



**STONE**   
CENTER/  
BUILDER

**Cultivate a beautiful and big  
saxophone sound!**

**In 15 easy daily steps!**



By Florian Rooz

# Tone Center / Builder

By Florian **Roosz**

© 2014 - Massive Creative On-line education.

More info: [www.HelloSaxophone.com](http://www.HelloSaxophone.com) / [www.FlorianRoosz.nl](http://www.FlorianRoosz.nl)

Dear reader: Much time and effort went into creating the video lessons for Tone Center/Builder. I hope it will bring you the sound of your dreams.

This booklet is intended as a reminder and recap of the exercises I handle in the video lessons. It's best to read it through completely at least once, as you go through the video lessons, and after this you can simply use it for quick reference during your practice sessions.

# Part 1: CENTER

**Exercise one:** Find three models

Your sound will naturally develop in the direction of the models you are listening to often. So it's good practice to choose your models consciously.

Go on-line or dive into your CD collection and find three tracks that have saxophone playing in which you really love. The type of tracks that really inspire you and make you feel like: "If I could sound this way, life would be awesome ;)!".

Listen to these three tracks every day and try to imitate the sound by playing along with the tracks.

Write down which elements of the sound you love so much to help focus your practice.

Three great (and often used) example models are:

**Sonny Rollins,**

**Cannonball Adderley**

and **Maceo Parker.**

## **Exercise two:**

Your sound is constructed of 4 parts, in a very specific order.

1: **Strong breath support** (where your sound is powered).

2: **Good posture** (keeping a very straight and open air flow in your body).

3: **Mouth shapes.** (Making sure you power each note, the correct way).

Play long notes with an open mouth shape (ooooo). As you play higher use (aaaaaa) then (uuuuuu) or (eeeeee) and then finally (iiiiiiii) for the high notes.

4: **Good embouchure** Make a strong/solid connection with your mouthpiece and make sure you connect with your instrument at the optimal angle).

### **Exercise three:** Mouthpiece centering

1: Play scales (as long notes) very precisely on just your mouthpiece.

(Play C to G and back). Make sure your notes are very clear and crisp and well-rounded and powered.

Realize this is also a good place to practice your mouth shapes, because that is what you use to make different notes on just the mouthpiece.

2: Playing songs on your mouthpiece.

Pick any song you know well and try playing the melody on just the mouthpiece. Again you will have to use your mouth shapes to make the notes. Make sure you play each note as clear and as crisp and well powered as possible.

3: Mouthpiece slurring

Play from low to high and back again on the mouthpiece within one continuous note. Try to make this sound as clear and as even as possible across the whole range.

#### **Exercise four:** Volume control

Increase your precision by playing long notes (using the low notes and up to the center C). Start your long notes very low in volume and then steadily increasing to full volume, and back to very low volume again.

Keep your sound equal and well pronounced as you vary the volume up and down. You want only the volume to be changing, not the rest of your sound!

#### **Exercise five:** Hitting the real notes (finding your tone center).

The secret to having a “centered sound” is “Hitting **your notes exactly and consciously**” and then “Keeping **them focused**”.

To keep your notes strong and centered all your fundamentals must be in order. If you find you can't do it. Look to your breath support, your posture, mouth-shape-use and embouchure. If you have these in order, you should be able to keep your notes steady.

Hitting the note right from the first second is all about mental projection. Pre-hear each note you are going to play in your mind during the exercises. Imagine clearly what you want it to sound like right before you blow, and you will find; the better your projection, the better you hit the notes.

From this point forward, during all “center” exercises, try always to hit the real note and keep it focused.

**Exercise six:** Matching your notes to another instrument while playing long notes (over the entire range of the instrument)

To increase your precision it's important to match your sound and pitch to an "in tune" instrument regularly. So play through the chromatic scale on a piano or another instrument and play each note as a long note on the saxophone, matching your sound and pitch as closely as possible to the sound of the other instrument.

