

List of supplies for the baroque oboe reed-making

For those who are discovering the world of the hautboy (flautist friends, hello!), and who want to start learning this instrument, whether you are a neophyte or a professional musician, the question that systematically arises concerns reeds and related supplies. Although it is very easy today to buy ready-made reeds for the baroque oboe, it is far from being the ideal solution: in the medium term you will have to devote a significant budget to it, and above all, you will remain helpless when in need to adapt the equipment to your instrument, your mouthpiece and external conditions. Indeed, a reed evolves over time: it closes, it thickens, it deforms. You must therefore be able to at least rework it, and ideally, to make it yourself so that it best suits your way of playing.

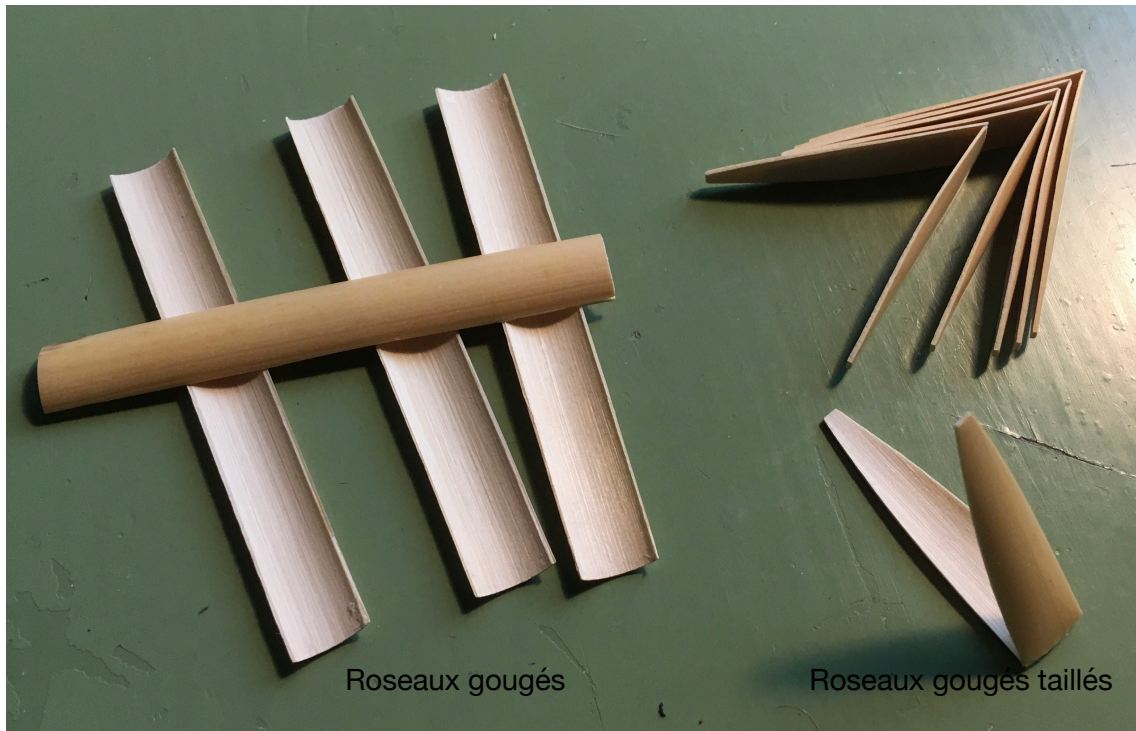
So I have compiled for your attention a list of the basic supplies and tools you will need to make your reeds. The starting kits offered by almost all suppliers of oboe equipment (the cost generally varies between 85 and 150 euros) are a good basis, but they are always incomplete (if you order one, remember to specify that it is for baroque oboes). Rather, count on a minimum budget of 200 euros to fully equip yourself with entry-level/mid-range equipment.

Cane

If you do not have a gouging machine or a reed shaper, and you have no experience in making oboe reeds, the easiest thing to do will be to buy gouged cane shaped for baroque oboe as a first step. They can be mounted directly on the tubes and will allow you to make your first reeds with a little more ease.

Since in my opinion it is essential to learn how to cut and shape your reeds yourself, you will also need to buy simple gouged cane. For the baroque oboe, the diameter is generally 15 mm (14 to 15 mm), and the gouging 0.68 to 0.70 mm thick.

If this is your first purchase, do not buy too many pieces from the same supplier and start for example with 10 gouged canes and 10 shaped gouged canes, which will allow you to quickly test other varieties of cane and to appreciate the differences.



