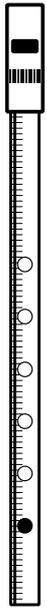


# Whistle - Next Steps 4

## 4.1 A New Note: C sharp (C#)



**C#**  
(top five holes uncovered, sixth hole covered to steady the whistle)

C sharp (also written as **C#**) is sometimes tricky at first, but it's absolutely necessary for playing tunes on the penny whistle. On the face of it it doesn't seem that difficult as you have to uncover all the holes. But the problem lies in holding the whistle, because if you're not covering any holes, what's keeping up the whistle? The trick is to use the ring finger on your right hand to cover the lowest hole; the mouthpiece is held by your lips (not your teeth!) and together this steadies the instrument in your hands.

With this new note we can now play a *scale in D*. This is exactly the same as the *do-re-mi-fa-sol-la-ti-do* sequence many of us learnt in school. In this instance, the "do" is the

lowest note on the whistle, **D**. **Re** is **E**, **mi** is **F#**, and so on up till the high **do**, which is the high **D**. Play through the exercises below slowly at first, then try to speed up.

## 4.2 Ex.1: The D scale

## 4.3 Using All of the Notes

Some changes between notes require practice: **C#** to high **D**, for example, where you have to quickly move from only the lowest hole covered to all holes

covered. The tune below uses the whole gamut of the notes we've learned so far.

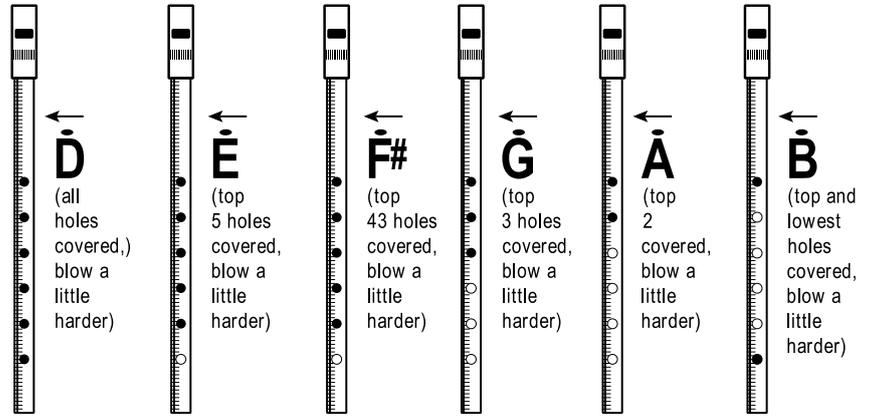
## 4.4 Three Crows Sat Upon a Wa' (traditional Scots children's song)

5.1 The Upper Octave

All the notes higher than high **D** are obtained by the same method: simply blowing harder, and these notes are known as the upper octave. Now try sounding other notes in the upper octave: start off with **D** then blow high **D**; then **E** and high **E**, and so on (note: the high **B** is quite difficult at first, and can often sound grating, especially on plastic whistles).

covered. This is to steady the whistle and make it more secure in your hands (this fingering can also be useful for the low **B**). Most tunes do not go higher than the high **B**, and many don't even go there, but it's useful to be able to do it.

In all the music examples that I give, any note name in the upper octave will be marked with a small dot above it. This should help distinguish between the lower and upper octaves. Note that with the high **B**, the lowest hole is also



5.2 Ex.2 - Traversing the Octaves

1 2

*B C# Ḋ Ė F#̇ Ė Ḋ C#̇ :: Ė Ḋ C#̇ Ḋ Ė Ḋ C#̇ Ḋ Ė F#̇ Ė Ḋ C#̇ Ḋ Ė ::*

3 4

*Ė Ḃ Ḃ Ė Ḃ Ḃ F#̇ Ḃ Ḃ F#̇ Ḃ Ḃ :: Ġ F#̇ Ė Ḋ Ċ Ḋ Ė F#̇ Ė Ḋ ::*

5.3 The Barnyards o' Delgaty (traditional)

The Barnyards o' Delgaty is an old Scots "bothy ballad" which came from the farm workers in the North-East of Scotland, and it's a very good tune to practise moving from one octave to the next.

In the second last bar of the tune you have two **As** immediately followed by a high **A**, a good exercise for leaping up an octave.

*F#̇ Ė Ḋ A B Ḋ B A F#̇ Ė Ḋ A*

*B Ḋ Ė F#̇ Ė Ḋ A B Ḋ B A*

*A A Ȧ Ġ F#̇ Ė Ḋ ::*

6.1 The G Scale

You should now be completely conversant with the D scale. You should know all the names of the notes on the D scale, and be able to play a normal scale, up and down from low D to high D. There are many, many tunes which you can now play which use the notes of the D scale, but by adding one more note to your skills - the C, or "C natural" - the number of tunes you could play will increase greatly.

6.2 A New Note: "C natural"

Let's look at the key of G major: there's only one note different between G major and D major, namely the 4th note of the G scale, the C natural. (C natural is just plain C, and we'll know it because it has no sharp - # - after it.)

One way to achieve that note is by half-covering the top hole of the whistle (see Diagram 1 on the right). Unfortunately, it's pretty difficult to use this method while playing fast, so you have to get into the habit of using an alternative fingering, by covering

the second and third holes, but leaving the top hole open (Diagrams 2 and 3). This isn't easy to begin with, but with practice it will soon become easier. This is a big hurdle in beginning to play whistle, but it's absolutely necessary.

Try the exercises below and start getting used to making this new note. Play each part of Ex.1 over four times, until you can play it through smoothly without making any mistakes.

6.3 Exercise 3

6.4 Exercise 4

In Exercise 4 we're exploring virtually the full extent of the whistle from its lowest note (the D) to one of its highest (the high B). There are higher notes on the whistle, but

you almost never come across them in Scottish or Irish music. Get to know your way around the whistle. Be able to play this exercise with confidence. First

play by tonguing every note, then try it without tonguing.

You now have the basic skills to play thousands of tunes on the penny whistle,

and the best way forward from here is to play, play and play. Enjoy it - there's nothing like it!