

Brighton Band Saxophone Guide

Assembly and Instrument Basics

- Be alert when opening and closing the instrument case. It is recommended to put an arrow on your case to show which side should face down. Always open your instrument case on a flat surface.
- Place the thin portion of the reed in your mouth and let it soak while you assemble your saxophone. Avoid touching the tip of the reed.
- Do not grip the saxophone too strong during assembly because you can bend keys
- Place the neck strap around your neck. Take the saxophone and connect the strap to the hook on the back of the instrument.
- Place the mouthpiece onto the neck of the saxophone. Gently twist until approximately half of the cork is visible. If the mouthpiece is difficult to get on, use a bit of cork grease. The mouthpiece opening will be facing the ground when the saxophone is placed upright.
- Slide the ligature onto the mouthpiece. The screws on most beginning ligatures will face the ground when it is being played.
- If you place the ligature too high, it will stop needed vibrations. If you look at the side of the mouthpiece that faces out from the player, the ligature will rest about $1/8^{\text{th}}$ of an inch below the U-angle of the mouthpiece. On some mouthpieces, there will be markings where the ligature goes. Do not tighten it too tight, just enough to hold in place.
- Place the ligature and reed straight and even on the mouthpiece. The tip of the reed will line up with the tip of the mouthpiece.
- Attach the neck to the saxophone. Align the bridge key very carefully and tighten the neck screw. Be careful not to use force on the keys.
- The neck strap is adjusted until the reed rests on the bottom lip and the weight of the saxophone is supported by the neck strap and the right thumb.
- Play on a reed that feels comfortable and is undamaged. There should be not cracks, chips, bends, etc.
- It is recommended to always have three playable reeds and rotate between them using a different one each time you play. This ensures that you always have a good, usable reed and that each reed is allowed to dry fully before it is used again. Reed cases are recommended.
- Wipe the moisture off the reed before you store it in your case. Be gentle.
- Use a cloth to wipe down the mouthpiece instead of passing a swab through it. Be careful not to damage it.
- When placing the mouthpiece in the case, attach an unwanted reed and the ligature to the mouthpiece and cover all of it with a mouthpiece cover. This protects the ligature and mouthpiece.
- You should swab your saxophone after playing it every time. Swab both the body and the neck. If you are playing for a while, it is a good idea to swab it frequently. If the swab gets rough or dirty, get a new one. Insert the swab into the larger end of the body or neck and bring it to the narrow end.
- Water and dirt can be removed from pads by using cleaning paper. This is needed if keys begin sticking. Be gentle.
- It is recommended to frequently wipe your saxophone clean with an instrument cloth. Handle with care.
- If you set your instrument down, cover the mouthpiece with a mouthpiece cap, and make sure you set it where the palm keys are up. It is best to find a flat surface. If you have a saxophone stand, use it.
- If you notice any pads are torn, the keys do not line up, or the keys are not at an even height, the instrument needs to go to the repair shop. Do not try to fix it yourself.

- It is recommended that you take your instrument in for general maintenance every six months. It is best to do this at a time when you are not actively performing it (during a break). With this being said, you should still practice during breaks.

Singing

- All instruments produce sound that imitates the human voice. Singing is an important tool for developing great ensemble tone quality and intonation. It is important that you take a serious approach to singing. The resonance and breath support necessary for singing are quite similar to proper playing.
- The key when singing is projection.
- Singing is the first standard on the national standard for instrumental music education. Playing an instrument is the second standard.
- The throat should be open.
- The face should be relaxed.
- The mouth shape should be oval like – the longer part of the oval from nose to chin.
- The same approach to breathing, air support, and direction of air with your wind instrument, applies to singing.
- Everyone should always be listening to match the pitch (ensemble setting)
- We will use different vowel sounds, including humming
- We believe in using audiation - check the pitch before, during, and after singing
- Whenever you have a hard time playing a section, it is a good idea to sing the part to get it imbedded into your head.

Tuning

- To tune, you need to adjust the mouthpiece.
- If the mouthpiece is pushed in, it will raise in pitch. If the mouthpiece is pulled out, it will lower the pitch.
- Warm up thoroughly before tuning
- Tune at a mezzo-forte dynamic level and do not use vibrato
- Play the tuning note strait (no vibrato).
- Use a trustworthy electronic tuner to tune
- To tune the saxophone, play the D inside the staff and work up the scale to the G above the staff. Play the G for a few seconds before making any adjustments.
- Once it is tuned, take a pencil and mark where it is on the cork. Depending on room temperature, it will not always be in tune, but this will make it close.

Posture

- Sit-up – put both feet on the floor, keep your back strait, and sit on the edge of your chair
- Sitting tall will allow your body to take full breathes and move naturally.
- Put your elbows alongside you body naturally. Relax your shoulders.
- Do not lean backwards and do not bend forward. It creates tension in the body that inhibits proper breathing. Your back should never touch the back of your chair.
- Keep your head strait
- Hold your instrument with right thumb and the neck strap.

