

Flute Trills "how to"

by Jennifer Cluff 2007

The best way to learn trills and other ornaments is to study them with a private flute teacher. The private teacher will help you understand any intricate trill rules or standard methods and fingerings for trills.

Charts that explain "how to" execute trills and other ornaments can be found online in music theory dictionaries, and also in some older flute books such as the "Rubank Advanced Method for Flute" Vol. 1 & 2. (not my fave book, but good for trill explanations.) Trill rules can be learned slowly through examples, and can change depending on the age in which the music was written, so consult your teacher.

The basic explanation however is this:

Trills can be notated with 'tr', as the symbol of a wavy line, or in very old music, as a plus sign. The trill is always from the written note to the next alphabetical note above it (upward) that is in the key signature.

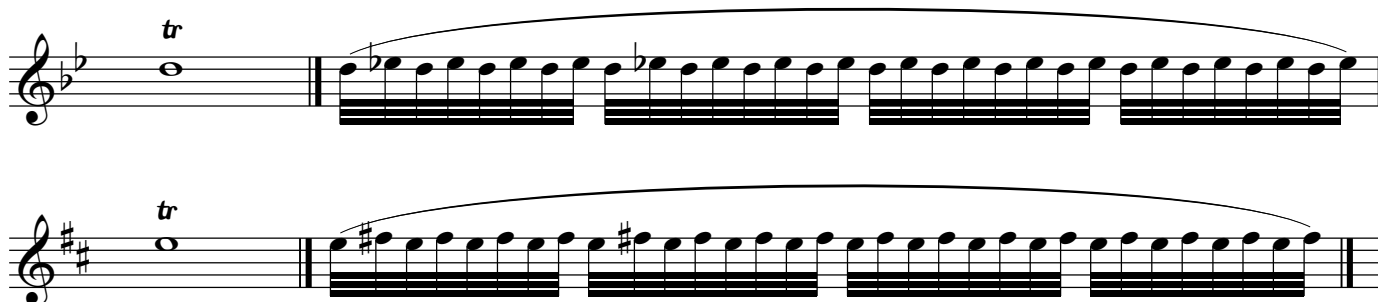
Trill symbols

Trill is executed as B to C. The written note trills to the next alphabetical note above the principle note



The first thing you should do, however is to check the key signature. If there is a flat or sharp in the key signature that pertains to the upper note of the trill, then the upper note has that flat or sharp applied to it.

Determining the upper note by using the key signature



If the composer wishes you to trill to an upper note that is NOT in the key signature, he/she will write the trill clearly indicating what the upper note should be, such as in these examples:

The upper note is to have a natural sign



If the composer wishes you to trill to an upper note that is NOT in the key signature, he/she will write the trill clearly indicating what the upper note should be such as in these additional examples:

The upper note should have a flat sign applied to it. Trill is Bb to Cb in this case

The upper note should have a sharp sign applied to it. Trill is G# to A# in this case

The upper note has a double-flat sign applied to it. This trill is Ab to B double-flat (A-natural) in this case

A trill usually takes place for the full value of a note, unless the note is a dotted-note. In that case the trill is usually stopped "on the dot" and the principle note is sustained for the remaining time.

Stop on the dot, means stop trilling and stay on the main note for the time that the dot represents. In this example, the dot represents an eighth note.

Tremelo

If the composer wishes you to trill between notes that are more distant than a mere step apart, he/she may write the trill as a tremelo, where the three slashes indicate a rapid alternation between the two notes. Both notes will be notated as the full value of the complete tremelo length. (ex: in 2/4 both a full-bar tremelo will appear as half-notes; see online ornament guides for more info.). For more information and tremelo and trill chart links see: <http://www.jennifercluff.com/bloggyindex.htm>