

Instrumental Music Curriculum & Methodology

Middle & High School Instrumental Resource

Alto Saxophone

Part A: Instrumental Unit

A Brief History

The Saxophone was invented in 1842 by a Belgian instrument maker named Adolphe Sax. His intention was to combine the power of a brass instrument with the agility of a woodwind by having a single reed and mouthpiece a keyed brass body. Saxophones come in many shapes and sizes ranging from the huge contra-bass to the tiny soprano.

The four commonly used today are the **soprano**, **alto**, **tenor** and **baritone** saxophones. Together these form the standard **saxophone quartet**. In Big bands the line up usually consist of 2 altos, 2 tenors and a baritone sax.

The saxophone did not really enjoy popularity until the development of jazz and more recently funk and rock music. It is used in symphonic works but never really found its place as a regular member of the orchestra. Today the saxophone is used in many diverse styles and genres of music, but is most commonly used in jazz.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=naT7gP0WrJI>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kQnQnq9c4EA>

Transposition

The four common saxophones in use today are pitched in B \flat and E \flat in relation to 'Concert pitch C'. This means that they are transposing instruments. i.e. The notes they read and finger sound different from those at concert pitch. Although the fingering on all saxophones is identical, the pitch of the notes is not.

<p>B\flat Soprano</p> <p>Reads C Sounds B\flat</p>	<p>B\flat Tenor</p> <p>Reads C Sounds B\flat</p>
<p>E\flat Alto</p> <p>Reads C Sounds E\flat</p>	<p>E\flat Baritone</p> <p>Reads C Sounds E\flat</p>



Alto Saxophone

Considerations for a beginner, intermediate and advanced players

Beginner Level - The Basics

Parts of the Saxophone

It is important for students to know all the parts of the instrument and understand the function of each part. This will assist with the student's development, the caring and maintenance of the instrument, and also with instructions during lessons and band rehearsals.



Preparing the Reed

The reed must be damp for it to vibrate properly. Some players soak their reeds in a glass of water before playing, but you can usually get away with holding the thin end in your mouth for about 30 seconds.

Fitting the Mouthpiece & Reed

- Push the mouthpiece on with a twisting action until it covers about half to three quarters of the cork.
- Line up the flat piece of the mouthpiece with the hole at the other end of the neck.
- Looking at the flat side of the mouthpiece, the ligature screws extend to your right. Slide the ligature up with your thumb.
- After you have dampened the reed, place it on the mouthpiece.
- Place the flat side of the reed against the mouthpiece under the ligature.
- Lower the ligature and position the reed so that only a hairline of the mouthpiece can be seen above the reed.
- Gently tighten the ligature screws.



Holding the Saxophone & Posture

After attaching the neck to the body and tightening the neck screw, put the neck strap on then clip the saxophone to it. Adjust the length of the strap so that the mouthpiece is level with your mouth. The neck strap supports the entire weight of the saxophone. If you need to lift the sax with your right thumb your neck strap is too long.

Standing

Stand evenly with the weight evenly distributed over the feet. Try to avoid thrusting the hips forward, or allowing the neck to be pulled down. The saxophone can be positioned directly in front of the body or on the right hand side.

Sitting

When sitting down to play make sure to keep your back straight. Do not slouch or slump forward. The alto sax can be positioned in front, but the tenor sax will probably be more comfortable to hold to the side. Sit on the edge of your chair, and always keep your:

- Spine straight and tall
- Shoulders back and relaxed
- Feet flat on the floor



It is important to understand that the saxophone is not held by the hands but rather balanced by the two thumbs. The left thumb pushing forward and to the right, and the right thumb pushing forward and down slightly. This leaves the fingers free to play.

Producing a Good Tone

Your embouchure is your mouth's position on the mouthpiece of the instrument. A good embouchure takes time and effort, these steps can assist with this:

1. REED PLACEMENT (as explained above)

2. EMOUCHURE

- Moisten your lips and roll the lower lip over your bottom teeth.
- Centre the mouthpiece on your lips and place it in your mouth about 1/2 an inch.
- Place your upper teeth directly on the mouthpiece. The reed rests on the lower lip over the teeth.

