

Florian Rooz

Hello Saxophone

The easy starters guide to the saxophone

For Alto & Tenor



Fast! Fun! and frustration free!
The way it should be!

Tips on how to use this book:

This book can be read from start to finish as a novel but you can also use it as a kind of encyclopedia. It works best if you print out all the extra tools so you can review them quickly. The best way to use the book, is to work it through once from start to finish. After that just select the ideas, skills and techniques that work the best for you and keep reviewing and practicing them. Keep in mind that this book will take some time to work through. Some of the exercises will take several days or sometimes a week or more to complete. It's best not to rush things. It's fine to read ahead but it's better not to do so and focus on completing every exercise a 100% first. Some musical skills, like for example: "being able to hear very subtle differences" take time to develop. Always expect your progress to take some time and never worry. Learning to play an instrument is something you just have to keep going at for a while. If you stay on the path you will succeed eventually! This book is very structured. Many of the later exercises only become meaningful once you've really mastered the earlier stuff. Always feel free to add other songs that you like to your exercises. The more you play stuff you love, the better! This book makes use of a special website where you can watch (or download) the videos and charts that go with the various exercises. Go to:

www.Hellosaxophone.com/exercises.html to access the movies and download all the extra materials included with Hello Saxophone.

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First things first

Congrats! You've probably just bought your first saxophone. And I bet you can't wait to start playing like John Coltrane in this movie: Go to the website (Hellosaxophone.com/exercises.html) and **watch video nr 1**. Now you probably won't sound like him for a while, but this book was written to help you get started and give you a solid and effective starting foundation that will help you make progress on the saxophone fast.

Let's begin!

The saxophone is a very simple and intuitive instrument, but when you look at all those shiny knobs and keys it can look kind of intimidating. All I can say is: "Don't worry about that!"

The complex machinery is only there to make it easy for us to play. Over the years the machinery on the sax has been refined and adjusted many times and once you get yourself in the saddle (so to speak) everything will start to come naturally.

Now we're going to move right into playing your first note in a second here, but there are a few important things we have to take care of first. Trust me when I say: "These will make your life much easier!"

Try to at least get:

A comfortable neck strap.

This will save you so much pain and discomfort!

Good neck straps aren't expensive, you can get a good one for about € 20,- The neck straps included with new saxophones are usually not very pleasant. Realize that your saxophone will be hanging from this thing for a full hour (sometimes up to 3 hours during a gig). Comfort is very key!

A cleaning kit (usually it's a long rope with a wipe on it + a smaller swab for the neck)

It's important to keep your sax clean, because if you don't it will soon start to stink (very nasty). Not cleaning is also very bad for your pads (the leather insides of the tone holes). Revising or fixing a sax because of damaged pads can cost up to € 600,- so better to just clean it regularly and save yourself the money. Also it's

not a brilliant idea to drink alcohol or eat spicy foods right before playing. It gets in your breath and thus in your saxophone. As part of your cleaning kit it's also a great idea to get some "powder paper". This is special paper you can use to take the moisture from your pads after playing. It leaves a powdery residue that helps to keep your pads in prime condition.

A box of reeds

The saxophone is part of the “woodwind instruments” family. Meaning the sound of the sax is created by vibrating pieces of wood (called a reed). For a beginner it’s usually fine to start with a 1,5 thickness reed. Just ask someone in a music store what goes well with your mouthpiece (take it with you to the store) and you will be all right. Also ask someone to show you how to put it on your mouthpiece the right way. I’ll show you in a video soon, but it’s never bad to see someone actually doing it right before your eyes at least once. There are a huge number of reed manufacturers. Personally I like: ‘Vandoren Jazz” reeds on both Alto and Tenor. Over time you just have to try a bunch of brands and types until you find the one that gives you the sound you want.

A saxophone standard

If you want to become a real hero on the sax it’s necessary to practice regularly. It helps your process a lot if you don’t have to go through the hassle of getting your sax out of the case and putting it together every time you want to practice. You can help things along by putting your sax on a standard in your living room (or wherever it is you usually practice). After practicing just clean it, put it back together and then leave it on the standard so you can grab it quickly the next time you feel like playing. Leaving it in the open will dry out the pads

a little quicker though, so it's a good idea to have them powdered with powder paper regularly.

A good saxophone

It may sound obvious but I can't stress this one enough. There are lots of very cheap saxophones out there (€ 300,- / € 500,-). It's fine to start on one of these if you're not sure if the saxophone is the right instrument for you or if you don't have a lot of money, but if you can....get a good one straight away! It's good to realize a few things about these cheaper instruments. Usually the high notes are slightly out of tune, the low notes are more difficult to play, you need to blow into them harder to get a good sound, they're often "leaking" or breaking (which means that some of the tones might not work at all) and often no repair shop will fix them if they break or get damaged (and they always do eventually). A cheap sax will often only last a few months before something breaks on it! So beware of the choice your making here. There is an upside though. I started on one of these very cheap saxophones myself. I Practiced hard on it and I could play a bit when I first got my hands on a really good saxophone. Since I was used to playing on a very poorly made saxophone the good one was suddenly surprisingly easy to play. I could appreciate the better one (feel/hear its quality) very well. The bad sax had forced me to develop solid technique and because my particular sax needed heavy pressure to produce a steady sound I had also

developed a strong embouchure very fast. Of course the choice is yours! Just know that a cheap saxophone can make things a bit more difficult and time consuming to learn. As a rule we could say that: More expensive generally means: this makes things easy, Cheaper means: this makes things more difficult. A good saxophone will cost you at least a €1000,- but with good maintenance it can last a life time. For beginners I personally recommend "Le monde" satellite saxophones. They are a great price for major quality (better than many old "Selmers" in my opinion).

Saxophone friends:

This is important for several reasons. There are many subtleties to playing the saxophone well and there are many cool techniques to learn. Make sure to get some people into to your life who you can ask questions and who just love to help you make progress. Just because they like it! A paid teacher can help you, but they can cost a lot of money and you can't always call them up when you're having a problem or when you want to try something new. So make friends with people who are playing the sax and who are ahead of you on the learning curve. Most people who are exceptionally good at something are very willing to help others become better. This goes for sax players too! If you know someone who you can call for advice and who you can practice with on a regular basis it will easily drive the speed of your

progress up tenfold. It will help you take chances and it will show you in which areas you can make progress. Also, it will continually provide you with something to aspire to. As you're friends become better so will you!

Now that you have all your stuff in order, Let's get started!

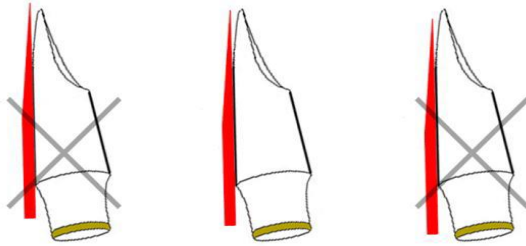
Putting your saxophone together

Step1: The first thing we need to do is put your sax together. It's easy. Pick up the horn (the largest piece). Pick it up by the horn so you don't damage any pads or keys and put it on your stand or put it between your legs. Then pick up the top (neck) piece and Insert it into the horn of the saxophone (see pic below). Make sure the large metal ring falls over the metal pin on the back. This pin must be at about the middle of this metal ring for your octave key to work properly. Now use the knobs or Screw

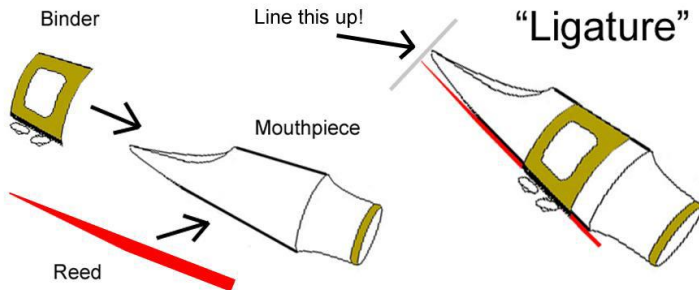


Step 2: put the reed on your mouthpiece (the metal thingy that came with it). It takes some practicing and trying to find out what sounds best. Take this seriously but don't take it too seriously! If it looks to be well aligned it's fine!. (see image on the next page)

Our reed should end just a hair's length under de the tip



It's important to avoid touching the tip (the thin end) of the reeds! These tips are very sensitive and they break and crack easily. A reed works the best when it's wet. Put the tip (about 2,5 cm) in some water or in your mouth for about 30 seconds before you put it on.



When you fasten a reed the important thing is to make sure that it's lined up exactly with the mouthpiece at the tip (as in the picture above)! If you look at the mouthpiece from underneath (the side with the reed) the tip of the reed should only be a tiny bit lower than the tip of the mouthpiece (as is shown in the "LIGATURE" chart that came with the book). The difference should be no more than the width of about a hair. A quick tip: The

closer you put the tip of the reed to the tip of the mouthpiece, the easier you play. If you place the reed a little lower (away from the tip) it will make the reed feel a little harder (giving more resistance). Over time you must find the best positions for your own mouth.

