

Reedpipe (soropilli, kaza)

Do you want to cheer somebody up? Build a medieval clarinette and practise playing for a while. Soon you can create humorous mood where ever you are and feel simple joy!_

In Finland, from January to May, collect the standing, hardened stalks of common reed in a dry day. Cut stalks at the stem at seashore and leave the soft ends to the shore. You can dry the stalks for a couple of days in a heated floor before storing them airy in a dry place.



Cut the stalk of a common reed at two sequential joints to get a billet for your reedpipe.

Roll the stalk a couple of times outwards with left hand while pressing the blade against the joint, wearing a glove as shown in the picture.



Break the joint by bending it with both hands close to it

If you don't get it easily done, go on the previous step.



Cut a reed on the billet

Use a sharp knife or a hobby knife with a thin blade. Set the stem of blade at the angle of 45° at 5 mm distance from the cylindrical end of the billet. Carve by gliding the blade towards the end of blade some 2 mm, until the blade is through the wall. Do not go any deeper; if the reed is too wide, it might split when raised.



Turn the blade horizontally to lengthen the reed along the fibres. Take only one single reed, do not lift up anything extra, which would become narrow strips on the sides.



Alternatively, you can accomplish the reed using three separate cuts: shorten the blade of the hobby knife. Begin at the each end of the first cut and cut the sides, using the blade flat. Then, set the blade under the reed.

Make the reed to stay 1–2 mm raised

Turning the blade up and down, move it ahead under the reed, until the reed is about three cm long. When the reed stays up from the base. the blowing of air vibrates it, producing the sound.



Pierce the joint open

Press the tip of a knife, file, an awl or a sharpened stem of a thin birch branch gently through the joint.



Clean the tube

Shut the reed with a finger. Push a round file or the top of a thin birch branch into the tube and roll, moving it back an forth. Blow loose fibre away and look through the pipe to make sure it's clean and empty, also under the the reed.



Test the reedpipe

Shut the end with the tip of tongue, set the pipe deep into mouth and close the lips. Avoid from moistening the reed, and don't close the reed with your upper lip. Blow, by varying force.



When your reedpipe gives sounds, cut fingerholes

The amount of fingerholes depends on the length of the pipe, usually 4–8 fit in. Begin from the the lowest, on the opposite end than you made the reed. At three fingers from the end, cut through the wall at the angle of 45°. Move the blade 5 mm forward and do the same, at the opposite angle. Turn the blade to remove a piece from the wall. Make the rest of the holes.



Finish the fingerholes

Roll a tiny sharpened stick in every fingerhole to make them tidy. Be careful, hold the reed from both sides to prevent cracking. Clean once more the inside of the pipe carefully, using a birch branch or a file.



Make a plug

It's easier to play reedpipe if you shut the blowing end permanently with beeswax. Mold a pea-sized stick of it, screw it in the front of the reed and cut the excess away. Alternatively, you can use a woodstick and a drop of glue. Saw the excess away, holding stick and finish with sandpaper. Don't to push in too big plug.

Practise playing

You can play the scale up and down, finger by finger, to learn the places of holes and to improve your motoric skills. Relax and have fun, discover various playing techniques. Pull the pipe slightly away and blow more to expand ambitus, range of notes. Play out your feelings and thoughts!



Build a case for your reedpipe

Use a suitable wide, plastic electric conduit, preferably recycled or waste material. Saw a piece, which is some five centimeters longer than your pipe. Select a dry treebranch and make it to fit tightly into the plug by peeling. Make sure the plug stays cylindrical when you carve it. Add some glue and push deeply in by hitting it against a hard surface or using a hammer. Saw the excess away.



Build another, longer plug with a handle. Finish the ends of plugs with a knife or sandpaper, tied around a piece of wood.

You can decorate the case with a strip of fabric och by painting. The case gets traditional look if you cover it with boiled, flexible birch bark. Make reedpipes in different scales and tunings and carry them with you with individual cases.