- If you hold the instrument at your side, the angle of the instrument differs from that of standing up. You need to adjust the angle of the mouthpiece.
- If you hold the instrument in front of you, be careful that your legs do not block tone holes, as these can flatten the pitch.
- Adjust the instrument to you. Do not adjust yourself to the instrument.

Breathing

- The correct breathing technique is known as abdominal breathing. This is not the shallow breathing that moves the shoulders and upper chest.
- When you lay down on your back, your body naturally abdominal breathes. I recommend this as a starting point to find the proper way to breathe with your instrument.
- To properly abdominal breathe, imagine you are inhaling into the bottom of your back. Open your ribs. When exhaling, keep your diaphragm low and abdomen supported. Do not expand or contract the abdomen and keep the abdomen firm. Do not exhale all of your air at once. Make your airstream while feeling pressure from the abdomen.
- If you expand your lungs fully, your lungs will push out on the diaphragm. This will cause expansion of the ribcage and some from the abdomen. Think about expansion outwards instead of up and down.
- Take a full breathe and blow with speed for a rich sound– a shallow breathe will not produce a good tone
- While playing, you need to learn to take quick, deep breaths that are in time with the music. Breathing gym can help with this.
- A good exercise when working on passages is to perform the articulations and fingerings as you normally would, but only with air (creating no sound). This allows you to work on nothing but air control.
- Do not hold the air as you are breathing. We believe in a concept known as “one air motion.” The air is either moving into the body or moving out of the body. This helps with musical phrasing. Think of the breath as being part of the music.
- It is recommended to learn how to breathe on all counts of the music. Learn to not take breaths on longer notes, in the middle of phrases, or on beat four of common time.

Angle

- The angle of the instrument is determined by the position of the reed, the mouthpiece, and your teeth.
- If you are unsure about the angle, maneuver the instrument up and down until you find the ideal tone.

Embouchure

- To hold air pressure and avoid leaks, the lips should be formed around the center.
- Place your upper teeth directly on the mouthpiece about 1 cm from the tip of the mouthpiece.
- Roll your lower lip inward slightly over your bottom teeth; it functions as a cushion. The reed will rest on the bottom lip.
- You want to roll the bottom lip in enough to flatten the chin. Too much will round out the chin. Too little will cause wrinkles and a weak embouchure.
- As you slightly press both thumbs forward, your upper teeth fit tightly to the mouthpiece.
- Do not puff your cheeks. You will lose control and never get a good sound.
- If your embouchure is too loose, your tones will come out too low. Pull the corners of your mouth back.

- If you are unsure how much mouthpiece should be in your mouth, take a sheet of paper and slip it between the reed and the mouthpiece. Use a pencil to mark a line on the front surface of the reed to indicate the amount that should be in your mouth. Using your thumb on the line, insert the mouthpiece into your mouth and stop when your thumb touches your bottom lip. This is the proper amount that should be in your mouth.

Fixing Unstable Sounds

- If the reed is too thin, it makes it difficult to control pressure. Because of that, the firmness of the corners will become unstable and will be hard to support.
- Air Support – without good air, the sound will be unstable.

Finger Technique

- The saxophone does have covered keys, which means that poor fingering can still work. However, for the best sound, speed, and accuracy, you must have proper fingering technique.
- Left hand will be on top and right hand will be on bottom.
- Keep your fingers on the keys at all times. This allows for accuracy and speed.
- Press the keys with the finger tips. Your hands should make a curved, C shape with your hand. The fingers should not be strait.
- If you are transitioning the pinkie while playing in either hand (Eb to C in right hand), utilize the rollers to help transition quickly to that key. As you do it, straiten the pinky and slide on the key. When playing G# and low B, play it with the tip of the finger. When playing the low C# and low Bb, straiten the pinkie. In order to switch between these notes, you need to practice good technique.
- Your left thumb will always rest at a slight angle on the thumb rest. All that needs to be done to press down the octave key is push the thumb slightly forward.
- When using side keys, try to keep the original hand position as much as possible. This will allow for speed.
- For a trill of A to Bb, press the Bb side key with the base of your right index finger.
- For a trill of B and C, press the C key with the side of your right index finger.
- The top side key is controlled by the side of your right index finger
- The high F# key is controlled by the tip of the ring finger
- The low and middle F# trill key is controlled by the tip of the ring finger.
- The high D key (first palm key) is controlled by the base of your index finger.
- The high D# key (second palm key) is controlled by your left index finger.
- The high F key (third palm key) can be used by wither the middle or ring finger. Use which ever you feel comfortable with.
- When side keys are used, be careful not to move the fingers too much. Always go back to the original position and avoid unnecessary finger motion.
- When playing a passage with a difficult fingering, seek out alternate fingerings. This also applies for trills.
- The fingers always should transition quick and crisp no matter the tempo.