In general this works the best:

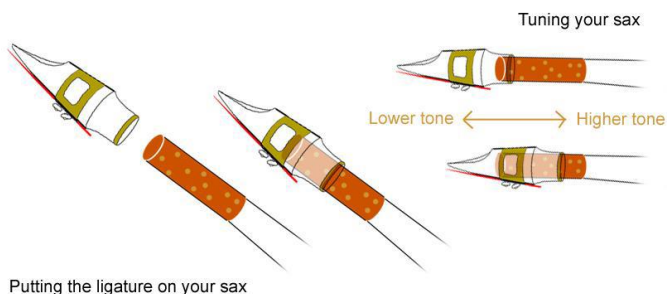
1: First put the binder very loosely onto the mouthpiece so there is still plenty of space for the reed. The binder should be at about the middle of the available space.

2: Put the reed up against the mouthpiece a little bit too low.

3: Push the reed up slowly from underneath with your thumb until it's lined up properly at about a hairs width distance from the tip of the mouthpiece.

4: Then fasten the reed securely with the binder. Just don't screw it on ultra-tight. If it's secure then its fine! Some people screw the mouthpiece on to the neck (**Step 3**) and then secure the reed. Others put the reed on the mouthpiece first and then screw the whole thing on to the neck. It's up to you to find out what makes you the happiest.

Step 3: Screwing the mouthpiece onto the cork.



You can do this without greasing the cork but it's much easier with some cork grease. Gently screw it on until it's about halfway onto the cork. You use the mouthpiece's position on the cork to tune the saxophone. The more cork we leave visible, the longer the length of the saxophone and the lower our notes will be. This way we can make all the notes on our saxophone about half a note higher or lower. Don't worry too much about tuning right now. This will come later. If your mouthpiece is at about the middle of the cork then it's fine for now!

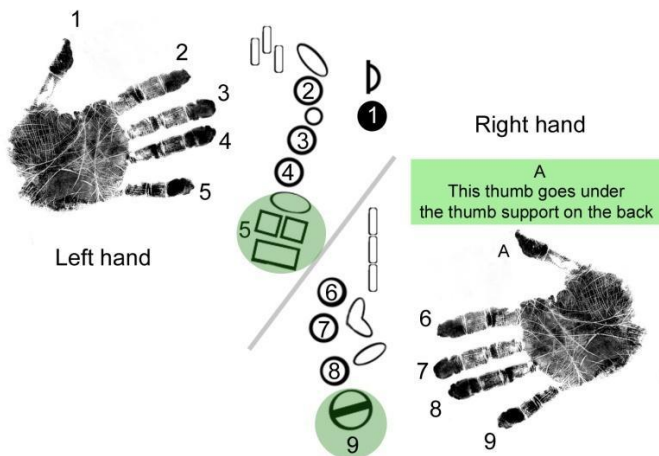
Step 4: Putting the saxophone on your neck. Put the strap around your neck first and then connect your neck strap to the instrument (there should be a small metal eye on the back of the saxophone).

Step 5: Adjusting your neck strap. Stand up straight. Keep your neck straight and adjust the length of your neck strap until the mouthpiece falls into your mouth naturally. Ok great! You have now

successfully set up your saxophone. Here comes the fun part. Your fingers!

Where to put your fingers?

It's not always very obvious where they go so use the picture below to make sure you have them all in the right places. Take extra care in getting nr 2 right. Sometimes the key above the nr 2 key comes as a round (pearl) key as well, so make sure you put your number 2 finger on the right key.



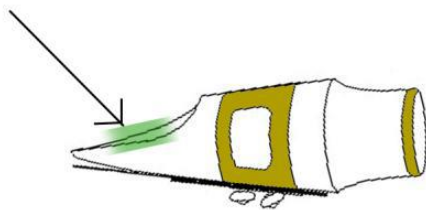
Thumb support: (A)

On the lower back you will see a metal “hook-like” contraption. You put your right thumb underneath this (diagonally) so you can support and control the saxophone with your right hand.

Blowing the mouthpiece

Getting a basic sound out of the sax is easy but there are a lot of details to it that will become more important as you develop more skill. It's the mouthpiece that produces all the sound! You can actually play the mouthpiece without the sax. The saxophone only amplifies the sound and creates more tone possibilities. For now we will just play the whole saxophone. The first thing to do to set yourself up properly is to put the mouthpiece up under your upper front teeth in your mouth

Put your teeth about here

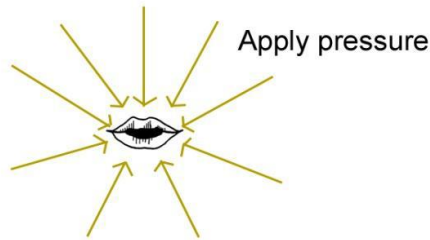


Let the lower part of the saxophone rest comfortably against your belly. **Put your upper teeth about halfway on top of the mouthpiece** (see the picture above and **video lesson 1#**). **It's important that you don't push your teeth onto the mouthpiece. Instead you gently push the sax up against your teeth!** You do this by pushing the sax forward very slightly with your left thumb and by making sure the length of the neck strap is correct. With the mouthpiece in your mouth; push the top part of the saxophone away from you gently with your left thumb. When you do this you will

feel some pressure on your upper teeth. The saxophone becomes kind of stuck between your right thumb and your upper teeth. This will leave your lower jaw completely free so you can breathe in easily without the sax bumbling about in your mouth. Also this allows you to control the vibrations of the reed more precisely. Experiment with holding the sax while having the mouthpiece in your mouth until you have found a comfortable way to hold it steadily. You can try to walk around with the sax a bit while having your mouth on the mouthpiece. If you can keep it steady while walking around slowly...You're good!

Make sure not to bend you neck! Your neck and body should stay straight up.

Putting your lower lip up against the reed. Curl your lower lip a little like you would do if you were biting your lip or trying to say the "B" in the word baby very clearly, so it becomes like a cushion between your lower teeth and the reed. Now the pressure for holding in the air should come mostly from the muscles in your lower lip and not from your yaw. If you're using your yaw too much you're going to bite your lip from the underside. You don't want to be doing that. Of course there will always be a small part of the pressure that does come from the yaw, but it should never hurt, or feel like you're biting yourself.



The key to producing a good and steady sound is strong and proper breathing. Pretend you're laughing very hard for a second. Feel what your belly does when you go HA HA HA. You feel your belly contracting powerfully pushing all the air out of your lungs. This is why we tend to get out of breath when we get the giggles. Also try bending over forwards and then breathing in deeply. When you're playing the saxophone you should be very aware that the strength of your breath comes from these muscles. We call it **"the Breath support"**. This gives us the power we need to create strong and steady tones.

Now **stand up!(because this makes breathing the easiest). Put your tongue in the EEEE positions (EA As in Eat)** Put some pressure on your lips from all sides so the air cant escape, keep your cheeks firm and straight, push keys number 2,3,4 down (picture on the next page), breathe in deeply and blow out into the saxophone from your belly. The pressure from your lips should be minimal. Just enough to keep the air in. The power for the note should all come from your belly.

Don't push/close any of the keys and blow.

It can take a while before you succeed! This is all completely normal! Don't worry if it takes you an hour or more to get just one nice and steady tone out of the sax. Keep practicing this with just this note until you really feel very comfortable and are producing a nice long steady tone. **Watch video lesson 1#** to make sure did all the above right.

Congrats! You have now made your first tone a: C# (Meaning a C-sharp) We will get into what "Sharp" means later

To insure that you teach yourself a comfortable and effective way of holding your lips and throat it's best to ask a teacher or an experienced player to check if you're doing it right. How you use your mouth on the sax is called "**embouchure**" which is French for "mouth pressure". It's different for each person, takes time to develop, and there are many details to that will become important later, but if you're hearing a descent, stable sound you're doing good for now. Do get someone to check your embouchure if you can but don't let anyone tell you that you should first develop a perfect embouchure before you can start playing seriously.

There is no such thing as perfect embouchure and it will take about a year of practice to refine and adjust your embouchures to create a truly stable sound. That's just how it is. Now watch **the embouchure**

workshop on the website to understand more about creating a great sound for yourself.

Saxophone pushups

The first thing to do now is; **some saxophone push-ups!!** It's still difficult for you to play for more than twenty minutes at time or produce a stable sound. The muscles in your mouth need some time to become stronger. About a week of playing (for as long you can) is enough to get you over the first hurdle and develop enough basic strength to play for an hour or so. Here are some pointers and some helpful things to try and teach yourself in your first week.

1: Keep your fingers on the keys: It's important to train yourself to keep your fingers very close to the keys at all times. It's really not necessary to take your fingers off the keys while playing and if you do you might get in trouble once you start playing more notes and in higher tempos. If you're playing at high speed it's easy to misplace your fingers. **Take your time to develop this the right way for yourself!** An often used technique is to put some double sided tape on your keys to force your fingers to keep close. To get an idea of what I mean; watch the clip of Coltrane again on the website. Look how close he keeps his fingers too his saxophone. If you teach yourself a bad fingering habit it can handicap you for a long time! **Take this one very seriously! Don't rush this!**

2: Use your tongue to start a note. Tap the tip of the reed with the tip of your tongue and say thee (as in eat).. Thee..Thee... to get a nice clear beginning and tap it again to end the note (this is called tonguing).

3: Play many “long notes”. Holding a note for a long time is the fastest way to strengthen your muscles. This makes it easier for you to play longer and with a stronger and more stable sound.

4: Try to play very loud and very soft. It's quite an achievement to be able to hold a long and steady tone at a very low volume (controlled breathing from your belly becomes very important here).

5: Try to play lots of short notes with good articulation (clear tonguing). Your music will sound better/cleaner if you learn how to articulate your notes well with your tongue. Try;
The,The,The,The,The,The. Just play the same note over and over until you can articulate it clearly.

