

Clarinet Pad Comparison

Ashantee Music offers a wide variety of padding options to meet a wide variety of needs. If you're wondering what the differences are, here's a quick summary!

CORK PADS: Long lasting and reliable with a crisp, precise feel to the keys. Cork tends to add to the warmth and core of the tone, and are easily altered to provide subtle improvements to tone and intonation. Cork pads also are less likely to stick in humid conditions, making them excellent for outdoor use. Most clarinets overhauled in cork pads use bladder or leather pads for the largest four, as the quality of cork required is very high, and difficult to find in larger sizes. Leather or bladder is often used in one or two places on the upper joint as well, in order to facilitate playing across the bridge key.

BLADDER PADS: Made from a moisture-proof skin over a felt disk, bladder (or skin) pads have been the go-to pad for a century. They may not last as long as other options, but are a good, economical solution resulting in a traditional feel and sound to most clarinets. These vary greatly in quality, and we use only high-end, double bladder pads with compressed felt cores to provide a long-lasting, reliable instrument.

LEATHER PADS: Supple leather over a pressed-felt core has long been used on saxes and bassoons, and are becoming more common with clarinets. Leather is long-lasting, and provides a smooth feel to the keywork enabling players to create a more satisfying legato. Leather is usually used only on the lower joint of the clarinet as smaller pads are difficult to manufacture uniformly, but occasionally are used on the upper as well. Leather tends to be more susceptible to moisture, and may not perform well in humid environments. Because of the quality of leather required, these can be an expensive option.

SYNTHETIC PADS: A bit more expensive than cork or bladder pads, they are also very reliable, moisture resistant and long lasting. They tend to brighten the tone a bit, and their quick seal is great for clarity in fast passages. We usually use Valentino Master's Series white synthetic pads—a highly-respected pad found on many of the best clarinets. Valentino Greenback synthetic pads are a softer version which are a durable and economic solution for student instruments.