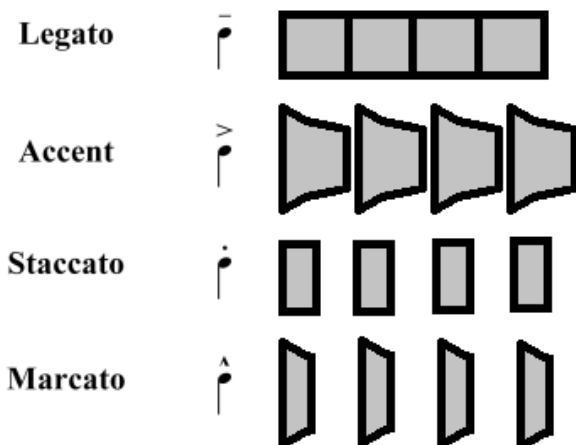
Tonguing and Articulation

- Air creates the tone, but tonguing helps articulation to be more accurate.
- By using the tip of your tongue, touch the tip of the reed lightly. Try not to push or press.
- Do not press into the reed or else you will create a harsh sound.
- Make sure you keep the embouchure stable as you tongue

- When performing staccato notes, think of it as a water faucet. When you shut the faucet off, the water pressure is still there ready to go. Your air stops when the tip of your tongue touches the reed, but air pressure is still ready to come out. When there is space, the tongue is waiting on the reed unless you are taking a breath.
- When articulating, please follow the chart below:

Articulation	normal	legato	staccato	marcato	accented
Syllable	dah	doo	dah	Dah	Dah
Difference from the normal enunciation	N/A	Smoother beginning and more connected	Same beginning as normal with half the length	Slightly more emphasis at the beginning with half the length	Slightly more emphasis at the beginning of the note, a slight decay

- When slurring, do not use the tongue except a legato tongue at on the first note. Make sure you create good air flow that relates to phrasing.
- When playing staccato, be careful to not put too much attack on the note
- Think about slightly faster air at the beginning of accented and marcato notes.
- The following chart is a visual representation of what different types of articulation sound like. It is known as the Articulation Visualization Key:



Bopping

- Bopping is a technique that is used to improve timing, uniformity of articulation and tonal resonance upon the initiation of sound. It is normally applied by marching ensembles, but can be used in concert ensembles as well.
- Bopping is executed by reducing every articulated note to a “round” staccato eighth note.
- Slurred passages are played full duration to the end of the slur.
- Tied notes are not sustained.
- Make sure that the throat remains open and relaxed. Keep notes open ended (no “dit” articulations, only “dah”).

Dynamics

- Dynamics are controlled by air speed, not the amount of air
- Tempo and dynamics have no correlation.
- When playing loud or soft, you need to listen to yourself and control your sound. Tone is the most important factor. When practicing at home, it is okay to experiment with dynamics to gain more control, but do not do so in a rehearsal setting. Control your sound.
- Some groups define their dynamics by expelling all of their air evenly over the assigned count structure for that dynamic. This can be a good exercise to memorize what each dynamic feels like. You should never fully “empty the tank” as this affects tone. The following is recommended to be performed at 108 beats per minute:

4 beats	6 beats	8 beats	12 beats	16 beats	20 beats	24 beats	28 beats
fff	ff	f	mf	mp	p	pp	ppp

This exercise can also be performed on a balloon to practice with resistance. As a young musician, it is recommended to start on one of the middle dynamics and work out from there. Focus on tone (quality of sound).

Performing Long Tones

- Take a big breathe and focus on tone. Blow out with abdominal support. Be careful not to accent the beginning of the note. Abdominal support will help you to get a good tone.
- Start the note with the tongue. Release the tongue from the reed at the same time you start playing.
- Start with warm air and release with a breathe
- Keep a consistent airstream and sound
- Perform numerous long tones (at least 5 for the duration of a full breathe exhale)
- Long tones are meant to be exactly that, long. If you are by yourself, take a deep breath and use the full extent of your air on one tone. If the tone is not long enough, take a deeper breathe.

Scales

- Learning scales is very important since most literature is based on scales. They are the fundamentals of all playing.
- One you learn a scale, play it every day.
- Playing scales in different articulation styles will help you to play varying musical styles.
- Arpeggios can also help you to develop better control across the instrument; play them with various styles of articulation.

Solutions to Common Problems

- If you have difficulty performing high or low notes and it is not caused by instrument quality, the problem could be the reed. Because there is much more resistance in the lower range, more air pressure is required to play lower notes. Playing soft is not easy in the low register, therefore using a hard reed makes playing low notes even more difficult.
- When higher notes are flat or have a thin sound, the reed may be too thin. You need a faster air stream to play higher notes as well. Without enough air speed, your sound becomes unstable; this brings tension to the embouchure, which creates difficulties in playing.
- If you hear a noise while you are playing other than the tone of the sax, it could be water noise. It is caused by moisture on the back side of the reed. It often happens when you are using an old reed or playing somewhere cold. Remove the reed and while it off. If it happens while there is a performance; suck the mouthpiece to get the moisture off.
- When needing to tongue fast, you need to patiently practice. It is crucial that you have the correct tonguing method. Practice slow. Since air stream created the sound, you need air pressure and speed. We use tonguing to

have more accurate articulations. Your tongue should have minimum motion and be relaxed. That makes your tongue move fast. When your tongue gets tense or moves too much, try with an even slower tempo and little by little make the tempo faster.