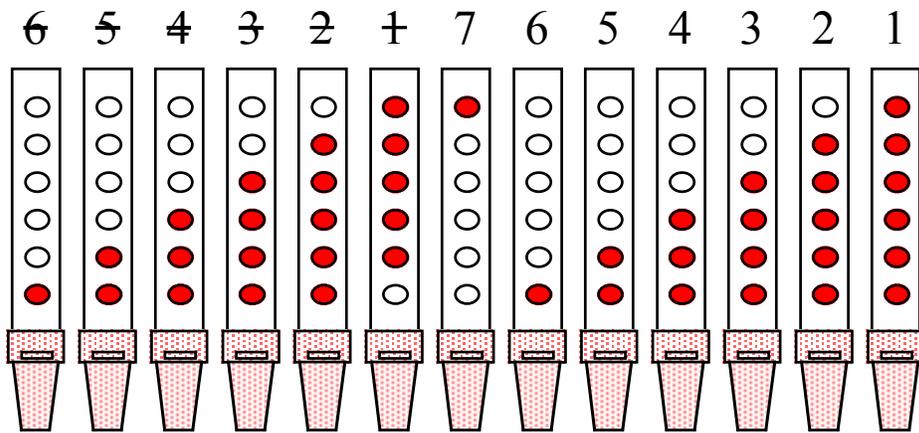
5 - Major scales have seven notes. Note 8 is note 1 again played an octave higher. For these lessons, instead of writing 8, we will use 1 with a dash through it (±), meaning “note 1 up the octave.” This exercise introduces notes 7 and ±.

Key of D - Exercise 2

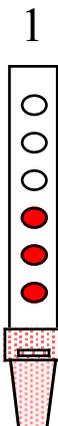


6 - Notes 2 through 6 can also be played an octave higher. The fingering is the same, but you will have to blow a little harder. Here again we will use dashed numbers to indicate the higher octave.

Key of D
Exercise 3

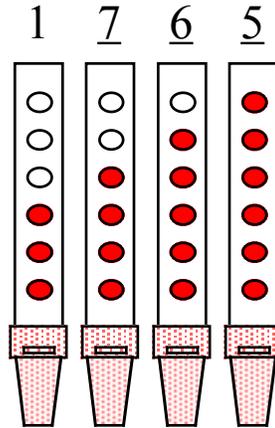


7 - Congratulations! That's what you need to know to get started in the key of D. Now on to the key of G. Almost all the notes in G are played the same as in D, but we number them differently, and there is one new note to learn. First, the new numbers. This is note 1.

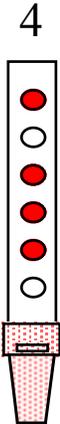


8 - Because there are some notes that go lower than 1 in this key, we will call them 7, 6, and 5. Underlined numbers are lower than note 1.

Key of G - Exercise 1



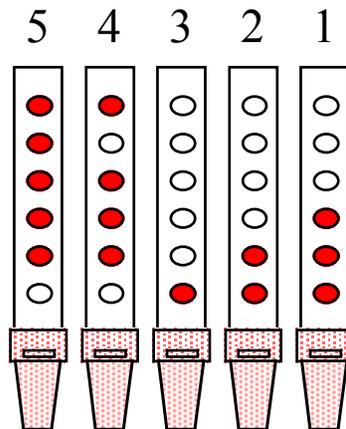
9 - The new note, the one that takes a little practice, is note 4. It looks like this.



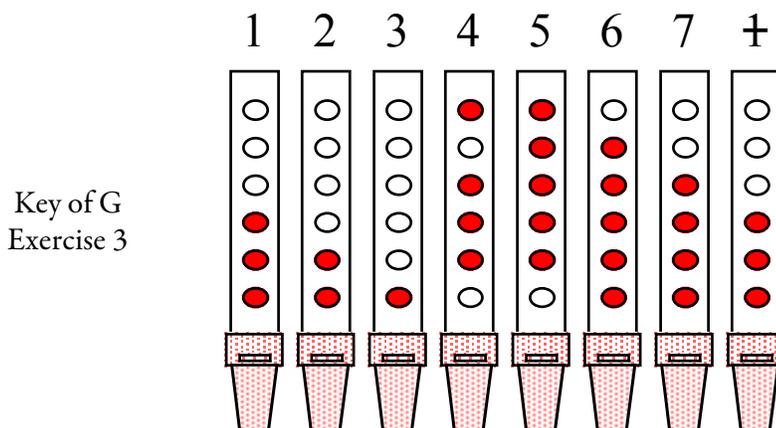
(Note - On some pennywhistles, note 4 in the alternate key is played with only two fingers, the left middle and left ring. If your pennywhistle came with a fingering chart, you may check and see which fingering is shown for C natural.)

10 - Play the following sequence of notes to practice using note 4.

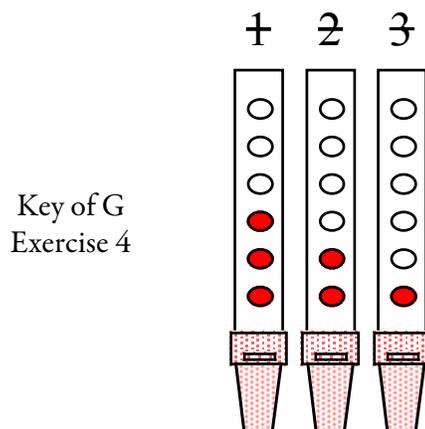
Key of G - Exercise 2



11 - Next play the whole octave, starting with 1 and going up the scale to †.



12 - Let's take two more notes higher than †. You'll have to blow harder for these notes.



13 - Another idea - if you play each note as though you were saying the word “do” you will get a different effect than when you say “ooh”. Saying “do” makes each note sound separately. Saying “ooh” connects the notes together in a smooth way. Which way is best at any given moment depends partly on the music and partly on personal taste. When you are playing, you will recognize places where a smooth sound is good, and other places where each note sounds best played separately.

14 - Sometimes, if moisture condenses inside the whistle, the notes will not sound correctly. If this happens, place the soft part of your littlest finger over the wedge-shaped part of the mouthpiece where the air stream divides. Then blow sharply into the mouthpiece to clear out the moisture. Moisture in the main body of the whistle can be gently shaken out.

15 - After playing the exercises in this section, and after experimenting a little with the “do” sound and the “ooh” sound, you are ready to play the Christmas songs included with this lesson. Have fun!