

# A GUIDE FOR PLAYING THE SAXOPHONE

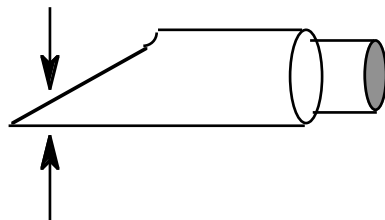
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PROVIDED BY [SAXSHED.COM](http://SAXSHED.COM) LESSONS BY MAIL

# I.

## APPROACHING THE SAXOPHONE

1. THE SAXOPHONE SHOULD HANG ON THE NECK STRAP TO YOUR RIGHT SIDE, NOT IN THE MIDDLE.
2. SUPPORT THE INSTRUMENT WITH YOUR RIGHT THUMB, KEEPING IT AWAY FROM YOUR BODY SLIGHTLY. WHILE SITTING THE SAXOPHONE SHOULD REST AGAINST THE RIGHT LEG, ABOUT HALF WAY BETWEEN THE KNEE AND HIP.
3. KEEP YOUR BODY POSITION STRAIGHT, HEAD ERECT AND ALWAYS BRING THE MOUTHPIECE TO YOUR LIPS WITH THE NECK STRAP IS ADJUSTED CORRECTLY, THE MOUTHPIECE SHOULD LINE UP DIRECTLY TO THE LIPS WHILE SITTING UP STRAIGHT.
4. PLACE THE FINGERS "ON THE PEARLS" (WHITE MOTHER OF PEARL INLAY ON KEYS) AT ALL TIMES. LEFT HAND ON TOP, RIGHT HAND ON THE BOTTOM. THE LEFT THUMB GOES ON THE THUMB REST UNDER THE OCTAVE KEY. THE RIGHT THUMB HOOKS UNDER THE THUMB HOOK.
5. PLACE THE MOUTHPIECE IN THE MOUTH AND ANCHOR THE WEIGHT OF YOUR HEAD AND TEETH DOWN ONTO THE MOUTHPIECE. THE TOP TEETH AND BOTTOM LIP SHOULD BE APPROXIMATELY 3/8 INCH IN FROM THE TIP OF THE REED.

THE TOP TEETH AND BOTTOM LIP SHOULD MEET AT ARROWS:

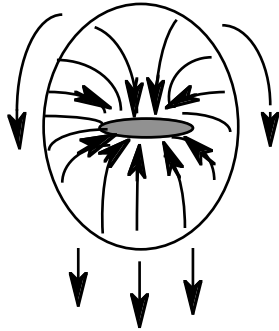


**THINGS TO REMEMBER:**

- A. NEVER REMOVE THE TEETH OR TOP LIP FROM THE MOUTHPIECE.
- B. DROP THE JAW TO TAKE A BREATH.
- C. THE NATURAL RESTING POSITION FOR THE TONGUE IS ON THE REED (READY TO BE RELEASED).
- D. THE NATURAL POSITION OF THE HAND FORMS A "C".
- E. PLACE TIPS OF FINGERS IN THE CENTER OF THE PEARLS.

- F. KEEP THE TIPS OF THE FINGERS (FLESHY PART) ON THE PEARLS WHEN PLAYING. SQUEEZE KEYS DOWN, DON'T HAMMER.
- G. KEEP THE FINGERS ARCHED SLIGHTLY, AS IN PLAYING THE PIANO.
- H. RELAX HANDS. TRY THIS: DROP YOUR HANDS BY YOUR SIDE AND TRY TO COMPLETELY RELAX THEM. RAISE THEM IN FRONT OF YOU WITHOUT TENSING UP. THIS IS THE NATURAL CURVE OF YOUR HANDS AND THE SAXOPHONE WAS DESIGNED TO WORK WITH THE NATURAL CURVE OF YOUR 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. REMEMBER – JUST FORM THE LETTER "F" WITH YOUR***

LIPS. DOING THIS WILL GET YOU WELL ON THE WAY TO FORMING THE CORRECT EMBOUCHURE.

5. WHEN 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. YOU CAN TRY TO FAKE A YAWN TO CREATE A SIMILAR SENSATION.
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.*** THE CORRECT POSITION IS MUCH LIKE 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. THIS IS ONLY AN EXERCISE. AS STATED BEFORE, THE TOP LIP SHOULD NEVER COME OFF THE TOP OF THE MOUTHPIECE UNDER NORMAL PLAYING CONDITIONS.
3. BRING THE CORNERS OF THE MOUTH DOWN AS FAR AS YOU CAN, INDEPENDENT OF ALL OTHER FACIAL, LIP AND CHIN MUSCLES. THIS IS SIMILAR TO A FROWN WITHOUT POUTING.

#### THINGS TO REMEMBER:

- A. KEEP A STATIONARY EMBOUCHURE. INITIALLY THE BEST APPROACH IS TO USE ONE EMBOUCHURE SETTING FOR THE ENTIRE RANGE OF THE INSTRUMENT. LOW B FLAT ALL THE WAY UP TO HIGH F SHOULD BE PLAYED USING THE SAME EMBOUCHURE SETTING. ***"SET IT AND FORGET IT!"***

B. INTEGRATE ALL OF THIS WITH LONG TONES, EMBOUCHURE STUDIES AND SCALES THROUGHOUT THE FULL RANGE OF THE SAXOPHONE.

#### IV. THROAT

1. THE THROAT SHOULD BE OPEN IN "HEE" POSITION.
2. REGARDLESS OF WHAT SYLLABLE YOU ARE THINKING WHILE PLAYING, THE THROAT SHOULD BE OPEN AND RELAXED.

