

# Lesson 5

## Learning To Play Evenly, Using The "Counting-Aloud" Technique

Many of the solo and orchestral parts that we play contain seemingly easy scale-wise passages that must be executed with perfect evenness, in rhythmically precise measure. This is a surprisingly difficult task that demands patience and discipline to master. Indeed, our first rhythmic objective will be to learn to play such scale passages *evenly*—with each note equidistant in time to the next note—so that it “looks” like this:



and *not* like this:



At a tempo of ♩ = 72, play:

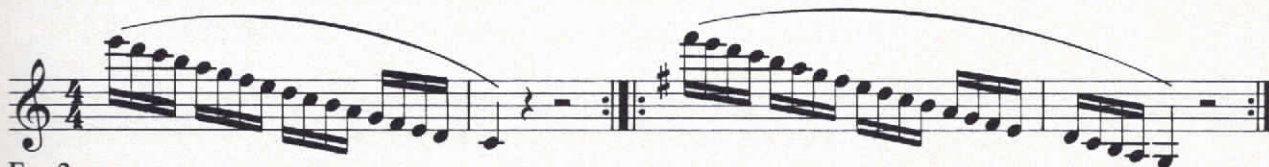


Ex. 1

You may be surprised (and shocked?) to notice that your performance of these scales was shaky and uneven. If this was true for you, the unevenness usually occurs in ascending scales and passages where your fingers must *lift* evenly. Descending passages, where the fingers *fall*, are generally more comfortable to perform.

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Play these descending scales . . .



Ex. 2

. . . and then these ascending scales:



Ex. 3

Listen closely to your playing. Was the passage even and smooth?  
Now play:



Ex. 4

Which was easier? Although you may have every reason to be satisfied with the evenness of your playing, you can still improve and surpass your present achievements.

### COUNTING ALOUD

To build the skill of playing evenly, we will use the learning technique of *counting aloud*. As you move through the exercises that follow, remember that this book will *not* work for you, and that your progress will be slow, if you do not do the counting aloud meticulously, consistently, and *in full voice*. (Please do not delude yourself into thinking that this technique is elementary, useless, or somehow demeaning. You have total control to gain, and nothing to lose but an imaginary loss of dignity!) You will discover that the



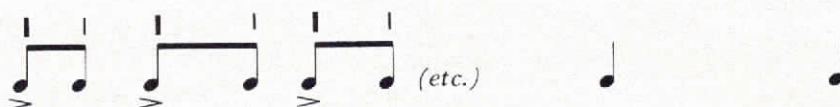
fluency, evenness, and sureness of your playing will vary in direct proportion to the fluency and accuracy with which you apply this learning technique at all your practice sessions. If you falter, hesitate, or stop to think or judge while counting, you most certainly will falter at exactly those places where the counting was unsure.

In the pages to follow, we will test these assertions in the hope that the evidence of your own experience will convince you of their truth and value.

Counting aloud is done just *before* you play and, if necessary, during the course of your playing practice. If you hear any unevenness while practicing, or stumble over a rhythm, *stop and count the passage aloud*. Remember that "aloud" means *aloud*—not restrained, silently, and politely, but loud enough for a passerby to hear your clear voice on the other side of the studio door!

### USING THE METRONOME

The metronome is an enormously valuable tool for building rhythmic skills and for enforcing the disciplines of conscientious practice. Use of the metronome, however, does not guarantee consistent evenness: while the principal beats may match the evenly spaced metronome ticks, the intervening (weak-beat) notes may still be uneven:



### Four TALKING Exercises

*Before you pick up the clarinet to play, practice counting aloud as a separate discipline. Set the metronome at ♩ = 66. Listen to the ticks. Then, in perfect time, count out one measure of "pulse count" (the count of the meter). Do not do this silently; do not just think the count. Do it aloud. Do the same for every drill, exercise, and piece you practice: set the metronome at the appropriate speed and ingrain this wonderful habit.*

At a tempo of ♩ = 80, *count aloud*:

1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4
○				○				—				—			

Ex. 5

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At the same tempo, count this aloud . . .

1 2 3 4 1 2 3 4 1 2 3 4 1 2 3 4

Ex. 6

. . . then say it again with a *slight* accent on the "one" count:

> 1 2 3 4 > 1 2 3 4 > 1 2 3 4 > 1 2 3 4

Ex. 7

### Playing Studies

To prepare for the next example, pick up the clarinet,

finger the first note



and practice counting with the instrument in your mouth so that you can start playing on time.

[♩ = 63] Count:

1 2 3 4 1 2 3 4 1 2 3 4 1 2 3 4

Play:

Ex. 8 *p*



CLARINET METHOD, BOOK I

*f*

A key

Ex. 9

[♩ = 80] Count:

1 2 3 4 1 2 3 4 1 2 3 4 1 2 3 4

Play:

*mp*

C#

Ex. 10

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1 2 3 4 1 2 3 4 1 2 3 4 1 2 3 4

Ex. 17b

1 2 3 4 1 2 3 4 1 2 3 4

Ex. 17c

1 2 3 4 1 2 3 4

Ex. 17d

Ex. 17e



CLARINET METHOD, BOOK I

In all of the preceding and following examples, be extremely accurate in playing the dotted 8th-16th figure. Count aloud when necessary. (Practice at ♩ = 92 . . . 126 . . . 152 to develop your rhythmic sense. Then play the original tempo.)

Count:

123 4 1 2 123 4 1 2

Mendelssohn: *Symphony No. 5 (Reformation)*, Op. 107/2nd Mvmt. (excerpt)

*Allegro vivace*

Ex. 18