



Dojo Digest: Should You Learn Circular Breathing

Do you ever wonder when you should stop the flow of music to take a breath on your practice chanter? What if you didn't have to?

Circular breathing is a technique some musicians use, especially those who play wind instruments like didgeridoos, saxophone, or flute. Basically, it's when you use air stored in your cheeks to maintain airflow while playing, to produce a continuous, uninterrupted sound even when you're breathing.

Is it essential for bagpipers to learn this skill? Nope.

Necessary? Not even slightly.

But can it be fun? Absolutely!

And as with anything you do with piping - if it helps to keep things fun for you, give it a shot! The more fun practice is, the more likely you are to spend time doing it. And more practice is always a good thing!

There are plenty of tutorials online, but here's a simple breakdown of how to do it:

Step 1: Store the air: puff out your cheeks and use the air stored there to keep blowing into the instrument.

Step 2: Inhale: while the air from your cheeks is flowing, quickly breathe in through your nose as you use the stored air to maintain the flow of air through your mouth.

Step 3: Repeat! Once you've taken in fresh air, start blowing from your lungs as usual to continue the cycle until you need to breathe again.

You can learn to circular breathe pretty quickly, but mastering it, like mastering a steady blowing cycle on the pipes, can take a bit of time to practice.

While it might sound like a party trick, circular breathing can be a fun skill to develop, letting you keep the melody alive when you're practising, without missing a beat. For pipers who teach, it can also be useful as you can demonstrate long phrases without stopping, or record entire tunes without a break so learners or other pipers can hear every note of a tune on your practice chanter as it would be played on pipes.

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