#### V. BREATHING

1. BREATH FROM THE DIAPHRAGM. STOMACH MUSCLES PRESS AGAINST THE RESISTANCE OF THE DIAPHRAGM.
2. CORRECT BREATHING INVOLVES THE STOMACH MUSCLES AND DIAPHRAGM WORKING TOGETHER TO PUSH THE AIR OUT OF THE LUNGS.

#### TRY THIS:

A. LIE FLAT ON YOUR BACK AND PLACE A LARGE, HEAVY BOOK ON YOUR STOMACH. BREATH IN THROUGH YOUR MOUTH SLOWLY. THE BOOK SHOULD RISE AS YOU INHALE. EXHALE THROUGH THE MOUTH. THE BOOK SHOULD LOWER AS THE DIAPHRAGM PUSHES THE AIR OUT OF THE LUNGS. YOU CAN ALSO CHECK DIAPHRAGMATIC BREATHING WHILE SITTING IN A CHAIR. HOLD THE LEGS OF THE CHAIR WHILE SITTING UP STRAIGHT. INHALE AND MAKE SURE YOUR SHOULDERS DO NOT RISE. THE STOMACH SHOULD EXPAND (GET FAT) AS YOU INHALE. WHEN YOU EXHALE THE STOMACH SHOULD GO IN. (GET SKINNY)

#### VI. TONGUING

1. "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.

2. 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".

A. AN EXCELLENT EXERCISE IS TO PRETEND TO SPIT A PIECE OF RICE OFF THE TIP OF YOUR TONGUE. IT'S ALMOST LIKE "T" AND "P" IN ONE MOTION.

B. ANOTHER SIMILAR EXERCISE IS TO FORM A SMALL APERTURE (FLUTE EMOUCHURE). BLOW AIR THROUGH THE SMALL HOLE FORMED IN THE LIPS. THE VERY TIP OF THE TONGUE SHOULD RELEASE AND RETURN TO THE SMALL APERTURE CREATING THE SOUND "T - POP." WHEN YOU RETURN THE TONGUE TO THE HOLE CORRECTLY IT CREATES A RATHER PERCUSSIVE "POP" SOUND. IT IS IMPERATIVE TO KEEP 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.

The image contains two musical staves. The top staff is labeled '(Tu)' and shows a sequence of notes in 4/4 time. Above the staff is a dashed arrow with a solid arrow pointing to the right, indicating a continuous, legato air stream. The bottom staff is labeled '(Teh)' and shows a sequence of notes in 4/4 time. Above the staff is a dashed arrow with a solid arrow pointing to the right, indicating a staccato, tapered air stream.

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



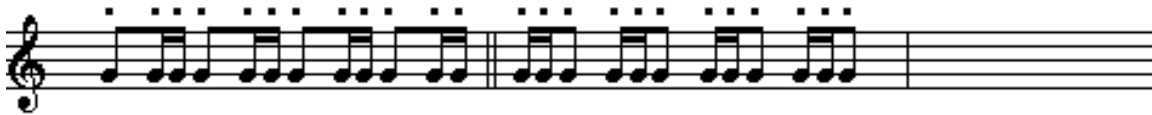
LIGHT TOUCH TONGUE ALL AIR. IT SHOULD SOUND ALMOST LIKE YOU ARE SUSTAINING A NOTE.

## 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




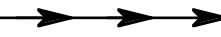
\*WHEN PLAYING CHROMATIC PASSAGES USE THE TRILL F# KEY AS WELL AS THE SIDE C. IF THE CHROMATIC SCALE IS WITHIN THE CONTEXT OF A SLOW MELODIC LINE, USE REGULAR F# AND C.

## VII. 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" OR "WAH-WAH-WAH-WAH" WILL CREATE THE PULSATIONS NECESSARY TO PRODUCE A CONTROLLED AND EVEN MANIPULATION OF THE PITCH.

"V" OR "W" 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:  (CYCLING) INSTEAD OF THIS:  (PULSATING) IT SHOULD BE AS THOUGH YOU WERE MAKING CIRCLES OR OSCILLATIONS, NOT JUST AN UP AND DOWN MOVEMENT OF THE JAW.

PLAY THE EXERCISE BELOW AT THE FOLLOWING OSCILLATIONS AND TEMPOS:

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, AS WELL AS THE KEY OF G MAJOR IS REPRESENTED ABOVE.**



## ADDITIONAL TONGUING EXERCISES

PLAY THE EXERCISES BELOW IN ALL KEYS. START ON THE TONIC OR ROOT AND DESCEND ONE OCTAVE. REPEAT THE SAME EXERCISE ASCENDING ONE OCTAVE AS DETAILED BELOW.

### 5 Stroke Rolls



### 9 Stroke Rolls



### 13 Stroke Rolls



### 17 Stroke Rolls

