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How to Make an Eight Note Pan Flute Out of PVC Pipes

By Lee Johnson ; Updated September 15, 2017



Make an eight-note set of pan flutes in the key of C if you want to be able to play most music written in C major and A minor keys. Pan flutes are simple instruments that consist mainly of a series of pipes of different sizes, arranged in a row. The instrument is played by blowing air across the top opening and changing between tubes to change notes. Pan flutes can be made from

PVC pipe, coins and duct tape.

Measure 6 inches from one end of the pipe and make a mark. This is the length for the C pipe. From the mark you made, measure 5.375 (be as close as possible, precision guarantees perfect frequency, however) inches to mark the space for the D pipe. From this marker, measure 4.725 inches down and make another mark for the E pipe.

Measure 4.442 inches past this mark for the F pipe. Make another mark 3.864 inches further down for the G pipe. Mark the pipe 3.415 inches farther down for the A pipe. Measure 2.958 inches further down for the B pipe and make another mark. Measure a final 2.772 inches down and make a mark for a final, higher C note.

Cut the pipe into eight sections according to the markings you just made. Each pipe can be easily arranged into size order to find the correct notes, but placing them in order after cutting makes the process easier.

Put a penny over one end of each pipe, and secure it in place with a 2-inch square piece of duct tape. This should create an airtight stopper on the end of each piece of pipe. Ensure that the duct tape is securely fastened. Blow over the top of the PVC pipes to ensure that each one produces a note after attaching the penny.

Arrange the pipes in size order, with the largest pipe to the left. Ensure that the pennies you attached to the bottom of the pipes are at the bottom end and that the top of each tube is in line with the tops of the other tubes. Use a ruler to ensure that they are all on a straight line, if you wish. Wrap duct tape around the tubes, so that they all sit side by side with the uncovered tops still level. Secure the pipes with additional tape if required. Hold the pipes with the longest one to your right. The notes of the pipes go (from right to left) C, D, E, F, G, A, B and C.