6: Try to go from a very low volume to very loud and back to silence in one long note. This teaches you to hold a steady tone and helps you build your strength.

7: Try different tongue positions. How you hold your tongue has a big influence on your sound. Try: Thuuuu, Thiiiiiii, Thaaaa, Thooooo, etc. It's good to experience this versatility of the saxophone for yourself. Also try moving your jaw forward and backward while playing and listen for the effect it has on your sound. Keep the EA (as in eat) tongue position as your standard though!

Test out different cheek positions. How you hold your cheeks can influence your sound as well. Try to firm them up or loosen them and hear the difference in your sound.

Don't worry if you don't really hear differences in your sound during some of the exercises.

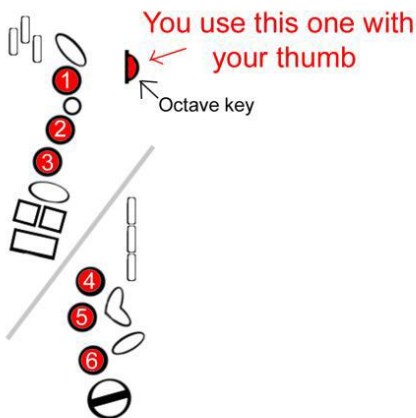
Some of the effects are really subtle and you won't start to pick them up until your ears are more experienced with the sound of the saxophone. Just keep doing them and eventually you will start noticing the effects.

Always think about your projection: I found it helpful to imagine that I'm playing in a huge hall and that I'm trying to make sure the people in the back hear my sound as clearly as the people in the front. Imagining things like that will help you put power in your sound. It's a very effective mindset to have while playing.

Watch video lesson 2# on the website for some examples of these.

Let's try our first simple tune!

For now it's ok to ignore the “**pinky platforms**” (these special Keys for your pinky's are used for playing the very low notes and we will get to them later). To start we will focus on the first seven (main) keys as displayed in the picture below.



To be able to play consistently you will have to build up the strength of your mouth: “**embouchure**”. An exercise that really helped me develop my embouchure fast was by practicing the following variation on an old children's song over and over. Now I'm assuming that you don't know how to read music yet. So I'm just going to give you the finger positions. We will get to reading music later.

Simple tune 1: “Twinkle twinkle little star”

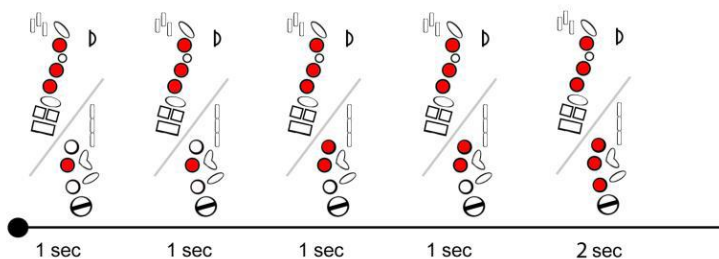
Try this:

(The length of each note is indicated below the note.)

1 sec 1 sec 1 sec 1 sec 1 sec

1 sec 2 sec 1 sec 1 sec

Continue on the next page



End



Great! You did it! You played your first song. Now **watch video lesson 3#.**

Try and use this song to practice your embouchure and finger fluency. Make it as long as you can. Play it fast and slow & soft and loud! In the video I also play an extra part. As a fun exercise try and figure out how to play this extra part by listening and trying to find the right finger positions by ear. I think you will find it quite easy to do.

Building the habit

In my work as a business consultant I learned something very valuable. We humans are very habitual creatures. I wanted to become a good saxophone player. In order to do that I was going to have to spend a lot of time on my sax but I had never done that before. Spending one full hour playing the saxophone every day represented a major change in my life. As humans **we are built to resist change**. That includes you and me! Our bodies don't like change. Even if we absolutely love to play the saxophone., at some point....(usually after playing for a month or two)....we will find ourselves thinking things like:"...Well...I played Monday and Tuesday so I guess it doesn't matter if I skip playing just this Wednesday...." If we fall for this trap we will usually find our frequency of playing getting very irregular at first. Then, over a period of perhaps another month or two we might slowly settle into not playing or playing very sparsely.

When we start to do something new; stopping with smoking, or being nice to our wife, or playing the saxophone. We have to make it a part of us. If we want it to become a real part of our lives and of our personality, then we have to create a new habit (or several new habits).This means; making sure we always have extra reeds around, always cleaning your sax, etc. We create habits by gently forcing them on ourselves. Now of course it may not feel like forcing because you love to play the saxophone but playing any instrument takes a lot of practice time and effort. Effort wouldn't be called effort if it was easy.

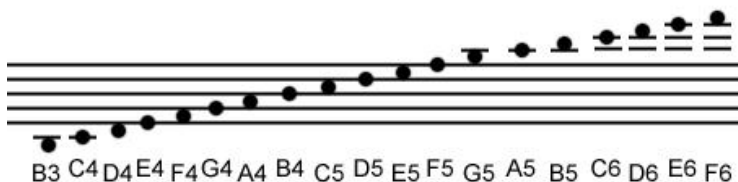
The easy days (when everything goes fine) are not something to be worried about, but if we want to successfully create the habits we need to become a “saxophone player” or someone who can confidently say “I play the saxophone” then it’s better to realize the effort it’s going to take beforehand and commit ourselves to a solid strategy.

Scientific studies have showed that it generally takes between 90 and 150 days to successfully create a basic habit. A habit meaning; “it becomes like having breakfast or doing the dishes”. We just do it every day without thinking about it as something **we need to make ourselves do**. It’s become normal and part of who we are and how we live.

So make a commitment to yourself to have fun with this and play for at least an hour every workday for at least 150 days. If we can make it to 150 days then we can be pretty sure that we can take a day (or a few days) off after that. By then we will actually feel bad if we haven’t played for a day and that’s exactly the kind of situation we need to create for ourselves. In a way it’s the healthiest kind of addiction! It’s also helpful to try and couple playing with something that you already do a lot and really enjoy doing. For example: A sport. You can then make a rule for yourself that you always have to play the sax for at least an hour before you can go off and play tennis, or have lunch, or kiss your girlfriend etc. It can be a great crutch to help enforce the initial habit on yourself!

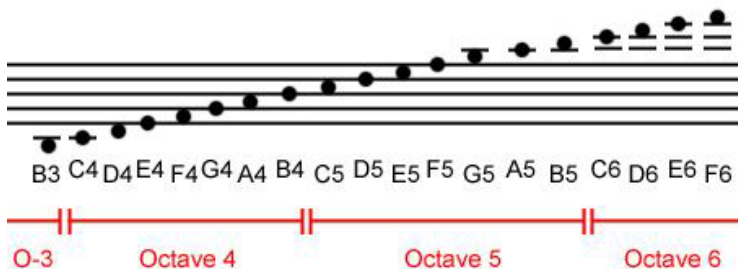
Hello octaves

While you're building your embouchure, let's learn a little more about the possibilities of your instrument. What can the saxophone do exactly? Well...The sax (Alto) can play from the low B(B3) all the way up to the High F(F6).

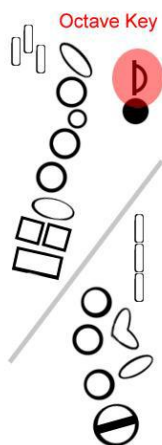


It covers 2 Full octaves and a few notes in 2 other octaves.

What is an octave? One octave is all the notes from a C (for example the C4) up or down to the next C. For example C5 (up). The numbers are an easy way to help you understand in which octave you are playing.



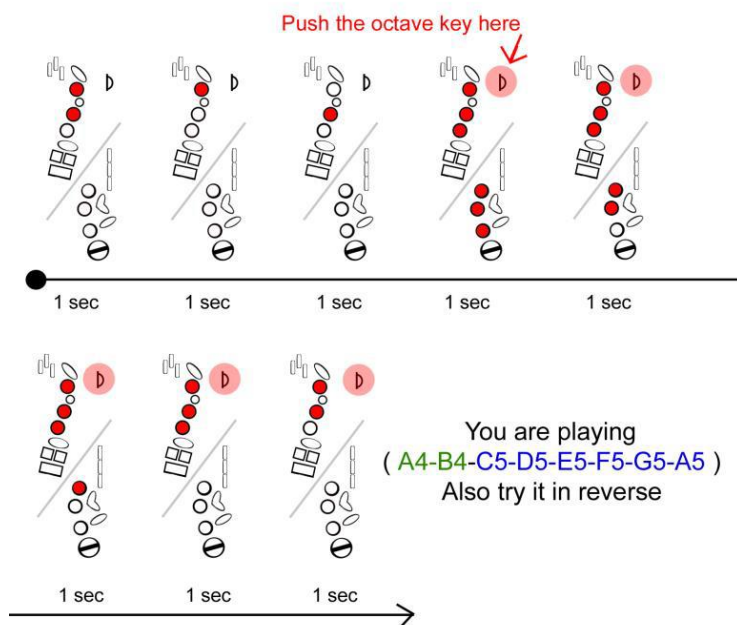
Take a look at the **Saxophone Piano chart** that came with this book. It displays all the notes on the saxophone. The numbers tell you which (piano) octave a note is in. The most natural (middle register) octave for the saxophone is the 4th octave. The children's song you played earlier was played in this 4th octave. Now on the saxophone it's very easy to switch between the middle (4th) and high (5th) octave. You do it by using the **octave key**. The little key located right above your left thumb (above the black plastic thumb support).



