



FILISKO'S BENDING INSIGHTS - 8/6/13

Standard bending occurs in a dual reed system. Both reeds in the hole work as a team. The higher pitched one can bend down smoothly to just above the pitch of the lower one. This occurs on holes 1-6 inhaling and 7-10 exhaling. Bending with valves (*windsavers*) and overbending (*overblowing & overdrawing*) is a little different.

Bending happens when your mouth and throat (*vocal tract*) is in tune with the note to be bent. This is very similar to whistling. Your mouth & throat become a musical instrument that alters & controls the pitch of the notes on the harmonica.

THE "3" REASONS FOR BENDING:

1. To create ornamentation or bluesy expression
2. To obtain new or otherwise missing notes including 1/4 steps.
3. To create annoying sounds - ***Bending does not always equal blues or music!!!***

THE "2" SKILLS NECESSARY FOR CONTROLLED BENDING:

1. You need to have the technique - Stay relaxed and breathe through the harmonica as though you were whistling - ***Don't use force !!!*** - Bending won't damage the harmonica, playing hard and loud will - Don't bend with your face or shoulders!
2. You need to hear it in you head - Essential for middle bends - Practice singing it

THE "5" LEVELS OF BENDING:

1. Ornamental bends - Bending (slurring) into or out of a note for bluesy expression.
2. Full bends - Bends played as flat as they can go - Feel for the "sweet spot" and zero in - Trying to bend lower will result in a weak and airy sounding note.
3. Middle bends - As on holes 2 & 3 - Played in-tune!
4. Middle bends played in-tune with **TONE** & vibrato - Sounding as good or better than the unbent notes - This is the level of the pros & masters.
5. Using bends like unbent notes.

For the **BIGGEST TONE** and best traditional sound, I advise that you develop your bending skills while tongue blocking. Be patient when learning to bend. Many aspects of bending are quite advanced. If you are not playing good blues on the readily available unbent notes, you may not be ready to incorporate bending. Always serve the music!