

Support systems (slings etc) and adjustable thumb-rests (prices at Jan 2025)

The weight of a clarinet (carried mainly by the right hand thumb via the thumb-rest) and/or the position of the thumbrest can cause the player to hinder freedom of movement in the fingers of their right hand. It can be difficult to be sure which of these two factors is the actual cause of this hindrance so it is best to explore the simplest and cheapest options first.

Support systems

There are broadly three support systems available:

A neck sling: commonly used by Saxophone players, this is a simple sling that fits around the player's neck and is secured at the Clarinet thumb-rest either by hooking onto the thumb-rest ring (if there is one) or by means of a leather tab with a slit which fits around the thumb-rest. There are many different designs of neck slings but the principle is that a proportion of the weight of the Clarinet is now supported by the player's neck instead of the right-hand thumb.

A harness: some players do not like supporting the weight of the clarinet at their neck so prefer to use a harness that fits on the shoulders; a proportion of the weight of the Clarinet is now supported by the player's shoulders instead of the right-hand thumb. Due to the angle of the instrument in relation to the body this is more of an option for players of Alto and Bass clarinets rather than Soprano clarinets but it is worth a try. A semi-rigid harness 'The Sax-holder Pro-revolutionary Sax support' is also designed for use with soprano clarinets.

A rigid support: the company 'ERGObrass' manufacturers an innovative 'support system' for Clarinets called the 'ERGOclar' support. This is an adjustable bar that clips onto the thumb-rest ring. If the player is seated the bar can be set to rest on the chair so the bulk of the weight is supported by the chair not the player; if the player is standing the bar can be set to rest in a special pouch fitted to the players belt (or alternatively can be set to rest on the floor via an extension rod). The ERGOclar system requires a suitable thumb-rest Clarinet ring onto which the bar can fit, but the company do sell an 'attaching ring' if your thumb-rest ring is not suitable.

Most slings and harnesses need to hook onto a ring on the body of the instrument. On a Soprano clarinet, if there is a ring, it will be at the top of the thumb-rest. If there is no ring it would be necessary to add a ring to the existing thumb-rest or to fit a new thumb-rest that has a ring. Please note – the most secure way to attach a sling or harness to the thumbrest is by means of a 'self closing hook' that clips onto the thumb-rest ring. 'Open' hooks or slitted leather tabs need to be checked that they are secure.

Adjustable Thumb-rests

Some players find the location of the thumb-rest does not suit their right hand and so operating the keys is uncomfortable and interferes with the free movement of their fingers. Sometimes this can be alleviated by simply fitting a thumb-rest cushion onto the existing thumb-rest, but if this is not the case then replacing the existing static thumb-rest with an adjustable one, which can be set to exactly the right place, is the best option.

The main manufacturer of adjustable thumb-rests is Ton Kooiman. Some Clarinet manufacturers (e.g. Buffet, Jupiter, Selmer, Yamaha) also make adjustable thumb-rests but they can be more difficult to obtain. There are also numerous unbranded adjustable thumb-rests available on-line.

Ton Kooiman now produce three models of adjustable thumb-rest: the Etude III and the Etude III (small) for smaller hands which are both priced at about £35; and the Maestro II (aimed at professional players) priced about £250. You can purchase these yourself and I can fit them if you need me too (normally for my minimum labour charge of £21 unless complications arise).



Ton Kooiman Etude III Thumb-rest & Support

Adjustable range – also has supporting arm for thumb
Available from various retailers. Fixing Screws included
(although might not fit existing holes)



Ton Kooiman Etude III (small) Thumb-rest & Support

Adjustable range – also has supporting arm for thumb
Available from various retailers. Fixing Screws included
(although might not fit existing holes)



Ton Kooiman Maestro II Thumb-rest & Support

Adjustable range – also has supporting arm for thumb
Available from various retailers. Fixing Screws included
(although might not fit existing holes)

Below are the adjustable thumb-rests made by the various well-known clarinet manufacturers. You may be able to purchase one yourself (I would recommend the shop Dawkes as the first place to try) or I could order one for you. The only model I keep in stock is the Windcraft model.

Special Order only:



WBU 1077
Thumbrest - Adjustable - Buffet Clarinets

Buffet Adjustable Thumb-rest (WBU1077)

4 settings
Sometimes available from retailers (my price £40)
Fixing Screws extra

Special Order only:



Jupiter Adjustable Thumb-rest (WKJ1077)

Adjustable range
Not usually available from retailers (my price £24)
Fixing Screws extra

Special Order only:



**Selmer Paris Adjustable Thumb-rest
(WSP:1077-CL/1078/1077-BP/1077-TR)**

Adjustable range
Not usually available from retailers (my price £15)
Fixing Screws extra

Special Order only:



Yamaha Adjustable Thumb-rest (WYA1177)

Adjustable range
Not usually available from retailers (my price £32)
Fixing screws included (although might not fit existing holes)

Usually in stock:

No Photo available
but similar to above

**Windcraft Adjustable Thumb-rest assembly
(WWC:1077/1078/1079)**

Adjustable range
Not usually available from retailers (my price £17)
Fixing Screws extra

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