When you press this key all the notes on the saxophone become one octave higher (you go from octave 4 to 5). Let's try it! Play the children's song from the previous exercise again but this time hold down the octave key the whole time while playing.

As you can hear it's the exact same song only one octave higher. To help you to get the right idea about how the lower and higher notes are connected try this next exercise.

Play the notes in the picture. They make up a scale (the A minor scale). Notice that you will start using the octave key midway to switch over to the higher octave.



As you can hear in this exercise, the notes that you've just played are a smooth transition from the lower octave into the higher octave. This small scale is a great exercise to do in order to get experienced in switching octaves smoothly. You can probably imagine how being

able to switch octaves smoothly is one of the first mayor skills you need to master the saxophone. Almost every song you'll ever play will require you to do this a great many times.

You are now ready to **watch video lesson 4#**

How a musician looks at music.

It's good to learn a little bit about how a musician looks at music at this point.

1: In a way music is like speaking. Just without words. Every "line" we play in a song is called a "prase" just like in speaking. Phrases can be short or long.

2: Playing on a soloist instrument like the saxophone is also often called "singing" because the role of the saxophone in a band is usually that of the singer or soloist.

3: All the notes in a song are related. It's like each note has a task within the song. In "Twinkle twinkle little star" you can hear this very clearly. The most important note in it is the D (see the basic notes chart). The song begins and ends with a D. The song relaxes on this note. It makes us feel like the song or phrase is finished. Another note; the A (see the basic notes chart) has the role of creating tension in this song. If we play D and then the A we feel like the music is "going somewhere".

The A creates a tension. This tension is released when we play the D again. Try playing; D, A, D, and you will hear this.

Now try to play D A D A and then play D with the octave key.

You will notice that this higher D also has the same relaxing effect. Even though it's an octave higher it's still a D so it still has the same function.

Knowing this, you can now try to improvise a little bit using these two notes (and of course also the same notes with the octave key).

Try for example to create a question – answer form. (This is also known as “Call and response” in Jazz). Try this:

DDAADDA.....AAAADDD. Do you hear the question and answer feel of it?

Now let's try doing the exact same thing only singing in a different key.

Sing twinkle twinkle again, but start on the C. You will notice that instead of the A, the G (see the basic notes chart) has now taken over the function of the A. You will soon notice that all the other notes have changed too. Try to find out the other notes of the song by ear. Now try to improvise a bit on this song with tension and relaxation using the C and the G (and of course also the same notes with the octave key). Also try to play "Twinkle twinkle" starting on the G. (So all the notes will change again).

Let's try another song!

Let's try a timeless classic now. You've probably heard this one. It's called "Ode to joy" and was written by none other than the great Beethoven.

Enjoy this video and try to find the notes of the melody by ear. It starts on the A (on alto) and D (on Tenor).

<http://www.hellosaxophone.com/EXBT.htm>

The most important note (the note that relaxes this song) is the F (Alto) B-flat (on tenor). As you can hear this tune has a very happy character. It makes us feel joyous somehow. The note that gives this tune its happy character is the A (Alto) or D (Tenor). You can experience this when you play another note instead of the A or D. Try playing the melody, but this time play the A-flat or D-flat (see the piano chart for this note) instead of the A.

You will notice that the happy feeling is now much more melancholy or sad somehow, even though the song itself hasn't really changed much. We just changed one note.

How can this be..?

Well that's a rather complex story that we will delve into more deeply later, but for now you can remember that the happy feeling can be called a "Major" feeling and the sad or melancholy feeling is called a "Minor" feeling. That's all you need to remember for now.

For extra credit try playing “Ode to joy” starting on E. (the C is now the relaxing note). Try to find the “Happy” note again and once you’ve played the tune the “Major/happy” way, try to change it to the “Minor/sad” feeling again.

You are now familiar with:

The relaxing note (also called the “tonic”).

The Tension creating note (also called the “fifth”).

The happy note (also called the “major third”).

The sad note (also called the “minor third”).

Starting to get the “Feel”

Now that you understand all the basics of the saxophone (posture, basic fingering, embouchure, octaves and the octave key) it's time to start building some “feel” for your instrument

The next exercise will hopefully make you laugh. You are going to have to make a lot of mistakes, but don't mind this. It's all part of the learning process. Screwing up is natural! It teaches us how NOT to do things and thus shows us how things should be done!

For this exercise you need to go online and **visit the website and watch "materials for getting the feel"**

You will find several movies here. The exercise is to play the specified parts of these videos. Listen to them and try to find the right notes by ear. Keep trying until you succeed in playing them fluently. It's important that you try to put in at least one hour every day of practice!! There are several videos. They build up in level of difficulty. Feel free to add other video's yourself if you want. The main point of this exercise is not so much to learn these songs perfectly. Instead it's to have fun while screwing around on the saxophone by yourself and to love it. It's about discovering how to play some fun tunes all by yourself and training your ear-hand coordination! You have to get very comfortable with the sax to find the right notes. It will help you “get a feel” and become comfortable with playing the saxophone faster

Take all the time you need for this exercise. It took me about 14 days to get to a point where I could play all four songs without having to think about my hands all the time. I also had to develop more embouchure power to be able to do it. Don't worry if you get a few notes different. There are often many ways to play the same tune on the sax. The important thing at this point is only to get comfortable with finding your own way and to really have fun while playing.

Before you start, **watch video lesson 5#** and read the chapter below for extra tips on how to complete this exercise.

Important tips for this exercise:

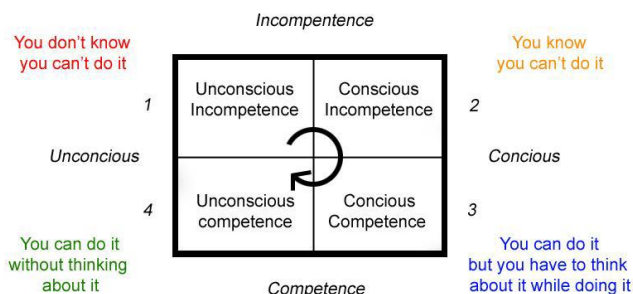
Don't ever be afraid to screw up! Don't worry about your neighbors thinking you are the worst saxophone player in the universe and just go for it! (Maybe buy them some flowers at every end of the month)

When you try to replay a song from hearing it's very important to get the first note right! If you get the first note wrong, the rest will be wrong also. Make sure you get the first note absolutely right before you start searching for the rest.

Break the song up into sections of 3,4 or 5 notes and practice these parts individually before you string them together.

Play everything very slowly at first so you have plenty of time to think about the next note while playing. As the time you need to think decreases you can gradually increase your tempo. If you're missing notes because you feel like, "*Ooops...forgot what to play there*" then you're playing too fast.

Our brains can't practice two things at the same time. Everything the human brain picks up has to progress through four stages (1234).



Now, we can do many things at the same time. But we can only THINK about one thing at a time. If you're thinking about where to put your fingers then you can't be thinking about varying the volume or speed at the same time. If you try you're guaranteed to misplace your fingers as soon as you lose focus there.

We have to build things up in layers. For example: We get a good part of the notes to a song into our head (up to the point where we don't have to think about them anymore) and then we can focus on adding something else like volume changes, vibrato (a vibrating quality of

sound) or varying tempo's. Every time you get another piece of the puzzle into the unconscious competence zone of your brain you can start focusing on and adding the next layer.

Some studies have shown that things can start to become unconscious once they are repeated about 27 times or more. This might help us to systemize things a little bit.

Sometimes we are our own worst enemy when we try to do too many things at once and we usually end up not getting good results. On a side note, this is also why huge life changes involving many aspects of our day at once usually don't work out for people.

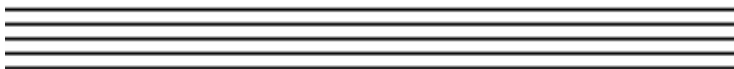
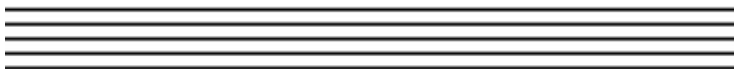
Have a practice goal: Set a specific goal for every hour of practice you do. (Today I will be able to; play "Mo better blues" fluently)

Only go on to the next page once you've completed the exercise.

Reading notes

Now it's time to also get to know a little bit more about notes. Being able to read and write notes comes in very handy. Included in the zip file with this book is our I.I.S. notes chart. It shows you all the basic notes on the saxophone. You can see both the fingerings and how they are written down in sheet music.

You know a few tunes by now. As an exercise let's write down the notes you're playing on the lines below. Don't worry about how to write the tempo and stuff. We will get to that later. Just pick one tune and write the notes down in the order that you're playing them.:



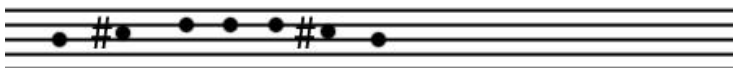
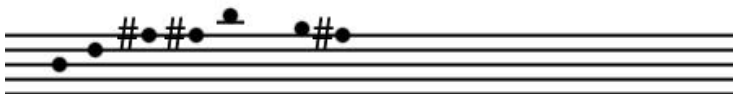
Not that hard right? The more you write down the things you play. The faster you'll be able to read notes. Reading notes opens up the road to all kinds of cool music. You can write down the duration of the notes underneath each note (in seconds/beats). Make a habit of writing down every little lick and tune you discover while you're playing. It's good to practice them all often. To become fluent with the sax you need a big repertoire. Meaning lots of songs and little licks in your head. By writing things down you make sure you can't forget all the cool little tunes you discover every once in a while.

