

I believe circular breathing to be a basic requirement for the serious oboist. While it is not regarded without scrutiny in the music world, it can provide ample comfort and efficiency.

**Once you learn this technique, use it with good judgment!**

**Circular breathing should never hinder the skillful development and use of organic phrasing through breathing**, which every good musician feels and your listener expects.

See it not as a party trick or flashy virtuosic skill, but a means of freedom—

- helping you not be hindered by your body
- allowing you to keep your heart rate lower when nervous
- reducing tension in general
- providing greater endurance

The steps and skills with which I used to learn to circular breathe, I obtained from many different resources and teachers, and many of these experts explained the method in similar ways.<sup>1</sup> Below you will find a step-by-step guide of *my* processes:

1. **Spit air:** Puff out your cheeks and use them to hold the air, closing off your throat with the back of your tongue. Without blowing, make an audible spitting sound, expelling the air from your cheeks at first with your hands and then with your cheek muscles alone. The purpose here is to learn that you can use your face to expel air from your mouth without blowing in any way. Focus on expelling the air from your cheeks with real muscular force.
2. **Spit water:** After you can spit air just using your cheeks, stand in front of the sink with water in your cheeks instead of air. Practice spitting the water out while attempting to maximize the force of the flow. Notice the placement of your tongue. **Remember: Your cheek muscles and tongue must be doing the work.** This is a very different feeling from blowing.
3. **Spit water and breathe in:** At the sink or in the shower, try spitting water and breathing in at the same time. (This is the step that took the longest for me; I made quite a mess in my kitchen in the mean time!)
4. **Optional:** Use of a cup of water and a straw. Schuring describes spitting air into a cup of water through a coffee straw, attempting to keep the bubbles going while you breathe in. Personally, I didn't find this helpful, as the lack of

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<sup>1</sup> Namely, those teachers were Nicholas Daniel, Nancy Ambrose King, Martin Schuring and Steve Taylor. It is not my intent to plagiarize their writings or teachings in any way, and I have highly indebted to their expertise. Besides Martin Schuring's *Oboe Art and Method*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), none of the writings regarding circular breathing by the others of that list are published, to my knowledge, at the date of this document's printing.