

SCRAPING BAGPIPE CHANTER REEDS

There are as many variations and techniques to scraping chanter reeds as there are reeds to scrape. Here are four options that will work a reed in to your liking. Which method works best for you will depend on a variety of factors: the reed's construction; how much material might exist on the blades; whether you are a wet or dry blower; your personal strength tolerances; etc. The only way to find out which approach will work for you is to experiment.



Reed Scrape Method 1: Stay in the Box

This method takes some material away from the area at the base of the blades just above the binding and no higher than halfway up the reed body—in other words, the area of the sound box. Keep away from the edges and stick to the area in the vertical center of the reed blades. Light scrapes equally across the area on both sides of the reed should keep the reed's general resonance and character while freeing up the cane to affect the whole scale.

Reed Scrape Method 2: The Bowtie

The bowtie method scrapes material in a curved "parabola" shape or "U" starting in the upper half of the reed blade. Scrape lightly along the edges to meet in a curve with the majority of scraping done in the parabola shape across the upper part of the sound box in the center of the reed body. The total area becomes a bowtie-like shape in the center of the reed. The effect of this technique is heard in larger changes in certain notes of the scale.



Reed Scrape Method 3: Out on the Edge

The edge method takes material away along the edges of the entire length of the blades just shy of the tip. Typically, a bit of material is taken off the bottom two-thirds of the blades along the edges only. This has the effect of freeing up the cane to make the reed a bit easier while retaining all the resonance the sound box can produce by leaving it be. This method can also flatten the overall pitch of the reed as well as effect its stability over time.

Reed Scrape Method 4: Blade Shave

This method is a more drastic approach that sticks to alterations on the blades only. It is not easily (or typically) done with ridge-cut reeds. In round-body or "molded" reeds, this method follows the same parabola as in the bowtie method but in reverse. Sanding or scraping on the blades will lower pitch on particular notes of the scale determined by how high up the blades you scrape (i.e., the lower portion of the scrape zone will affect the lower hand notes; scrapes in the upper portion will affect the top hand notes).

