

SAXOPHONE GUIDE

for

Woodwind Methods

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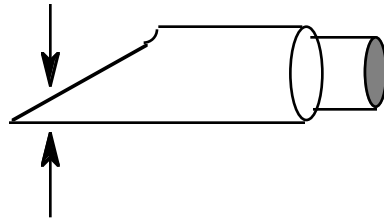
Layout and Printing by Skip Spratt

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I.

Approaching the Saxophone

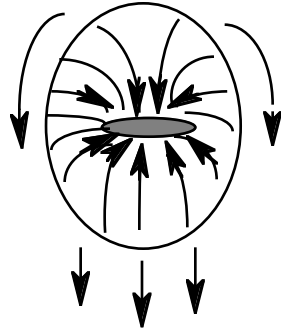
1. Anchor the weight of your head and teeth down onto the mouthpiece approximately $\frac{3}{8}$ inch.
2. Never remove the teeth or top lip from the mouthpiece.
3. Drop the jaw to take a breath.
4. The natural resting position for the tongue is on the reed (ready to be released).
5. Keep your body position straight, head erect and always bring the mouthpiece to you. If your head is straight the mouthpiece should meet your lips in the middle.
6. Support the instrument with your right thumb, keeping it away from your body slightly. The mouthpiece should enter at this angle:



7. Keep the saxophone to your right side, not in the middle.
8. Hand and finger position:
 - a. The natural position of the hand forms a "c".
 - b. Place tips of fingers in the center of the pearls.
 - c. Keep the fingers of the pearls when playing.
 - d. Squeeze keys down, don't hammer.
 - e. Don't bend the first knuckle of the fingers. Keep them slightly arched, as in playing the piano.
 - f. Relax hands.

II.

Embouchure



1. Form an "O" or "Ou" position, evenly around the mouthpiece.
2. Turn corners into the mouthpiece while pulling down *slightly*.
3. Drop jaw from the hinges (near ears). The jaw must be relaxed.
4. The jaw and lower teeth pull away from the reed, while the lower lip lifts up onto the reed in the opposite direction. (like exaggerating the letter F)
This dynamic of the jaw , lower lip and teeth working the reed with just the correct amount of opposite tension, is one of the most important elements in playing the saxophone. Perhaps the saxophone embouchure can better be described as an "Ouf" position.
5. If the position described in step 4 is correct, it should create an opening in your mouth when playing, as if there were a ping-pong ball in your mouth.
6. Bottom lip must be rolled in enough to create a good cushion to work the reed, but too much will damage the tone and your lip. *Don't swallow your lip.* Just go by the natural formation you get when saying "F".

III.

Embouchure exercises

1. Put the index finger on your bottom lip. Press lip over bottom teeth and pull down. This will hurt unless you resist by lifting your bottom lip up and away from the teeth, using the facial muscles in conjunction with muscles in the bottom lip. (F)
2. Play long tones with upper lip off the mouthpiece.
3. Bring the corners down as far as you can, independent of all other facial, lip and chin muscles.

Page 3 Embouchure Exercises Cont.

4. Integrate all of this with the long tones, embouchure studies and scales throughout the full range. *Keep a stationary embouchure.*

THROAT- Open in "Hee" position.

BREATHING- Stomach muscles press against the resistance of the diaphragm.

TONGUING- "ee" position. The tip of the tongue is placed on the tip of the reed. (approximately 1/16-1/8 inch from the top of the reed). This is the natural resting position of the tongue when the mouthpiece is in your mouth. Form an embouchure - apply air pressure and then release and return the tongue. The tone should sound full if the support is sufficient and the release is accurate. All the while air pressure must continue from the abdominal muscles, even when there isn't any sound, due to the placement of the tongue on the reed.

The air does most of the work in tonguing. We only use the very front part of the tongue - sing "ee". That keeps the rest of our tongue stationary - then "tee-tee-tee-tee".

An excellent exercise is to hypothetically spit something off the tip of your tongue.

Another similar exercise is to form a small aperture (flute embouchure). Blow air through, release and return the very tip of the tongue, keeping the air speed intense all the while.

The best approach to tonguing is the achievement of good legato tonguing, which will lead to a good staccato tongue.

(Tu)

(Teh)

Here we use the stomach muscles to kick the air "ha ha" with the tongue "teh teh" so it is "teh" not "tut". The musical effect we want here is light and tapered staccato. The air must start fast and abruptly, but stop slowly or tapered like a pizzicato or pluck of a string.

Exercises in Legato Tonguing



Light touch tongue all air. It should sound almost like you are sustaining a note.

Legato Tonguing

“dit” or “tet”



Exercises in Staccato Tonguing



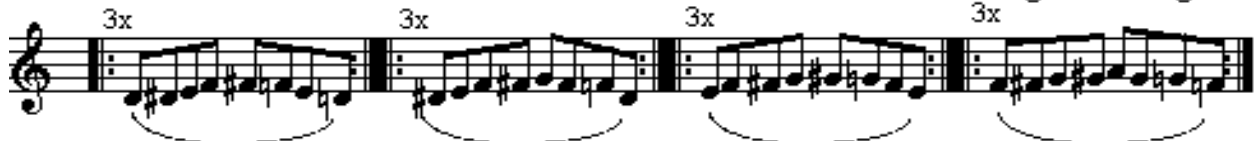
Do this exercise in all keys.



5 Half Tones

1st x legato
2nd x legato tongue
3rd x staccato

Etc. through full range



*When playing chromatic passages use the trill F# key as well as the side C. If the chromatic scale is within the context of a slow melodic line, use regular F# and C.



VIBRATO

Once a student has achieved a *good, healthy sound*, even if he/she's only been studying six months or a year, vibrato should be introduced.

Using the syllable "Vah-Vah-Vah-Vah" will create the pulsations necessary to produce a controlled and even manipulation of the pitch.

"V" is the jaw movement, "ah" is the air stream. The "ah" or air portion of the vibrato is very important. First say "Vah-Vah-Vah-Vah" with the air, not the voice.

It is a combination of jaw and air - putting the air through the horn like

this:  instead of this:  It should be as though you were making circles or oscillations, not just an up and down movement of the jaw.

Recommended speed of oscillations: 3 pulses at 108 m.m.

4 pulses at 72-80 m.m.

5 pulses at 56-63 m.m.

6 pulses at 48-60 m.m.

Vibrato exercises should be played in all keys.



5 Stroke Rolls



9 Stroke Rolls



13 Stroke Rolls



17 Stroke Rolls