Saint James Infirmary Blues:

It's time we get started on another song. Playing songs is an exercise which helps to practice every skill on the saxophone. The songs this manual will teach you include a few challenging finger positions but once you can play them all you will have opened up a truckload of new possibilities for yourself on the sax. If you run into trouble. All I can say is: **Keep at it!! Practice every day and after a while your fingers will start to find the right positions. Go slow!**

Do one thing at a time and divide the songs up into just four or five-note sections. Once you can play a few sections without thinking about it too much. Start stringing them together. This is just the first song. Throughout the book we will play other songs and make them longer and add more and more complexity.

Watch the video "infirmary blues" on the website and play the melody. Here are the notes per phrase.



Use the I.S.S. finger chart and piano chart to locate the right finger positions one by one.



You can now play a little blues!

The relaxing note (Tonic) in this song is the B (or E on Tenor sax). A very clear way to check if a note is the tonic is by sustaining it throughout the whole tune. Try doing this. Just play the video and keep playing a B throughout the whole song. You will discover that the effect of the note seems to change somewhat as the song develops, but it always sounds in tune and it keeps having the relaxing effect.

The “tension note” (the fifth) for this song is the F-sharp (or B on Tenor sax). Try sustaining this note for the whole song too. Listen for the effects.

The sad note (minor third) is the D (or G on Tenor sax). Try to do a little improvisation with these three notes: B, D, F-sharp while the video is playing. Just play over anything Louis is playing and have fun with it.

A good tip on improvising. Imagine you're in a foreign country and you don't speak the language. You're in a small village at some important yearly festival and an old man is telling a fantastic tale to the crowd. Now you can't understand a word he is saying because you don't speak the language, but you can still clearly make out that this guy is amazing the crowd with some kind of tall tale. This is how you should look to your own improvisations on the saxophone. Instrumental music is a language that nobody understands. Since it has no real words. The art of improvisation is to tell a fantastic tale anyway! So whenever you improvise. Imagine that all you listeners are in a foreign country and they don't speak the language. You are that old man in front of the crowd. And even though they won't be able to understand a word you are saying. You still want to give them the feeling that they are listening to the best story they ever heard.

For extra credit try to improvise again but this time try to use the “happy note” (major third) instead of the minor third. Try to find out which one it is yourself. If you feel comfortable with all the above exercises then you’re absolutely ready to move on.

Creating a clear mental picture of the saxophone

And we are going on with another exercise. This is quite a tough one. It’s probably going to take you a while to do this but it’s the most important exercise I think you’ll ever do on the sax. You see it’s necessary at this point to start to develop a good mental picture of the saxophone in your head. When you look at the saxophone you probably still feel some confusion as to:” **which notes are located where**”.

When you look at a piano you can see all the notes neatly lined up next to each other from low to high. On the saxophone this isn’t so easy because you can’t see the order of the notes on the saxophone with your eyes. If I was to say to you:” **Play an F, and now play the note that’s 6 notes above that**”. If you were playing a piano you could just count up 6 keys and you would have found it but that’s not so easy on the saxophone. If you can create the ability to see the order of all the saxophone notes in your head you make things much easier for yourself in the long run. We are going to have to create a good mental image of the saxophone and

using this you are going to get all the notes into your head and fingers.

How do we do this?

I also hit this glass ceiling at some point and it's the reason why I ended up creating the piano chart. What it does is quite simple. It shows you the order of the saxophones notes exactly as on a piano.

Now all you have to do for this exercise is play all of them like a scale. From the lowest note all the way up to the C#6. Name them in your head while you play them. Feel free to try and go even higher if you want but it's ok to save the super high stuff for a little later.

Once you have done this for a while (2 weeks or so) you will start to find that you begin to see the saxophone as a whole in your mind. You will be able to locate every note easily and you will be able to count up and down the range. It's the foundation for everything else. So take all the time you need to practice this until you can play it and name the notes almost without thinking about it.

Playing all the notes as a scale without skipping a single one is called playing "Chromatically".

Now I will go into this more later, but while you're doing this exercise realize and remember one thing. When we play chromatically like this: **"we are taking only half steps between notes"**. This will become important later so keep it in mind while you practice.

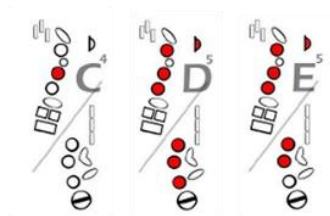
Watch Video lesson 6# on the website for the in-depth explanation on how to move your fingers when you play the chromatic scale.

For an easy tool to learn all the scales very fast. Check out the **Scale book** on www.HelloSaxophone.com



THE SCALE BOOK

All 12 major & minor scales for Saxophone in handy fingercharts



Learning scales couldn't be easier!
The ISS visualisation enables you to play all the scales right away!

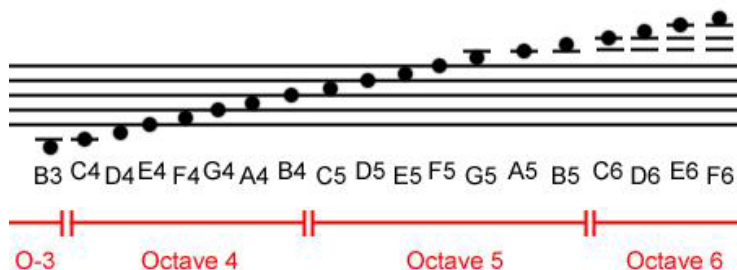
The basics of Music

Now that we're starting to play some songs and know our way around the saxophone it's time to push ourselves to the next level. Knowing about music; what it is, how it works and why it works is crucial to becoming good with any instrument. It's time to get ourselves up to speed on the language that musicians speak and on all the basic principles that we're going to need if we want to become really good with the saxophone.

You have probably heard this little sentence:

Do Re Mi Fa So La Ti Do.

It's the basic scale. As you probably noticed the “Do” is used twice in this. You have probably also noticed that from “Do” to “Do” is exactly the same amount of tones as an octave. 8 steps (from the Latin word “Octa”) !



Well, you're right. "Do re mi fa...etc" is the sound of one octave. In order to make things easier to talk about -

people number the “official” octaves as going from C to C but an octave is really just a series of 8 sequential notes that make the:”Do Re Mi Fa So La Ti Do” sound. So it can also be from E to E or from F to F.

So whenever you’re going from one note (any note) to the same note only 8 notes **higher** or **lower** then you’ve gone **up** or **down** an octave. There are also words for all the other distances (**these distances are called intervals**). Here they are:

1 single note is called a: Unison

2 notes: a Second

3 notes: a Third

4 notes: a Fourth

5 notes: a Fifth

6 notes: a Sixth

7 notes: a Seventh

8 notes: an Octave

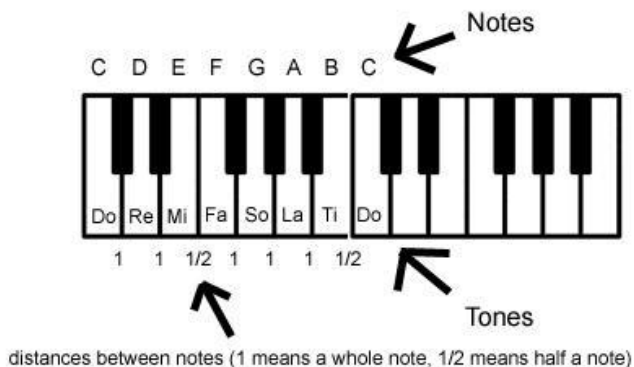
So you can also go up or down a fourth, or a sixth. Now you know what all these special words mean. One of the things that you’re often going to hear musicians say is: That song is set in B mayor / C minor, or A-Flat or another note. It’s important to know what this means that. this note is the Tonic / Base note / the “Do” sound in the song (the relaxing note).

Every one of the 7 **NOTES** (A,B,C,D,E,F,G) can be the **Tonic / the “Do” sound**. When people talk about the **“key that a piece of music is set in”**, they are referring to this **base note** or **Tonic**. This is **the “key”** a piece of music is set in. It shows us which scale (sequence of 8 notes) it's based on. This tells us which notes we can predominantly expect in it. So it's **the key** to the music!

Understanding scales

Watch **video lesson 7#** before reading on.

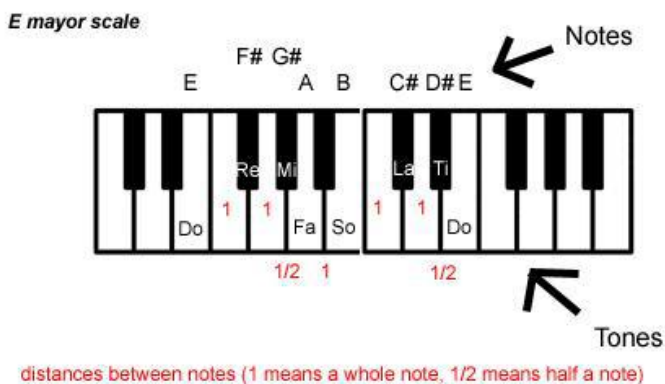
Scales can be tricky beasts. From C to C in a scale would be C,d,e,f,g,a,b,C. If we play this it will sound like: Do Re Mi Fa So La Ti Do. You might expect that every **tone** is exactly one whole **note** apart. (Notice that the difference between the words **“note”** and **“tone”** are now becoming important) but that isn't so. And that can cause a hell of a lot of confusion.