**Exercise seven:** Evening out your range chromatically

Most saxophones are very uneven in their make-up. To ensure that your range sounds even and well-connected, you will have to learn to compensate for the irregularities in your horn.

Find the one note on your saxophone that sounds the most beautiful.

Now play through the chromatic scale (both up and down) always starting at this note and try to match every other note to this "most beautiful note". Keep doing this every day until your whole range sounds as if it is on par with this note.

**Exercise eight:** Evening out your range randomly (using licks)

Now that your range sounds good chromatically, it is time to make sure you can also play evenly when playing more randomly across your instrument. Choose between 10 and 20 licks you like (preferably licks that bring you across most of the instruments range) and practice playing these licks just as evenly as you have learned playing the chromatic scale.

If you find there are certain jumps your find very hard to even out, just keep at them. Take time out to focus just on these jumps and you will find that after a while, you can even out your entire range.



## Part 2: BUILDER

**Exercise one:** Long notes (Saxophone push-ups)

There is no way around it! If you want to have a big sound, the amount of long-note-practice you do is a big factor. Fully powered (very loud, but well focused) long notes are the “push-ups” of the saxophone. And if you want to gain more power and projection, you need to do a fair amount of push-ups every day.

At the end of each daily practice. Play Power-long-notes until you are so tired you can no longer keep the air in. continue doing this until you can comfortably play saxophone (regularly) for about 2 hours. If you can do that, you are “ in good shape “ power wise.

**Exercise two: Materials do matter!**

If you want a big sound, you will need a mouthpiece that is (at least) equal or comparable (size wise) to an 8 star Otto link.

With a mouthpiece of this size you will also need to increase the resistance of your reeds to a thickness 3/3,5 or higher.

Your horn also has a real impact on the way you sound. Most student horns (under \$700 or so) will quickly reach their limit once you start being really serious about your sound. If you are really serious about developing your sound up to the “pro level”, investing in a great horn will be very rewarding. Since a well-made professional horn will open up all the registers when it comes to empowering your sound.

### **Exercise three:** Overtone practice (Long notes)

This exercise increases your control over your sound tremendously. Using the low notes (D and lower), try to play long notes, but try (without using the octave key) to hit the higher octave notes, just by using your mouth shapes and breath support.

In the beginning, even hitting just one overtone is tricky, but if you do this every day for a few weeks, you will quickly discover you can hit higher and higher overtones.

Play these overtones as Long notes. Keeping them clear and crisp and well-focused.

These notes are very difficult to control and play focused. Much harder than the regular notes! So once you have these under control, you will have become very very adept at controlling the normal range of the your sax 😊

**Exercise four:** Mouthpiece Push-ups

Doing “push-ups on just the mouthpiece is also an important part of strengthening your sound.

Play the “siren” (as shown in the video)

Play Long loud notes on the mouthpiece until you can no longer keep the air in.

**Exercise five:** Be healthy!

The more energy and focus you have, the better you will be at playing the saxophone. The sax isn't like a piano which always sounds well. The sound of the sax is mainly made by you. So don't underestimate the influence of your health on your sound. The stronger and more focused your body and mind are, the stronger and more focused your sound will be.

**Exercise six:** Breath support Push-ups

Use a heavy book or a light dumbbell to strengthen your diaphragm (breath support) muscles. Lie down on the ground and place the book or weight on your belly and breathe in deep. The weight will rise on your belly. Keep doing this for about 5 minutes.

**Exercise seven:** Record yourself regularly and check your improvement.

The sensation of our own sound which we get when we are playing, is very different from what others are hearing as they listen to us. Make sure you get the “listener-perspective” on yourself regularly.

Record yourself and listen to your sound!

### **One last very important thing!**

Stop looking for a secret that isn't there 😊

If you do the exercises above every day for a good period of time (several months at least) you're sound WILL improve immensely! Believe me when I say:

“There is no great secret to having a great sound. All there is to it is doing these exercises every day! And doing them seriously!”

So get busy and make it happen! 😊

Wish you the best!

Florian Rooz

[www.FlorianRooz.nl](http://www.FlorianRooz.nl)