Dynamics

Dynamics indicate the loudness and softness of any given musical sound.

 Italian words are used to describe the range of dynamics from softest to loudest:

pianissimo	*piano*	*mezzo-piano*	*mezzo-forte*	*forte*	*fortissimo*
(very soft)	(soft)	(medium soft)	(medium loud)	(loud)	(very loud)

Each of these words are commonly abbreviated in music and look like this:

pp	*p*	*mp*	*mf*	*f*	*ff*

How to play softer or louder on the oboe involves changes to your **air** and **embouchure.** We'll again use the image of the clock to help us think about our embouchure. Imagine that your lips are round like a clock and think about where each of the numbers of the clock would be on your lips.
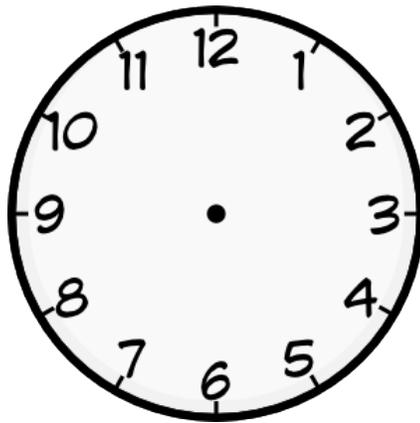
To play louder: use more air and less embouchure
Open up the embouchure around where clock numbers **5** and **7** would be on your lips

To play softer: use less air and more embouchure, but constant air support.
Use a little more embouchure around where clock numbers **5** and **7**
& **2** and **10** would be on your lips.

Now let's try some exercises with dynamics:

Make sure that you aren't adding in extra muscle work to change the dynamics. No furrowed eyebrows, tense fingers, hands or back. Maintain a rounded embouchure at all times with no air "pillows" in your cheeks.

If you notice that your sound makes a sudden loud squeaking noise before the note sounds, then you are likely using too much air or too much embouchure support. Try again, but with less air blown through the reed and a slightly more relaxed embouchure.

Practice each of these exercises every day that you practice to develop a smooth transition from one dynamic level to another.

Crescendo and Diminuendo

When there is a gradual increase or decrease in volume in a musical passage, composers often use the following words or symbols:

Crescendo (or cresc.)
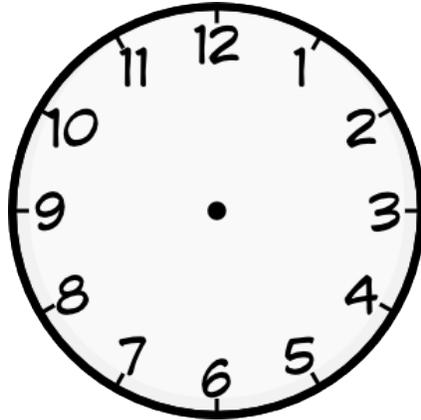

and

Diminuendo (or dim.)

The Italian term *crescendo* means**:** to become louder

In music this symbol indicates that you should gradually increase your volume:

To play a *crescendo* on the oboe, increase the volume of air that you blow through the oboe as you gradually open your embouchure at 5 and 7 on the clock.

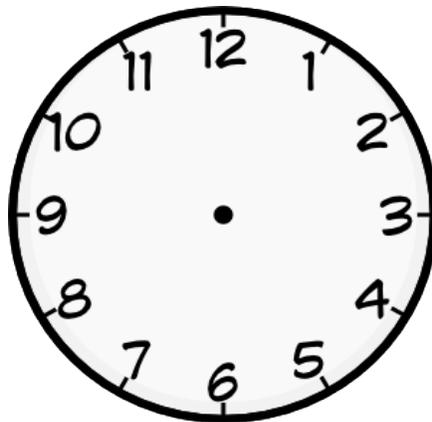Practice the following exercises to learn how to play a crescendo:

The Italian *diminuendo* or *decrescendo* means: to become softer

In music this symbol indicates that you should gradually decrease your volume:

To create a *diminuendo,* decrease the volume of air that you blow through the oboe, but still maintain good air support. Gradually surround the reed with your embouchure at 2 & 10 and 5&7 of the clock.

Practice the following exercises to learn how to play a diminuendo:

Now try these exercises that incorporate *both* the crescendo and diminuendo:

Make sure that you aren't adding in extra muscle work to change the dynamics. No furrowed eyebrows, tense hands/fingers or back are needed to change the volume of the oboe. Only your air and embouchure should change. Maintain a rounded embouchure at all times with no air "pillows" in your cheeks.

If you notice that your reed makes a sudden loud squeaking noise before the note sounds, then you are likely using too much air or too much embouchure support. Try again, but with less air blown through the reed and a slightly more relaxed embouchure.

Practice each of these exercises every day that you practice to develop a smooth transition from one dynamic level to another.

You may notice that your embouchure muscles get tired really quickly from practicing dynamics. With consistent practice your muscles will get stronger and you'll be able to play for longer periods of time. This is called building embouchure *endurance*.