

## The English Tabor Pipe

The English Tabor Pipe is a simple instrument to play. These charts provide you with the basic fingering suitable for a large percentage of the English folk dance music repertoire.

The pipe is primarily a diatonic instrument, which means that normally it plays only the notes in the scale and none of the accidentals. A dextrous player can learn to 'half-hole' the notes to extend the possibilities.

It is very suitable for learning to play by ear, and once the scales overleaf have been mastered, it should be easy to pick up tunes.

### Keys

Although the instrument is available in several keys, the D pipe is the most common and easily available. The D instrument enables one to play in the keys of D, G and Emin. These are all popular keys for the English dance repertoire.

### Repertoire

The instrument was widely used in royal and provincial households in C15th for social and professional dance as well as processions, and consequently much of the secular early music repertoire is well suited.

The pipe continued into the C17th as a dance instrument often accompanying dances from the Playford collection. In the C18th taborers were more likely to be street musicians. Many of the folk tunes from John Gay's Beggar's Opera are suitable.

The pipe and tabor just survived into the C20th as a morris dance instrument and you will find that most Cotswold morris tunes fit very well. Many morris tunes start with a 'rising 4th' and fit the G scale best.

### Playing the Tabor

Taborers are named as such because they lead with the tabor. Originally a dance instrument the rhythm was more important than the tune.

In England today many kinds of tabor are played. The small shallow tabor is distinctively English, but a variety of deep tabors are also popular.

Small tabors can be suspended from the left hand, whilst larger drums are often hung from the elbow or shoulder. By tradition the tabor is fitted with a single or double gut snare on the drum head that you strike, known as the 'batter head'.

To begin with, learn a tune by heart on the pipe. A march would be a good choice. Then, forget the pipe and just practice beating the simple rhythm with the right hand. Once you are comfortable with the rhythm, you can try adding the tune. It is easier than it looks. You can practise the tabor part anywhere you hear music, for example listen to a tune on the radio and beat out the rhythm with the right hand.

**To learn more:** The Taborers Society: [www.pipeandtabor.org](http://www.pipeandtabor.org)  
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# English Tabor Pipe

## Fingering Chart

For d tabor pipe

by  
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Overtone	0	0	0	0
Thumb	●	●	●	○
1st Finger	●	●	○	○
2nd Finger	●	○	○	○
	Do	Re	Mi	Fa

**Overtone:** No Overblow  
Blow very softly

1	1	1	1	2	2	2	3
●	●	●	○	●	●	●	●
●	●	○	○	●	●	○	●
●	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Do	Re	Mi	Fa	So	La	Ti	Do

First Overtone  
Blow a little harder

2nd Overtone  
Harder still

3rd Overtone  
Blow hard

3	3	4	5	5
●	●	○	●	●
●	○	○	●	●
○	○	○	○	○
Re	Mi	Fa	So	La

4th Overtone  
Blow very hard!

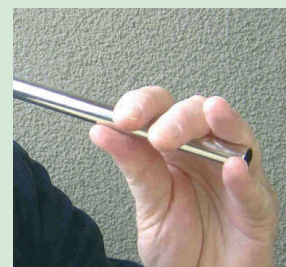
- Thumb Hole (open)
- Thumb Hole (closed)
- Hole open
- Hole covered
- ◐ Hole half-covered

## D Major Scale on D Pipe



### Holding the Instrument

Hold the pipe between the ring and little fingers of the left hand. This leaves the other fingers and thumb free to cover the holes (the single thumb hole is positioned on the bottom of the instrument).



You can cover the holes using either the pad of the fingertip (above), or the fleshy part of the 2nd joint (left).

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### Getting Started

Carefully cover all the holes, getting a clean tone. Then practice overblowing (blowing soft, medium, hard, harder, etc) to understand the principle. After you have mastered that - try the D scale, and find a popular tune that fits into that scale.

NB. The lowest notes on the instrument, shown with 'no overblow', are very quiet and of little practical use. The range of the instrument really starts with the D note on the first overblow.



Overtone	0	0	0	0
Thumb	●	●	●	○
1st Finger	●	●	○	○
2nd Finger	●	○	○	○
	So	La	Ti	Do

No Overblow  
Blow very softly

1	1	1	1	2	2	2	3
●	●	●	○	●	●	●	●
●	●	○	○	●	●	○	●
○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
So	La	Ti	Do	Re	Mi	Fa	So

First Overblow  
Blow a little harder

3	3	4	5	5
●	●	○	●	●
●	○	○	●	●
○	○	○	○	○
La	Ti	Do	Re	Mi

2nd Overblow  
Harder still

3rd Overblow  
Blow hard

4th & 5th Overblow  
Blow very hard!

## G Major Scale on D Pipe