

Scraping a Reed

Step-by-Step Pictures

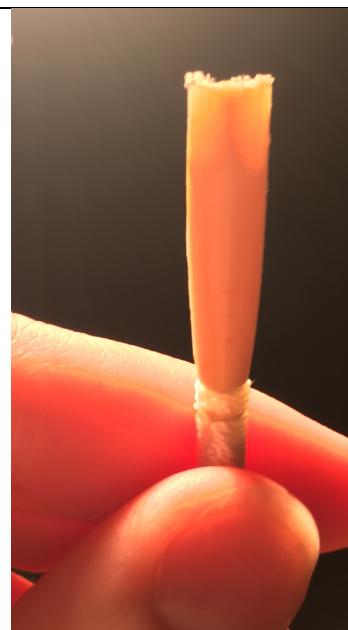
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Day 1: The blank should measure 72-73mm from the bottom of the staple.



Scrape a “roughed-in” tip to form a tapered point. Start the scrape at 66mm. This is how I put my blanks away. Roughed-in tip, not clipped open.



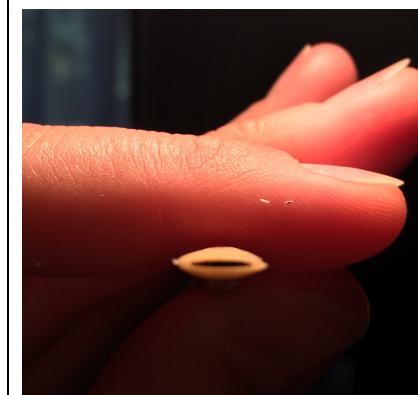
Blank in front of a light source. Notice a spine has been left in the center. Scraping towards the sides and never scraping directly in the middle of the tip achieves this.



Side view. Notice the tapered, pointed tip.



When you’re ready to make the blank into a reed, soak it, thin the tip a bit more and clip it open.





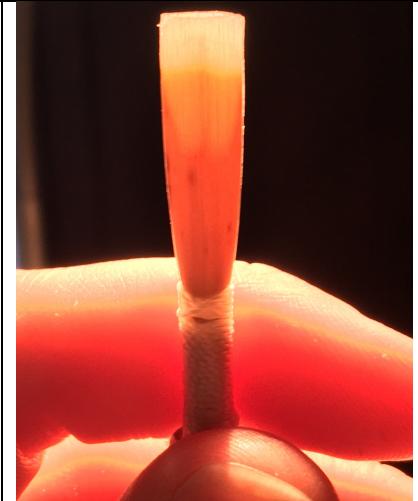
Insert the plaque about $\frac{1}{4}$ of the way into the reed and continue thinning the tip until a peep can be made when you blow into the reed. Focus on the tip of the tip to keep the taper. (Notice the left edge? Even I still sometimes take a little too much cane off. ☺)



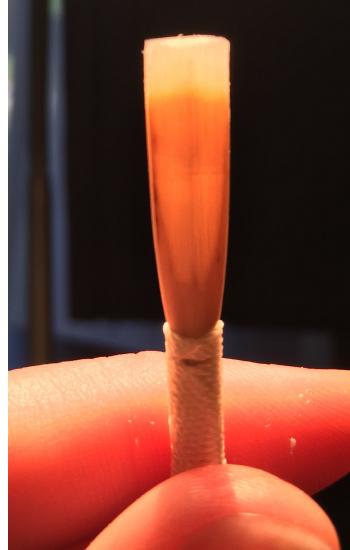
Notice that the tip is a little thinner and better defined now.



After the tip makes a peep, add in the heart. Start the heart at 61mm and avoid scraping the center. Unlike the tip, also avoid scraping the sides. You want to keep rails along the edge to help with the stability and structure of the reed.



Take about 10 scrapes out of each section in the heart. Take long and straight scrapes. You do not want the heart to taper. Try crowing the reed. The crow should produce 2-octave C's. The tip produces the high C, the heart (and later the back), the low C. If the reed does not crow, keep scraping the heart, taking only 3-4 scrapes at a time until you get a proper crow. Once low crow enters, you can add in the back.



