BagpipeLessons.com Inner Circle Course pack

Your First Year on the Bagpipes

53 LESSONS · 6 STAGES · BEGINNER

This is the order I'd teach you in if you were sitting in front of me. Watch one lesson, then practice it for a week before you add the next. About 15 minutes a day, at least four or five days a week. Everybody moves at their own pace, so treat the timings as a guide.

1 Gear and good form ABOUT WEEKS 1 TO 2

- ☐ 01 **Don't Start Learning to Play the Bagpipes Until You Watch This**
  Why every piper starts on the practice chanter, and what to get.
  Video · Beginner
- ☐ 02 **Masterclass #1: Introduction**
  What the Masterclass covers and how to use it.
  Masterclass · Beginner
- ☐ 03 **Masterclass #2: Your Practice Chanter**
  The parts of your chanter and how to hold it.
  Masterclass · Beginner
- ☐ 04 **Masterclass #3: Top Hand Position**
  Ring finger first, then your thumb.
  Masterclass · Beginner
- ☐ 05 **Masterclass #4: Bottom Hand Position**
  Pinky first, then your index finger.
  Masterclass · Beginner
- ☐ 06 **Back to School Supplies**
  The beginner gear rundown: chanter, book and metronome.
  Class Replay · All Levels

PRACTICE EACH DAY

- Blow a clear, steady note: steady and gentle, not hard.
- Hands on, play low G, hands off, and again. Aim for 100 times a day.
- Check the two pillars: hands as relaxed as possible, fingers as close to the chanter as possible.

Move on when you can put both hands on the chanter correctly without looking, and get a clear, steady low G.

2 The nine notes ABOUT WEEKS 2 TO 4

- ☐ 07 **Learn the Pipes #1: The Scale**
  The nine notes of the chanter, where every tune begins.
  Video Lesson · Beginner
- ☐ 08 **Masterclass #5: Bottom Hand Notes**
  Low G, low A, B and C.
  Masterclass · Beginner
- ☐ 09 **Masterclass #6: Top Hand Notes**
  E, F, high G and high A.
  Masterclass · Beginner
- ☐ 10 **Masterclass #7: Crossing Noises**
  Lift before you drop, and the D to E move.
  Masterclass · Beginner

PRACTICE EACH DAY

- The scale, up and down, slow and clean.
- Lift before you drop: fingers coming up go first, then drop the others.
- D to E on its own, slowly. It's the trickiest move on the scale.

Move on when you can play the scale up and down with no crossing noises, and name each note on the staff.

3 Gracenotes and strikes ABOUT WEEKS 4 TO 8

- [ ] 11 **Learn the Pipes #2: Gracenotes**
  The little notes that separate the big ones.
  Video Lesson · Beginner
- [ ] 12 **Masterclass #8: High G Gracenotes**
  Your first gracenote, on every note lower than F.
  Masterclass · Beginner
- [ ] 13 **Masterclass #9: D Gracenotes**
  Played with the bottom-hand index finger.
  Masterclass · Beginner
- [ ] 14 **Masterclass #10: E Gracenotes**
  The E gracenote, small and clean.
  Masterclass · Beginner
- [ ] 15 **Masterclass #11: GDE Gracenotes**
  All three together, cleanly in a row.
  Masterclass · Intermediate
- [ ] 16 **Masterclass #12: Tachums**
  A gracenote pattern you'll find in many tunes.
  Masterclass · Intermediate
- [ ] 17 **Masterclass #13: Thumb Gracenotes**
  The high A gracenote.
  Masterclass · Beginner
- [ ] 18 **Learn the Pipes #3: Strikes**
  Clean strikes on every note, from low G up.
  Video Lesson · Beginner
- [ ] 19 **Masterclass #14: Strikes**
  Strikes on every note.
  Masterclass · Intermediate
- [ ] 20 **Masterclass #15: Gracenote Strikes**
  A gracenote and a strike together.
  Masterclass · Intermediate
- [ ] 21 **Masterclass #16: Doubling Strikes**
  Strikes inside a doubling.
  Masterclass · Advanced
- [ ] 22 **Learn the Pipes #5: Introduction to Rhythms**
  Quarter notes, eighth notes and dot-cuts.
  Video Lesson · Beginner

PRACTICE EACH DAY

- One gracenote at a time on every note it goes on. A quick little pop, not a big lift.
- Keep your fingers close and loose. If a gracenote sounds slow or mushy, slow down and make it smaller.
- Start tapping your foot and reading simple rhythms.

Move on when your gracenotes are small, clean and even on every note.