To explain: In reality the tones, “Mi” and “Fa” and “Ti” and “Do” are not actually a whole note apart. The step from E to F may be a whole TONE apart, but they are only half a NOTE apart! Now the sequence this creates: 2 whole steps plus a half step + 3 whole steps plus a half step as shown in the image above is called the major scale or major sequence. If we want to hear; “Do Re Mi Fa So La Ti Do” we always have to use this sequence (keeping the distances between the notes exactly the same as when we play from C to C).

To clarify: On the piano, going from a white key onto to a black key is going up or down half a note. Going from a white key onto another white key is going up or down a whole note. Only not between the E and F and between the B and the C. (watch the image again closely until you see tis). On the saxophone we have the exact same sequencing of notes. It has the same black notes and white notes. Only they aren't colored like on the piano.

So from C to C you can just play the white notes but if we wanted to play an E Major scale (8 notes from E to the next E). Then you'd start with an E instead of a C. We then first have to make a step of one whole note, so we can't hit the next white key "F" instead we have to play the "F-sharp" (This is just another way of saying: F but half a note higher). This way we make the required step of one whole note. Then we would have to go up another whole step. So we would again have to hit the next black note: the "A-Flat" (Same as with the "F-sharp" only it's an A and it's half a note lower) I know it's confusing but don't worry, you will get this! Next we would have to make a step of half a note again. So we would hit the white "A" key. If we don't use this sequence, our major tone ladder will sound false.

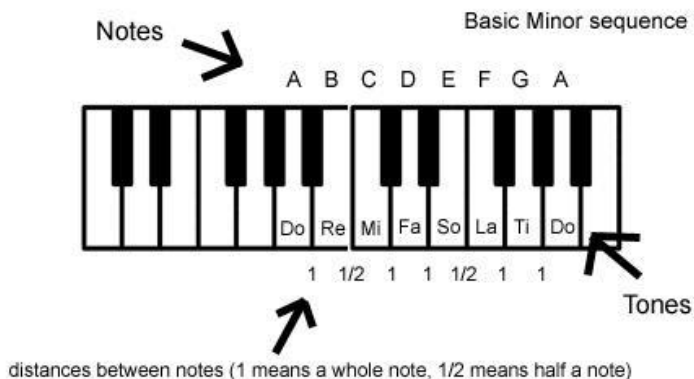


As you can see in the picture above; "Do Re Mi Fa So La Ti Do" is located very differently when we play the E major scale but we used the same "major sequence".

The same distances between notes as with the C mayor scale. (**1,1, ½ ,1,1,1, ½**). It's important to know that when people are talking about a mayor scale, they can be talking about any note but they are always talking about using this same sequence to create the scale for it. So if a piece of music is in the key of “**E mayor**” it will have the **E as its Tonic** (base tone), and instead of playing (for example) the F and the G, you will have to play the F# (F-sharp) and the G# (G-sharp). Any note that isn't in this scale will sound false or out of place in relation to the other notes. Later we will learn how to create blues and Jazz scales by inserting specific “false” notes called blue notes.

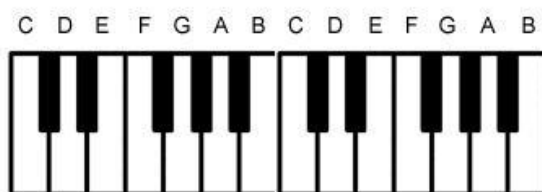
Exactly like on a piano, the saxophone has the same half notes and whole notes. Knowing the different scales is essential for improvisation. To find al the scales on the saxophone you have to know how all this stuff works

You have probably heard about “**Minor**” **scales** also (or maybe not). Minor scales are a separate kind of scales. They work exactly the same as the mayor scales but they are build using a different **key sequence**.



The basic Minor scale sequence goes from A to A and is: 1, 1/2, 1, 1, 1/2, 1, 1. When you play this you get; “Do Re Mi Fa So La Ti Do” but this version sounds very depressing somehow. The depressing and generally unhappy quality can help you to immediately recognize music that is played in Minor or (Mineur). So whether it’s the A Mayor scale and the A Minor scale, or the G Mayor and the G Minor scale, they both start with the same note but the sequences that we have to use are different and some of the notes will therefore be different too. Ok now you know how all Mayor and Minor scales work and you know how to find the right notes for them the notes are laid out nice and easy side by side, which is why I created the piano chart for you. For the saxophone the basic notes aren’t too difficult. You probably know most of them by now but the “Sharp” and “Flat” notes are a little less obvious. You really have to practice the fingering for these until you just know where to find them. The IIS piano chart shows you the white, and the black. Unfortunately the saxophone isn’t like a piano where

keys (the half notes) nicely side by side. For the next exercise try to figure out and play the A Minor and A Mayor scale. You will hear the difference. Use the IIS piano chart and the 2 sequences to find which notes to play and then find them on the sax.



Minor sequence: 1, 1/2, 1, 1, 1/2, 1, 1

Mayor sequence: 1, 1, 1/2, 1, 1, 1, 1/2

Remember: *If you go up or down from a white key onto a black key you're going up half a note. If you go from a white key to a white key you're going up a whole note, **except between the E&F and B&C.***

Mercy Mercy Mercy

After all this difficult stuff it's time to play another tune. This time it's a timeless classic called Mercy Mercy Mercy by Joe Zawinul.

Once again try to play the melody by ear. It's really quite an easy melody.

Watch the video "**Mercy Mercy Mercy**" on the website. First learn the melody. Remember! Slow it down and Break it down! Once you're able to play the melody, try to find out which note is the Tonic, Fifth and Major third. You can then do a few more advanced exercises that are a lot of fun.

Try to sustain the tonic and the fifth throughout the whole song again and listen for the effects.

Try to improvise over the video using the tonic, major third and fifth, and if you want you can also try using the minor third.

Try playing along with the horns on the chorus and improvise freely during the keyboard solo. Don't worry about any of the music theory yet! Just play from your feelings!

Try playing it as funky as you can: Vary the speed and experiment with the mood of the song to make it funkier.

Try playing it as a ballad: Go slow and try to make it into a sensual love song by lowering the tempo and lowering the volume. Try to use some vibrato (Increase and decrease the pressure of your lower lip on the reed gently and repeatedly to achieve this).

Have fun with it and try to experiment with any style you think is interesting. Remember it's all about finding your own personal style!

Try playing the whole theme without the video while keeping a steady rhythm with your foot.

Try playing along with the horns on the chorus and improvise freely during the keyboard solo.

Try playing it as funky as you can: Vary the speed and experiment with the mood of the song to make it funkier.

Try playing it as a ballad: Go slow and try to make it into a sensual love song by lowering the tempo and lowering the volume. Try to use some vibrato (Increase and decrease the pressure of your lower lip on the reed gently and repeatedly to achieve this).

Have fun with it and try to experiment with any style you think is interesting. Remember, it's all about finding your own personal style!

Try playing the whole theme without the video while keeping a steady rhythm.

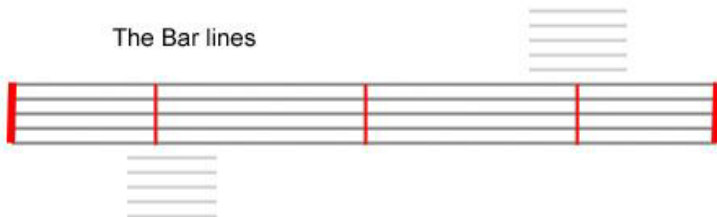
Basic music writing:

A piece of written music is very much like an instruction manual. It tells us when and how to play our instrument. It works like this:

Every piece of music is written on 5 basic lines. Above and below these 5 basic lines are extra lines. But they're only used when they are needed. These extra lines are called ledger lines.

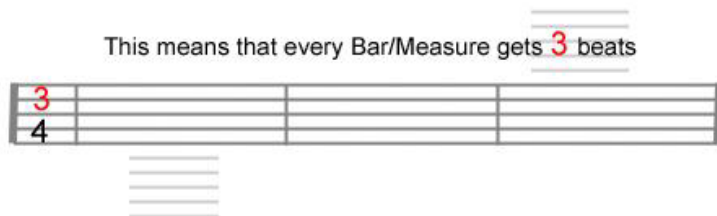


Most music consists of many pages of these lines. They're read from left to right and from top to bottom. Just like normal writing. Every piece of music is split up into tiny bits called "Bars" or "Measures", this is done with the use of so called Bar lines.



Bars always have a fixed length. This structures the music and helps players to play in harmony with others.

The length of a bar (in counts/beats) is displayed at the beginning of every line. At the beginning of every line there will always be 2 numbers. The above number tells you the number of counts (beats) in every bar.



This means that if you were to play the above sample of music, you would have to count like this:

1,2,3, 1,2,3, 1,2,3,

If it's a four, you count to 4, if it's a five, you count to 5 etc.

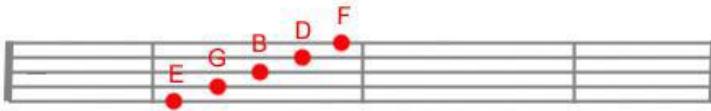
The speed at which we count is called **the tempo**. And it's really up to you and your band to decide on it. You can play any song fast or slow but it's still the same song as long as you keep counting correctly.

Every horizontal line and the spaces between the lines represent a note. When a note needs to be the composer will show this by placing a big dot (a note) on the line that corresponds with the note he wants to hear. For example: a "B".

A note on the **B** line means a **B** has to be heard here:



Both the lines and the spaces between the lines represent specific notes. Here are two little tricks that will help you to never forget which is which:



On the lines: Every, Good, Boy, Does, Fine



Between the lines: F,A,C,E

If you remember these two rules it will soon become very easy for you to spot which note you're expected to play.

Here is how to write the five basic different types of note:

From left to right:

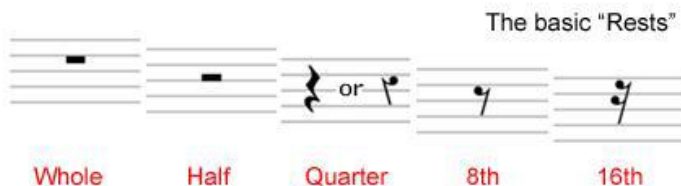


Whole note, Half note, Quarter note, Eighth note, sixteenth note



A dot behind a note lengthens it by half its original length

Each note also has an equivalent “rest” this is a symbol that tells you to stay silent for a moment.



Now the actual length of these notes and rests depends on the second number at the beginning of each piece of music and the Tempo.

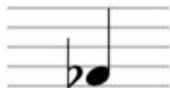
This means that the quarter notes are **1** beat



The lower number tells you which note-type gets to be one second (is played for 1 beat) during the whole song. If it's says: **4** then every **quarter** note is one beat. If it says: **8** then every **8th** note gets to be one beat, etc. The length of the other notes follows from this. A half note is half the length of a whole note, A quarter note is half the length of half note, an 8th note is half the length of a quarter note. If the quarter note (as in the picture) gets to be one beat, than the half note in this piece of music will be 2 beats, the whole note will be 4 beats and so on.

You already know about the existence of the **Flat** & **Sharp** notes. These notes are also written in a specific way. When the Flat or Sharp symbol is placed before a note it means the composer wants to hear the Sharp or Flat version of this note instead of the regular one.

F-flat



F but half a note lower

F-Sharp



F but half a note higher

The **Breath mark** was specially created for wind instruments.

The Breath Mark
Take a break to breathe here



You now know the basics of music writing. There are many more symbols, notes, etc, but if you take the time to memorize these basics, it will make it very easy for you to understand and learn those when you encounter them.

For every music symbol under the sun check out:
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Modern_musical_symbols

Counting:

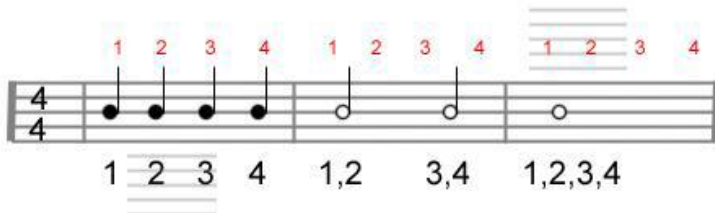
Knowing how to “count” is crucial to playing songs at the right speed and in harmony with others. How does it work? You already know the different types of notes

From left to right:



Whole note, Half note, Quarter note, Eighth note, sixteenth note

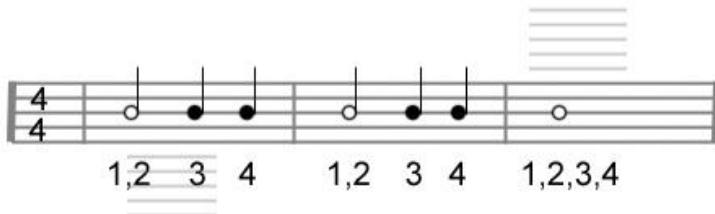
These are the five basic types (there are others but we leave them out for now). As the names (half, quarter, etc) suggest the length of these notes is relative. How long they are depends on **the two numbers at the beginning of every line** and on **the Tempo**. Like the sequences for major and minor tone ladders all notes have a very specific and fixed relation to each other which makes them simple to use. A whole note is exactly the length of 2 half notes, a half note is exactly 2 quarter notes, a quarter note is 2 eighth notes and one eighth note is 2 sixteenth notes. Subsequently one whole note is the same length as 16 sixteenth notes or 8 eighth notes, 4 quarter notes, etc. So how does this help us play music? Take a look at the examples on the next page:



The 4/4 symbol at the beginning of the line means that every bar gets 4 beats and that the quarter notes gets to be one beat/count. So playing this would sound like:

1,2,3,4: Thu Thu Thu Thu, Thuu Thuu, Thuuuu.

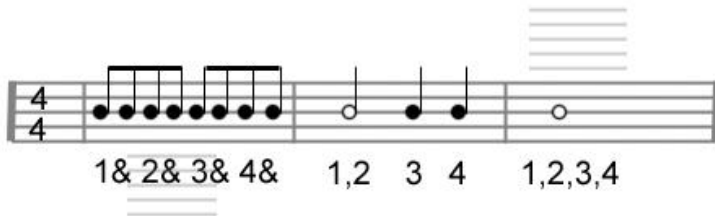
Every quarter note gets 1 beat, the two half notes both get 2 beats and the whole note gets all four of the beats in the bar. Very simple right? Know let's see what happens when we mix them:



Now we would get something that sounds like:

1,2,3,4: Thuu Thu Thu, Thuu Thu Thu, Thuuuu.

It's not very difficult. Just count it with your foot. When we go beyond the quarter notes it becomes a little bit trickier. Let's try an example that uses 8th notes:



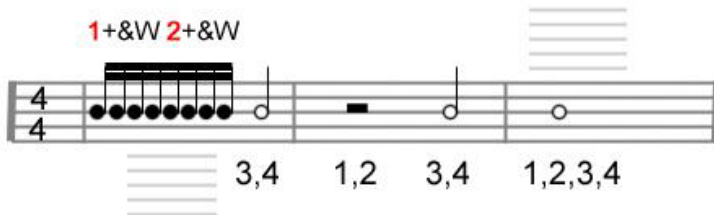
As you can see I now added the “and” symbol (&). It helps you to hear when the notes should come. Try this: Simply count to four as your did before, at the exact same speed! But between each number say: “**And**”. So you get: **1 and 2 and 3 and 4 and 1, etc.** The places where the “**and**” goes are where you play the extra notes.

So this would sound like:

**1,2,3,4: Thu Thu Thu Thu Thu Thu Thu Thu, Thuuuu
Thuu Thuu, thuuuuuuuu.**

(Notice that the way I wrote this down (Thu Thu, etc) is now different in length of Thu’s then from the earlier two examples! However the length of the notes hasn’t changed! In the first examples every “Thu” represented 1 beat but in this last example every “Thu” is only half a beat.)

The relativity of this can be a bit confusing at the start. Don’t worry about it though! After a little practice with it you will soon understand it. With sixteenth notes it again gets a little trickier. You have to add another set of things to count the notes in between the beats.



There are many personal variations on how to deal with this. I kinda created my own way by using “Plus(+)” and “with(W)”. So when I count the above piece of music. I count to four at my regular speed. And then I say: “**Plus and with**” in between each beat. So out loud I would count the above peace like this:

1 Plus and with 2 plus and with, 3 plus and...etc.

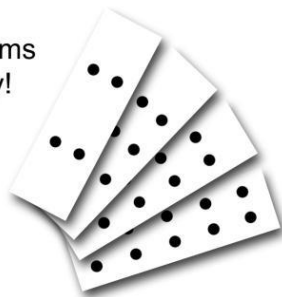
Thu Thu Thu Thu Thu Thu Thu Thuuuuuuuu,
Rest for two beats Thuuuuuuuu,
thuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuu.

Again notice that the length of these “Thu’s” is relative. The last long “Thu” in this example lasts only 4 beats but in relation to the 16th notes (which are represented her with single Thu’s) that’s very long.

You now have a good idea of how this works on a 4/4 beat but what if we use a 3/4 beat or a 2/8 beat or any other example? Remember, the lower number tells you witch note gets to be one beat. From there you can figure out the relative length of all the other notes.

Listening exercise: To make sure you get this a 100% we created a special counting tool and exercise that will put all the above into practice for you and give you a very concrete example of how this all works together. In the **zip file from the website** you will find 4 counting diagrams.

Use the H.S. counting diagrams
to make counting very easy!



Watch a video example of how to use the counting diagrams on the website: "**Counting**"

Every card represents one specific measure type and each card has two bars worth of beats (counts) on it. Put the cards on the table in front of you as you listen to a song. Try to listen for the beat. Tap the dots on the cards **exactly on the beat**. Tap them from left to right and from the top down. By trying each card you will find that one measure type fits each song best. It's usually quite simple to find the so called "ones" in a song. (**This is the "1"** in the: 1,2,3,4,1,2,3,etc.) Try to listen for the 1's and start counting there using the cards.

