

BEGINNING SAXOPHONE

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GETTING STARTED

HOLDING THE SAX



ATTACH THE HOOK OF THE NECK-STRAP TO THE RING ON THE BACK OF THE BODY OF THE SAXOPHONE. ADJUST THE NECKSTRAP UP OR DOWN SO THAT WHEN THE WEIGHT OF THE INSTRUMENT IS SUPPORTED BY THE NECKSTRAP, THE MOUTHPIECE IS AT MOUTH LEVEL.



PLACE THE FIRST THREE FINGERS OF THE LEFT HAND ON THE UPPER SECOND, FOURTH, AND FIFTH KEYS ON THE SAX AS SHOWN IN THE DIAGRAM TO THE LEFT. THE LITTLE FINGER CAN REST ON THE LARGE SET OF SPATULA KEYS. THE LEFT THUMB SHOULD REST ON THE STATIONARY THUMB REST ON THE BACK OF THE INSTRUMENT AS SHOWN TO THE RIGHT.



PLACE THE FIRST THREE FINGERS OF THE RIGHT HAND ON THE THREE LOWER KEYS OF THE SAX, AS SHOWN TO THE LEFT. REST THE LITTLE FINGER ON THE LOWER SPATULA KEYS. PLACE THE RIGHT THUMB UNDER THE THUMB REST, AS SHOWN TO THE RIGHT.



MAKING SOUNDS

THE FIRST ASPECT OF PLAYING THE SAXOPHONE WE'LL EXPLORE IS FORMING THE EMOUCHURE (THE SHAPE OF THE MOUTH) AND CREATING A TONE.

ROLL YOUR LOWER LIP SLIGHTLY OVER YOUR BOTTOM TEETH. YOU DON'T WANT TO PULL A LOT OF LIP INTO THE MOUTH - JUST ENOUGH TO PROVIDE A CUSHION FOR THE REED. SLIDE THE TIP OF THE MOUTHPIECE ABOUT ONE HALF INCH INTO YOUR MOUTH, PLACING YOUR TEETH ON THE TOP SURFACE OF THE MOUTHPIECE. FORM AN EMOUCHURE BY FIRMLY CLOSING THE MOUTH IN A CIRCULAR SHAPE AROUND THE MOUTHPIECE.

TAKE A DEEP BREATH AND BLOW. IF YOU ARE LUCKY, YOU WILL PRODUCE A MID-RANGE TONE KNOWN AS C SHARP. REPEAT THIS PROCESS WHILE CONCETRATING ON KEEPING THE CHEEKS IN. RATHER THAN ALLOWING THEM TO PUFF OUT. WATCH YOURSELF IN A MIRROR.



IF NOTHING COMES OUT, REPEAT THE PROCESS SEVERAL TIMES BLOWING STRONGER. YOU MAY NEED TO TIGHTEN OR LOOSEN YOUR EMOUCHURE. IF A HIGH PITCHED SQUAWK COMES OUT, TRY BLOWING SOFTER, POSSIBLY WITH A LITTLE LESS MOUTHPIECE IN YOUR MOUTH. IF YOU CONTINUE HAVING DIFFICULTY PRODUCING A QUALITY SOUND, TRY RELAXING YOUR MOUTH A BIT AND CHECK YOUR HAND POSITION TO BE CERTAIN YOU ARE NOT PRESSING ANY OF THE MANY SIDE KEYS ON THE SAX.

NEXT: ONCE YOU CAN PRODUCE A TONE WITH CONSISTENCY, REPEAT THE PROCESS USING THE TONGUE TO ARTICULATE, OR "TONGUE," THE NOTES. THE ARTICULATION IS CREATED BY STRIKING THE TIP OF THE REED WITH THE TONGUE USING A "TAH" STROKE. YOU CAN PRACTICE THIS USING JUST THE MOUTHPIECE WITHOUT CREATING A TONE.

THE NEXT SEVERAL LESSONS WILL ADDRESS ARTICULATION MORE THOROUGHLY, SO DON'T WORRY IF YOU HAVE DIFFICULTY WITH IT.

PLAYING EXERCISES

1. LET'S GET STARTED BY LEARNING THREE NOTES: G, A, AND B. SUSTAIN EACH NOTE AT LEAST THREE TIMES. WORK FOR AN EVEN AND PLEASING TONE QUALITY.

A GUIDE TO READING AND UNDERSTANDING THE FINGERING DIAGRAMS IS INCLUDED WITH THE "BEGINNING SAXOPHONE FINGERING CHART."

*  THIS SYMBOL IS KNOWN AS A FERMATA, AND INDICATES A SUSPENSION IN THE TIME. FERMATAS ALLOW YOU TO HOLD A NOTE LONGER THAN IT'S INDICATED VALUE.

PRONOUNCE EACH TONE WITH AN ARTICULATION, OR "TONGUE," AS DESCRIBED IN THE "MAKING SOUNDS" PORTION OF THE LESSON.

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EXAMPLE:

WHOLE-NOTE WHOLE REST
(4-BEATS SILENCE)



The example shows a single staff in 4/4 time. The first measure contains a whole note (semibreve) on the middle line. The second measure contains a whole rest (semibreve rest) on the middle line. The time signature 4/4 is written at the beginning of the staff.

* THE 4/4 SYMBOL REPRESENTS THE TIME SIGNATURE, AND TELLS US THAT THERE ARE FOUR BEATS IN EACH MEASURE.

EXERCISES 2-5 SHOULD BE PERFORMED IN TIME (WITH A BEAT). EACH WHOLE-NOTE SHOULD RECEIVE EXACTLY 4 BEATS, FOLLOWED BY A WHOLE-REST (4 BEATS OF SILENCE). IT IS IMPORTANT TO PRACTICE MAINTAINING GOOD TIME. PLAY THESE EXERCISES BOTH WITH AND WITHOUT A METRONOME, ALWAYS PATTING A FOOT TO INSURE ACCURACY. WHEN PRACTICING WITH A METRONOME, VARY THE TEMPO BETWEEN 60-90 BEATS PER MINUTE.

2.



Exercise 2 consists of a single staff in 4/4 time. It contains eight measures. The first, third, fifth, and seventh measures each contain a whole note on the middle line. The second, fourth, sixth, and eighth measures each contain a whole rest on the middle line. Below the staff, the numbers 1, 2, 3, 4 are written under each of the eight measures to indicate the beat count.

3.



Exercise 3 consists of a single staff in 4/4 time. It contains eight measures. The first, third, fifth, and seventh measures each contain a whole note on the middle line. The second, fourth, sixth, and eighth measures each contain a whole rest on the middle line. Below the staff, the numbers 1, 2, 3, 4 are written under the first measure, followed by "ETC....." under the remaining seven measures.

4.



Exercise 4 consists of a single staff in 4/4 time. It contains eight measures. The first, third, fifth, and seventh measures each contain a whole note on the middle line. The second, fourth, sixth, and eighth measures each contain a whole rest on the middle line.

5.



Exercise 5 consists of a single staff in 4/4 time. It contains eight measures. The first, third, fifth, and seventh measures each contain a whole note on the middle line. The second, fourth, sixth, and eighth measures each contain a whole rest on the middle line.