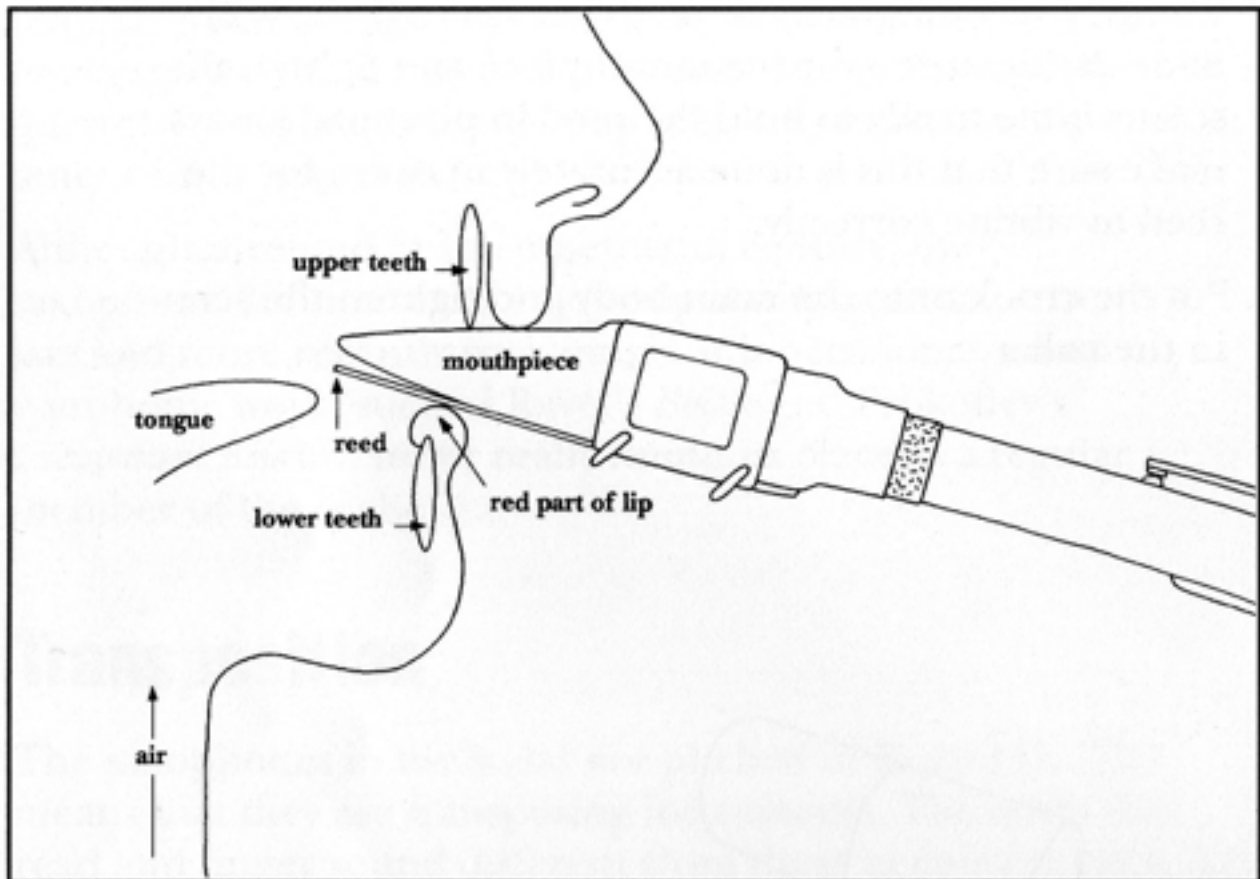
- Close your mouth around the mouth piece, like a rubber band. Your facial muscles all support and cushion your lips on the mouthpiece.
- Keep your chin down and slightly relaxed.

Two Golden Rules

- Don't puff out cheeks
- Don't bite

Buzzing sounds

- This can be adjusted by tightening and loosening the lips.



The Embouchure

Tonguing

Another vital foundation technique for playing the saxophone is tonguing. The tongue is the saxophonist's equivalent of a violin bow, or a drumstick. It allows you to start notes clearly and precisely, to repeat notes and to produce subtle variations of phrasing.

Breathing

Make sure you breath from the diaphragm and achieve all-round expansion in the area of the waist and lower ribs. Expansion on inhaling and contraction on exhaling. Do not try to breath in a special way and lift the shoulders and chest. For woodwind playing breathing should be a natural unconscious process from the diaphragm.