4 Doublings, the D throw and your first tune ABOUT WEEKS 8 TO 14

- [ ] 23 **Learn the Pipes #4: D Throw**
  The first compound movement, built one gracenote at a time.
  Video Lesson · Beginner
- [ ] 24 **Learn the Pipes #6: High G Doublings**
  Your first doubling.
  Video Lesson · Intermediate
- [ ] 25 **Masterclass #17: Introduction to Doublings**
  How every doubling is built.
  Masterclass · Beginner
- [ ] 26 **Masterclass #18: F Doublings**
  Masterclass · Beginner
- [ ] 27 **Masterclass #19: E Doublings**
  Masterclass · Beginner

- [ ] 28 **Masterclass #20: D Doublings**
  Masterclass · Intermediate
- [ ] 29 **Masterclass #21: C Doublings**
  Masterclass · Beginner
- [ ] 30 **Masterclass #22: B Doublings**
  Masterclass · Beginner
- [ ] 31 **Masterclass #23: Low A Doublings**
  Masterclass · Intermediate
- [ ] 32 **Masterclass #24: Low G Doublings**
  Masterclass · Intermediate
- [ ] 33 **Masterclass #25: High G Doublings**
  Masterclass · Intermediate
- [ ] 34 **Masterclass #26: High A Doublings**
  Masterclass · Beginner
- [ ] 35 **Masterclass #28: D Throws**
  The D throw, clean and even.
  Masterclass · Intermediate
- [ ] 36 **How to Learn a New Tune the Right Way**
  Learn it once, correctly, instead of relearning it later.
  Class Replay · All Levels
- [ ] 37 **Learn the Pipes #7: Your First Tune, Scots Wha Hae**
  Put it all together and play a real tune.
  Audio Lesson · Beginner
- [ ] 38 **Scots Wha Hae: the tune package**
  Sheet music, my recording and the note-by-note lesson for your first tune.
  Tune Download · Beginner

PRACTICE EACH DAY

- One doubling at a time, slow and even, before you speed it up.
- Your first tune: listen until you can sing it, highlight the matching phrases, then work in small chunks.
- Play it slow and clean. Learn no mistakes; speed comes later.

Move on when you can play Scots Wha Hae from start to finish, slowly and cleanly. Play it for your family and record it on your phone. You're a piper.

5 Grips, taorluaths, birls and more tunes ABOUT MONTHS 4 TO 9

- [ ] 39 **Masterclass #27: Intro to Bottom Hand Embellishments**
  What the bottom-hand movements have in common.
  Masterclass · Beginner
- [ ] 40 **Masterclass #29: Grips**
  Masterclass · Intermediate
- [ ] 41 **Masterclass #30: Taorluaths**
  Masterclass · Intermediate
- [ ] 42 **Masterclass #31: Birls**
  Masterclass · Intermediate
- [ ] 43 **Understanding Tune Types: Marches, Strathspeys, Reels & More**
  Tell a march from a strathspey from a reel.
  Class Replay · All Levels
- [ ] 44 **Going Home**
  A gentle slow air with just a grip, gracenotes and strikes.
  Tune Download · Beginner
- [ ] 45 **The Brown Haired Maiden**
  A great first 2/4 march, in two parts.
  Tune Download · Beginner
- [ ] 46 **The High Road to Gairloch**
  Another simple two-parted 2/4 march.
  Tune Download · Beginner
- [ ] 47 **Prince Charles' Welcome to Lochaber**
  Your first four-parted march.
  Tune Download · Beginner

- [ ] **48** **Amazing Grace**
  The tune everyone will ask you to play.
  Tune Download · Beginner
- [ ] **49** **Highland Laddie**
  A classic every piper should know.
  Tune Download · Intermediate
- [ ] **50** **The 79th's Farewell to Gibraltar**
  A four-parted competition march to work toward by the end of the year.
  Tune Download · Intermediate
- [ ] **51** **Practice Chanter Session, October 4, 2023**
  Play along with a live practice chanter session.
  Class Replay · All Levels

PRACTICE EACH DAY

- Warm up on the scale and your gracenotes, then one embellishment.
- Early on, spend most of your time on drills. As a tune comes together, shift toward run-throughs.
- Come to the monthly Practice Chanter Sessions and play along.

Move on when you have three or four tunes going well, with clean grips, taorluaths and birls.

6 On to the pipes ABOUT MONTHS 9 TO 12

- [ ] **52** **What Bagpipes Should I Buy?**
  Four sets compared, and what's worth your money.
  Video · All Levels
- [ ] **53** **Making the Jump from Practice Chanter to Pipes**
  A complete, tested plan for the move to the pipes.
  Class Replay · Beginner

PRACTICE EACH DAY

- Keep going on the practice chanter. You'll never put it away; every piper uses it, even world champions.
- Build up your blowing gradually, a few minutes at a time.
- Check whether there's a pipe band near you. Many are happy to help new local pipers.

You're ready for the pipes when you have about six tunes going well on the chanter and your embellishments are clean.