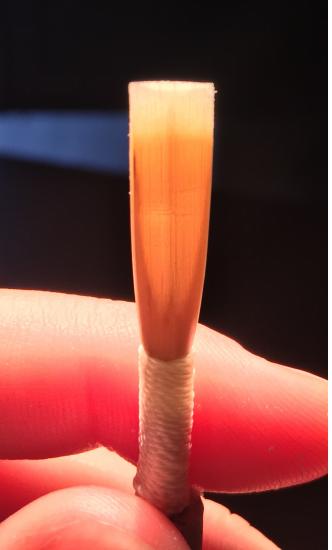
Start the bottom of the back at 51mm and scrape to the bottom of the heart (61mm).



Another view of the back. You can really see the left rail on the heart here – this is a good width to leave the rails (about a $\frac{1}{2}$ mm). Thinner than this and you lose stability and structure, thicker and the reed won't vibrate well.



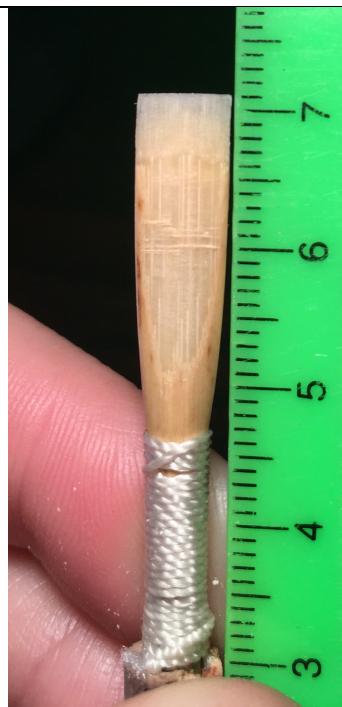
Notice the jaggedness of the scrape at the top of the back going into the heart. Later I will blend this by scraping from the heart into the back. I use a razor blade to smooth out the lines, but a knife is fine, too. Some people prefer to leave a notch here to define the back/heart.



Test the crow after adding the back. It should crow a 2-octave C. Here, I took a little more out of the heart because, although I could get a proper crow, the low crow wasn't coming in fast enough and the reed felt stiff.



The reed has tight sides and a tapered tip. The heart has parallel lines and you can see a slight indentation in the back. Some reeds will have a more pronounced back. And, this one may still, as it isn't quite finished.



This is how I will put the reed away. * It crows a proper 2-octave C. I like my finished reeds to be between 69 and 71mm. This one, as you can see, is 71mm, which is perfect because it gives me room for error when I work on it more tomorrow.

* I rarely completely finish a reed in one sitting because after drying overnight, then soaking the next day, it almost always feels harder so more cane needs to be removed. You will have a better chance of making a nice sounding, stable, and longer-lasting reed by putting it away right after achieving a proper crow. Many times I don't even play on a reed at this stage because I don't want to be tempted to scrape more out of it before it's ready. I ONLY crow it. (I did not play on this particular reed – I got it to crow a 2-octave C and then I put it away for the night.)

Day 2: I just took out the reed from yesterday, soaked it, and crowed it. The crow was still there, but it was a little harder to achieve. So, I thinned the tip and crowed it again. It helped, but I felt it could be a little freer, so I took 4 light scrapes out of each section of the heart. This freed up the reed but when I blew the crow harder, it became a little raucous. I clipped the tip and this solved the problem (notice how tiny the clip is!).



Because I prefer a smooth feeling reed, I turned the reed around and scraped backward from the heart into the back with a razor blade (this can also be done with a knife). This smoothed out any rough parts in the cane. Not only does it feel better in the mouth, but also I believe it helps to refine the sound of the reed.



This is the finished reed. It is in tune, has a nice sound, is easy to articulate, and produces a large dynamic range. Notice where all the sections start and end. The total length is 71mm (which falls within the 69-71mm range). The heart falls between 61 and 66mm, and the back starts at 51mm.