Tubes

You will need brass tubes to mount your reeds, as well as a suitable mandrel. Personally and like many of my colleagues, I use English horn staples from the Italian manufacturer Chiarugi, 27 mm long, model nr.3. The nr.2 and 2+ models, which are a little narrower, are also suitable. Take at least 10 to start, but you will quickly see that this will not be enough if you play the oboe regularly. You can also opt for the increasingly common historical alternative of one-piece staples, with the Chiarugi AB55 reference that I recommend for my oboes.



The mandrel: for Chiarugi nr.3 English horn staple (2,2+...), or for Chiarugi AB55 long tube, depending on what you choose.

The scraping knife

A wide variety of models and prices are offered. Be careful before ordering: there are right-handed knives and left-handed knives. Folding models like mine are practical because they are ambidextrous and take up less space in the kit.

We could spend hours discussing the different types of blades and ways to sharpen them: in all cases avoid ceramic blades, which cannot be resharpened. It will also not be necessary in my opinion to spend more than 100 euros in this purchase. As such, I definitely do not recommend the Japanese “Nagamatsu”, overpriced and poorly made.

You will also need to invest in a flat sharpening stone, but this can wait a few weeks of intensive scraping. In any case, don't worry: sharpening scraping knives is a subject in its own right that few oboists really master (myself included), and this will perhaps be the occasion for a later sheet specially dedicated to it.



Threads



-A spool of nylon thread (you have the choice of color!) to tie the shaped cane on your staples, and which will drive you crazy by taking great pleasure in unwinding and getting tangled despite all your precautions.

-A small spool of fine cotton thread (from a haberdashery, supermarket, hardware store, etc.), which you will use to adjust the depth of the reed into the oboe to achieve the tuning.

A caliper

made of stainless steel with tightening screw, to precisely control the dimensions of your reeds and help you in cutting and measuring their shape. The small 75 mm models are very practical, Chiarugi distributes them but they are a little expensive. Otherwise, large 150 mm models are easily found in DIY stores.



Small accessories:

-A scraping plaque, absolutely essential. Buy two preferably, because, like guitarist's picks, they are easily lost. Just avoid flat metal plaques which require you to press a lot on the tip of the reed to scrape it, at the risk of splitting the cane.

-A cutting block to cut your reeds, if you're a little old school!

-I personally prefer small scissors or straight nail clippers, both of which are very quick to use. The scissors will also be used to cut the nylon thread cleanly when mounting the reeds.

There also exist sophisticated, very precise reed cutters, but they are very costly.

-Transparent nail polish to waterproof the nylon thread once the reed is mounted.

-A roll of Teflon (DIY store) or any other effective alternative (fishskin, food-grade stretch film, etc.) to seal leaks from the reed when nail polish is not enough.

-A small piece of beeswax to wax the nylon thread before mounting the reeds.

-Pipe cleaners to clean the tubes that we reuse after dismantling the old reeds.

-A soft nail file. I am particularly looking for large, flexible manicure files with 2 sides of grain, medium and fine.

-A small metal ruler, which I use for many things, except for measuring.

-A cutter

-An additional knife with a straight, thin blade for everything other than scraping reeds (cutting, shaping, etc.)



-If you want to use brass wire, you will also need to buy fine pliers with a cutting part.



Ready-made kits often include a spool of brass wire, which is rarely used among baroque oboists. But it's not bad to have some in your toolbox, to get out of a bad situation and persuade a truly indomitable reed before a concert.

And finally, of course, **a sturdy pencil case** big enough to store everything!

I also advise you to take this opportunity to order the following accessories, if you do not already have them:

- A reed box**, to chose among the models for English horn or baroque oboe reeds. Make sure your reeds will fit in if you make them on one piece staples, as they will then be longer (allow around 80mm).
- A silk or fine cloth swab** to wipe the oboe after playing it.
- An oboe stand**
- A tuning machine**

Finally, here is a non-exhaustive list of suppliers, based in France, Germany and Italy:

- Neuranter neuranter.fr I have been buying the majority of my cane from them for many years.
- Glotin <https://www.glotin.fr/>
- Chiarugi <https://www.chiarugi.net> / in high demand for tubes and accessories, reasonable prices.
- Kreedo <https://www.kreedo.de/>
- Reeds'nstuff <https://www.reedsnstuff.com/> lots of choice but expensive.
- Berthelot <https://www.anches.com/fr/> offer shaped gouged cane reference 517 which I find quite close to the shape of my reeds. I just need to touch up the top a bit which is wider than what I'm doing.

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