MaestroMeet

# Horn: reading the other crooks on an F horn

*Written C sounds the note in the second column; the third column is the note you play, with the fingering you already use, on an F horn or the F side of a double.*

| The part is headed | Written C sounds | On F horn, read every note | And change the printed key by |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Horn in F** | F, a fifth below | as written | no change |
| **Horn in E** | E, a minor sixth below | down a semitone | add five sharps |
| **Horn in E flat** | E flat, a major sixth below | down a tone | add two flats |
| **Horn in D** | D, a minor seventh below | down a minor third | add three sharps |
| **Horn in C** | C, an octave below | down a fourth | add one sharp |
| **Horn in B flat basso** | B flat, a major ninth below | down a fifth (low parts: and an octave) | add one flat |
| **Horn in G** | G, a fourth below | up a tone | add two sharps |
| **Horn in A** | A, a minor third below | up a major third | add four sharps |
| **Horn in B flat alto** | B flat, a tone below | up a fourth | add one flat |

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1. Fix the key first, once, before the downbeat, using the last column. It reads the same way as the rest of its row: the first column names the crook printed at the top of the part, and the last column says what that crook does to the printed key signature. A part headed Horn in D adds three sharps, so one sharp printed means four sharps played; say “E major” to yourself and let scale-trained fingers do the rest. Adding a sharp means removing a flat first, and the other way round: two flats printed plus three sharps of change leaves one sharp played. Old parts often print no signature at all: on the valveless horns they were written for, the crook itself did the job of the key, and this column simply hands that job back to you.
2. Then the eye makes one move, not many: every note drops a rung, line to the line below, space to the space below. A third keeps line-notes on lines and space-notes in spaces, so you re-see the whole page a rung lower instead of calculating note by note: see F, play D (first valve on the F side, thumb with one and two on the B flat side); see G, play E; see A, play F sharp, because E major says so.
3. Printed accidentals travel with the note: a sharp still lifts your played note a semitone, a flat still lowers it, a natural cancels what the signature did. Where a bar knots up, pencil the played notes above it before the rehearsal; professional parts are full of exactly those marks.
4. Learn it on music you already know by ear. Take any simple written tune you could sing from memory: a folk song, an anthem, an old grade-book piece, the melody line of anything on your shelf; public-domain songbooks are free online if the shelf is bare. Play it once as printed, so the sound is fresh in your ear. Then play it again pretending the page is headed Horn in D: the printed notes stay exactly as they are, and you play each one a minor third lower with three sharps added to the key, just as the D row says. (An ordinary sheet of music is, in effect, a Horn in F part: it asks you to play what is printed. Pretending a different heading onto it is what turns any tune into transposition practice, for any crook you choose.) Now every wrong note announces itself, because your ear already knows the tune, and that is the one thing a table can never give you. Five minutes a day for a week fixes a crook for good. When a real part arrives, pencil the played note above the first note of every entry: mid-phrase the intervals carry you, but an entry is a cold start, and cold starts are where transposition breaks.

One more trap: in old parts written in bass clef, the notes usually sound an octave higher than the modern convention would suggest. Ask your principal which convention the edition uses.