Taking Care of Your Instrument

Before putting your instrument back in its case after playing, do the following:

- Remove the reed, wipe off excess moisture and return it to the reed case.
- Remove the mouth piece and wipe the inside with a clean cloth. Once a week wash the mouth piece with warm tap water. Dry thoroughly.
- Loosen the neck screw and remove the neck. Shake out excess moisture and dry the neck with a neck cleaner.
- Drop the weight of a chamois or cotton swab into the bell. Pull the swab through the body several times. Return the instrument to its case.
- Your case is designed to hold only specific objects. If you try to force anything else into the case, it may damage your instrument.

Considerations for Intermediate to Advanced Players

(all points here are relative to beginner standard also)

- Intonation
- Phrasing and melodic line
- Dynamics
- Tempo
- Development of musical theory and understanding how to apply this on the instrument
- Knowledge and application of scales and modes
- Blues theory and scales
- Harmonic theory knowledge for improvisation
- Thinking vertical whilst playing horizontally
- Ornaments
- Motivational selection of repertoire
- Integration and inclusion in ensembles and communal music making
- Regular performance opportunities



Fingering/Note Chart

- = Open
- = Pressed down

The most common fingering appears first when two fingerings are shown.

The chart displays the following notes and their common fingerings (from left to right in each row):

- A:** Fingering 1-2-3
- B:** Fingering 1-2-3
- C:** Fingering 1-2-3
- C#:** Fingering 1-2-3
- D:** Fingering 1-2-3
- D#:** Fingering 1-2-3
- E:** Fingering 1-2-3
- F:** Fingering 1-2-3
- F#:** Fingering 1-2-3
- G:** Fingering 1-2-3

G# A^b

A

A# B^b

B

C

C# D^b

D

D# E^b

E

F

F# G^b

G

G# A^b

A

A# B^b

B

C

C# D^b

D

D# E^b

E

F

Musicorp Australia

Instrument Hire

<http://www.musicorp.com.au/saxophones/>

Where Can you Access Sheet Music and Resources?

Music Stores

- Size Music
- Winston Music
- Allans Billy Hyde

Internet Sites

- Musicnotes
<http://www.musicnotes.com>
- Sheet Music Plus
<http://www.sheetmusicplus.com>
- AMEB Online Store
http://www.ameb.edu.au/shop/woodwinds/saxophone.html?___SID=U&p=1

The Top Ten Tips For Your Instrument in the High School Ensemble

(add elaborations)

1. Use a good reed
2. Blow through the thin end of the reed
3. Correct posture (sit on the edge of your chair with a straight back, and adjust the strap)
4. Intonation - listen/tune up
5. Projection - air support (diaphragm)
6. Practice long tones and overtones to produce a good, full even tone
7. Blending in (voicing, dynamics and articulation)
8. Rhythmically locking in with other parts
9. Practice scales with a metronome to develop a smooth fluent technique
10. Do sectional practice

Reference List and Resources Used

Greg Osman - Saxophone teacher and classroom music teacher at Rostrevor College

Essential Elements - Comprehensive Band Method

Eb Alto Saxophone Book 1

Hal Leonard

(Tutor methodology aligned with other band and ensemble essential elements resources)

Beginner Tutoring

Learn As You Play Saxophone

By Peter Wastall, Revised Edition 1989

Boosey & Hawkes

(An Individual learning and playing methodology)

The Art of Saxophone

Method Book 1 - An introduction to the saxophone for the beginner

By Andrew Scott

Lakshmi Investments Pty.Ltd.

Abacadabra Saxophone - Third Edition

Alto Saxophone

By Jonathan Rutland, Alison Pinder & Jane Sebba

A&C Black London

Introducing the Saxophone - James Rae

Universal Edition 17 390

Intermediate Tutoring**The Jazz Method for Saxophone - John O'Neill**

Schott Educational Publications

Saxophone Rock & Pop Chart Hits

1990 Wise Publications

Easy Jazz Conception - Jim Snidero

15 solo etudes for jazz phrasing, interpretation and improvising

1999 by Advance Music

Advanced Tutoring**Rubank Advanced Method Saxophone Vol. II**

H. Voxman

Rubank, Inc. No. 181

The Technique of the Saxophone - Joseph Viola

Volume One - Scale Studies

Hal Leonard Publishing

Improvising Jazz Sax - by Charley Gerard

1983 Amsco Publications

Jazz Styles & Analysis: Alto Sax - by Harry Miedema

Music Workshop Publications

John Coltrane, Improvised Saxophone Solos

Transcribed by Don Sickler

Studio Publications Recordings