As you watch your fingers go from one dot (beat) to the next, you will get an idea of how the notes flow together over the beats. When we compose a song ourselves we often just come up with a melody first (without thinking about measure types at all). Our brains pretty much

always use one of these rhythms automatically so we can use these cards to quickly discover the measure types of our own songs after we've thought them up. Sometimes a song can be written down in several measure types. It's good to remember that music writing is not like an exact science. It's a place to be creative. There are many subtleties to it which will come to you over time. If you can do this exercise successfully you have a firm grasp of the basics. Let's try it out for ourselves and go the way of Mozart. In the next exercise you can try to write your first simple saxophone song.

On the website look for: "**Counting exercises**" you will find three songs. Each one uses a different measure type. Use the cards to experience and discover for yourself which measure type they are using.

Writing a simple melody yourself

Writing exercise: Pick up your saxophone and compose a simple melody using only 4 different notes: Just use the C5, B4, A4, G4. Try to come up with a melody while you're experimenting with these notes a bit. Most people automatically go with a 4/4 beat (that means: 1,2,3,4,1,2,3,4,1,2,3,4),

Print out the empty music sheet from the website.

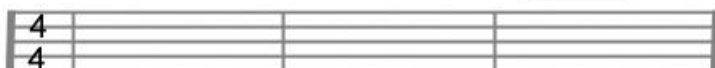
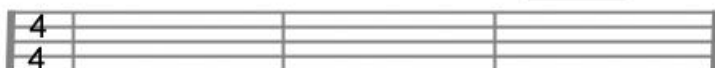
Feel free to use any other measure type if you want. Make it more difficult for yourself by adding other notes if you feel comfortable. My advice is to keep practicing with this until you feel comfortable writing notes and melody's. By creating and writing simple tunes you will learn all the above stuff way quicker. (Also try to use the rests and the breath mark).



F, A, C, E,
Every Good Boy Does Fine



1 2 3 4 1 2 3 4



From left to right:



Whole note, Half note, Quarter note, Eighth note, sixteenth note



A dott behind a note lengthens it by half it's orginal duration

The low notes and the high notes

One of the most difficult things when you just start playing the sax is the low notes and the high notes. So I kind of skipped over and avoided using these low notes a bit but now that we're starting to make some progress we will start to run into all kinds of cool songs that we want to play. These usually also incorporate some of these more tricky notes.

The low notes (everything below D4):

I kept looking for good info on how to deal with these but the only advice I found around this subject was: "Just practice it a lot and then you will slowly get better with them". So I did, but somehow I kept feeling like there had to be something I needed to do, some kind of detail that could make my life much easier. I kept finding that if I started playing with a low note things were fine. Just playing the low notes by themselves was fine to but in a song they kept going weird on me. Sudden distortions and weird screams and sometimes the sound would even just die on me entirely.

Then I stumbled upon the answer while trying to play a song that I saw Tony Lakatos play on a YouTube video. He was going through a lot of low notes in sequence very fast and surprisingly, when I tried this my low notes would come out much better. I tested a few things and then I realized that his **high speed** was the key!! You see...The higher the notes, the more forgiving a saxophone becomes when it comes to pressing the keys down fast, but with low notes (which you play with

your weakest finger (the pinky) the speed by which you close the tone holes becomes more important.

The low tone holes are the furthest away from our mouth so I guess this makes them much more sensitive to small variances in the air pressure. Also these keys work through rather big mechanisms that demand some power and speed from pinky's.

Low notes really aren't so much more difficult to play.

You just have to pay attention to your speed when you use them. All you have to do is:

1: Develop good embouchure. Breathe from your belly! (This can take some time and is the most vital part!)

2: Make sure to pay special attention to pressing down the low-note-keys as **quickly** and as **firmly** as you can. The tone hole must be completely and firmly closed right **before** you blow the note. It also helps to do this in front of a mirror a few times until you're sure the placement of your pinkies is dead on.

Using this you should find the lower notes no more difficult to play than any other.

The high notes (everything above d5):

The high notes are one of the saxophones greatest assets. They spice up solos and give the saxophone a lot of its flavor and sexiness. Being able to produce powerful and steady high notes is an essential part of mastering the sax but it can be rather tricky to get it right.

High notes need a lot of power to sound cool. If you don't put enough power into them they can sound kind of whiny, weak or even false. The key to producing great sounding high notes is **good breathing**.

And the best way to make them sound good is to alternate between a regular note and its higher equivalent. So you play an "F" and then a "High F", an E and then the "High E" and so forth. Try to match the notes so the high note sounds as brilliant as the lower one.

For the super high notes (called altissimo notes) there is a very large number of factors at play. Basically everything needs to be done right in order to play these notes. (the fingering, the amount of power in your lips, how you hold your tongue and cheeks, your breath support, posture, EVERYTHING!

In my other book www.unleashingthedragon.com I go into altissimo in more detail. It's great to try them but don't expect it to work until you've been playing for quite a while.

Hey Jude:

Let's put all this into practice. Let's play Hey Jude from the Beatles. Watch the video "**Hey jude**" on the website:

Use your ears to find out how to play the melody. It's set in D major (Alto) (Tenor is G major)

- **First master the melody.**
- **Then try playing the full major scale (of D-Alto or G-Tenor) during the song.**
- **Try counting along with your foot.**
- **Try to improvise a solo using the notes in the scale.**
- **Watch the second movie of Branford Marsalis and Sting. Now try to improvise along with Hey Jude in the same way as Branford is doing in this video. Less is more. Don't lose yourself in trying to play overcomplicated phrases. Just keep it simple and funky.**
- **Try playing "Hey Jude" in the key of C major.**
You can now see that since there are twelve notes, we can play every song in twelve different keys. In places like YouTube you will often find many different versions of every song in various different keys. Now that you are familiar with what this means you can always search for the tonic and then find the rest of the notes in a scale.

Let's do an exercise with this: On the website "**Key exercise**" you will find four versions of Saint James infirmery Blues. All in a different key

Try to find the key and the tonic for each one.
Once you found them all, try to find out the keys and Tonics of the four songs on this next webpage "**Key Exercise 2**"

Basic improvisation

Improvising is a lot of fun and it's one of the reasons why most people start playing the saxophone. It's really an ideal instrument for improvising with melodies. Over many years the jazz community has perfected this to a form of art and it keeps challenging all music players, both beginners and masters to rise to the challenge and innovate in new and exciting ways. Simply said improvisation is about breaking patterns. You take a song or a melody and you change it in an unexpected but nice way by breaking the songs patterns but also returning to them in the end. Or you can just make something completely new up on the spot while playing with others. The second version (the making up completely new stuff) is probably still a bit out of our reach right now but basic improvisation really isn't that difficult. I made a movie for you that shows you a little bit about how you can start practicing with this.

Watch video lesson 8#

And once again: Imagine you're in a foreign country and you don't speak the language. You're in a small

village at some important yearly festival and an old man is telling a fantastic tale to the crowd. Now you can't understand a word he is saying because you don't speak the language, but you can still clearly make out that this guy is amazing the crowd with some kind of tall tale. This is how you should look to your own improvisations on the saxophone. Instrumental music is a language that nobody understands. Since it has no real words. The art of improvisation is to tell a fantastic tale anyway! So whenever you improvise. Imagine that all you listeners are in a foreign country and they don't speak the language. You are that old man in front of the crowd. And even though they won't be able to understand a word you are saying. You still want to give them the feeling that they are listening to the best story they ever heard.

Try to do this with as many simple tunes and as often as you can. It's a great exercise that helps you build a lot of natural ability on the sax.

So one more time:

Try to teach yourself:

Good saxophone posture (this makes blowing easier)

Good clean articulation and holding a steady tone

How to switch octaves fluently (get very comfortable with this)

How to write music (Being able to read it will come automatically this way)

Search out the scales A through G Mayor and Minor and practice them over the whole range of the saxophone. (Knowing them is prerequisite for doing good improvisation)

Get a lot of practice with the low notes and high notes!

Set yourself a goal for every practice session. (today I'll keep practicing until I succeed at.....X.....at least 5 times.)

Create and keep cultivating all the supporting habits:

Make sure you always have some spare reeds.

make your saxophone easily accessible for practice.

Clean your sax after every practice session and leave it ready for the next one.

Make friends with other players who are better than you and learn from them.

Find a good store that answers your questions and helps you find what you need.

Ask someone who is very good with the saxophone to help you with all the questions that you have, practicing, etc.

And most importantly of all!

Try to reserve at least an hour of your time every day, for at least a 150 days, to really make an amazing start on the saxophone!

This should give you everything you need to get started in a fun way and keep making progress in the first few months.

I hope my starter's guide gave you a clear understanding of all the basics. I wish you the best of luck on your learning journey. Good luck and have fun playing!

Florian Rooz

What do I do next?

I created three of my additional programs especially to be a perfect follow-up to this starter's guide.

Tone Center/Builder is my specialized program for developing your tone to the professional level. You have all the skills now to use this program successfully. You can [download it here](#):

Unleashing the Dragon is my complete (16 weeks long) intermediate advanced course/boot-camp. This focusses on advancing and integrating all the different facets of saxophone technique. You can [download it here](#):

Learn the 9 secrets of improvisation! You also know enough now to use my special improvisation program

called **Full song workshop program**. In this program I will analyze and work through a song with you step by step. I'll show you the 9 essential steps that professional players use to create amazing improvisations. You can [download it here](#)

Chances are there are also some new programs available now that were not yet created at the time of writing this book.

Just check www.HelloSaxophone.com and visit the store for all my current materials.