

# Saxophone Master Class SOUND & FINGERINGS

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### **IMPROVING YOUR SAXOPHONE SKILLS**

If this is your goal, here is how you can achieve it:

- 1. Practice EVERYDAY (weekends included), even if it is for 5 minutes
- 2. Listen to music EVERYDAY
- 3. Have patience, this is not a race!

#### **LONG TONES**

This is the best way to warm up your embouchure. There are several reasons why we do Long Tones:

- It makes your embouchure (combination of lips, mouth, mouthpiece and reed) strong. The lip has hundreds of muscles, which need to be trained to play the saxophone.
- You learn how to use the diaphragm, how to breath correctly, how to open your throat, how much pressure each note needs, a sound balance throughout the instrument and little by little you will be able to hold the notes longer.
- It works your personal sound. The sound is the first thing people is going to notice when you play.
- Is the perfect way to know your saxophone; what notes are naturally out of tunes in the horn, right position, right posture...
- You can work on your tempo when you do it with a metronome.

First you need to know and control the mouthpiece. For me the body of the sax is the speaker. You should be able to play songs and scales with the mouthpiece.

# **MOUTHPIECE EXERCISES**

- 1. Play a steady note and make sure the note starts without an explosion or bending it. Play it as long as you can. (First week)
- 2. When you can play one note steady then try to play three notes: a middle sound, a high sound, a low sound. For the high sound you need to press the diaphragm and the corners of the mouth, not the lip. To get a low sound you will have to

- drop the jaw, this will require more amount of air. (Second week)
- 3. When you can play three notes as you wish, pretty in tune, try to make the sound of a siren (middle-high-middle-low-middle sounds) by moving the jaw up and down and giving the appropriate amount of air
- 4. Start playing easy songs like twinkle, twinkle; happy birthday, etc.
- 5. Play major scales

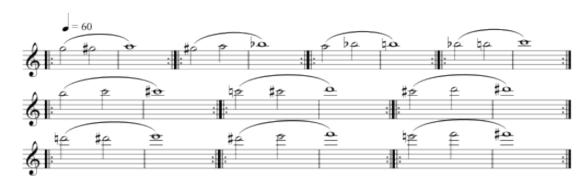
## **LONG TONES EXERCISES**

You can find and create many long tones exercises, here are five that work very good for me. Remember not to over do them. One exercise a day, EVERYDAY, is enough. You can stay one week with each one or pick different ones when you see that you have a problem in a note, a register, etc.

## 1. Use metronome and tuner:



Repeat each twice to improve the mistakes done the first time. Do it one whole octave and use different registers like below. You should be happy with the sound that you are producing, concentrate on the sound, do not let your brain think in another thing, just the sound that it is coming out the horn!



When playing high register make sure you have a big sound, not a tinny one which occurs when biting the mouthpiece (you should never 'bite' the mouthpiece!) and opening the throat (imagine yourself saying Ah).

Or the low register:



- 2. Sustain same note as long as possible. Breath thru nose without taking the lips out of the mouthpiece. Do it using piano or tuner at a *mf* dynamic mark. Do it on middle register first and then on high and low registers.
- 3. Long Tones using dynamics. Do it with a tuner or piano (piano much better so you train your ears and not your eyes;-) Start by
  - a. Blowing only air, till the air becomes sound. Do it chromatic up to a P5.
  - b. Play a loud sound by removing the tongue from the reed. Be careful not to make an explosion sound at first.
  - c. Start very piano to loud and pianissimo again
  - d. Reverse of c.

You can use metronome or not.



## **OVERTONES (Matching Tones)**

This is one of the best exercises to develop tone production and intonation on the saxophone. By matching the regular note with the overtone sound, your sound will become richer and fatter.

If we start playing a low Bb and press the reed we will get the  $1^{\rm st}$  partial of the overtone's series, which is the middle Bb (always fingering the lower Bb <u>without</u> the octave key); if we press more then we get the  $2^{\rm nd}$  partial, the  $13^{\rm th}$  above the note we are fingering, in this case an F; with more pressure we get the  $3^{\rm rd}$  partial which is the high Bb, so two octaves above the note fingered; the  $4^{\rm th}$  partical is two octaves and a major  $3^{\rm rd}$  above the fingered note, in this case a high D, and you can keep going.

Note that you will not get these overtones if you do not <u>hear the note in your inner ear first!!</u> So just by pressing the reed you will not get these evertones.

**J** = 60



SECOND PARTIAL



THIRD PARTIAL

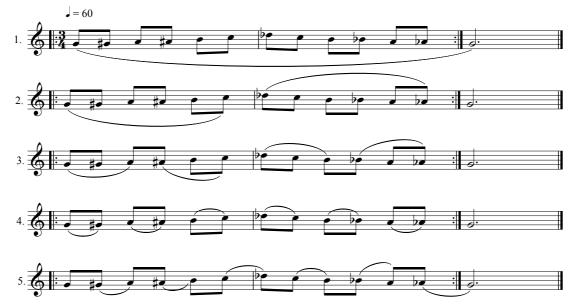


 $<sup>\</sup>ensuremath{^{*}}$  In parenthesis is the note that has to be fingered to produce the overtone note.

#### FINGERING EXERCISES

After the warm-ups exercises you need to be familiar with the instrument. I do fingering exercises. For beginners the best ones are from the book Klosé for saxophone.

This one is a little more advanced and should be done in ALL keys with different articulations as follow:



Start by playing one by one, two times each until you are familiar with the articulation, then do all of them together, from beginning to end. Increase the speed as you get familiar with them. I do all of them in one breath; then I play them half step higher or lower.

Using the same articulation as above you can play the extended version of the exercise:



This is a very useful fingering exercise using the full range of the horn (saxophone) in triplets. Do it even with metronome and add articulation later on:

