

# Saxophone Warm-up

## Steven Stusek

The most important aspect of each day's practice for me is my warm-up period. A good warm-up prepares the muscles in your arms, fingers, face, and breathing apparatus for performance, and gives you the best chance to achieve your ideal tone. I have used variations of the following warm-up nearly every day of my career, and I believe the following elements are essential to developing a beautiful saxophone tone and a fluent technique. Keep in mind that this is a warm-up. The goal is to relax the body and mind and prepare yourself for learning new musical elements. We are warming up all muscle groups, from small to large. One aspect should lead to the next and cover all areas of saxophone performance. These aspects include breathing, tone production, intonation, vibrato, homogeneity of sound, efficient finger motion, and extremes of range.

I always begin with long tones. I use a metronome and a tuner for this exercise as well as with all of the following exercises. Set the metronome at 60. I first play a descending chromatic scale starting on middle B with a forte dynamic. I play each note for four counts making sure that each note has a beautiful tone and is perfectly in tune. Breathe when necessary, but only between notes. Descend in this manner to low Bb. I then return to B and ascend chromatically until I reach altissimo E, the highest note I currently can consistently play in tune and with a good tone (see Saxophone Warm-up, p. 3). By performing this exercise I know I have played every note on the saxophone with a beautiful tone and in tune, every day. Any note that does not sound beautiful or is not in tune can easily be fixed at this stage. After you can play this long tone exercise comfortably I suggest introducing vibrato. I alternate straight tone daily with 4, 5, or 6 vibrations per beat. Vibrato will be covered in a separate article.

Next I begin to introduce simple finger patterns to the warm-up. I use what in North Carolina is known as the "All-State pattern." I play through all major scales in this pattern (see Saxophone Warm-up, p. 4), two octaves, beginning with Bb, and ascending chromatically. When you can do this easily with the metronome at 60 begin to introduce the third octave into the pattern. Remember, speed is not the goal here. Playing with a warm, beautiful tone, throughout the range of the instrument, with a relaxed facility, should be the goal. Allow your fingers to remain in contact with the keys at all times, helping to eliminate extraneous motion, which can lead to tension.

Using the same progression I next play all major scales in thirds, utilizing the full range. The metronome should still be set to 60. The focus here is the same – a beautiful, homogeneous tone, a fluid, relaxed technique (p. 5).

My hands have begun to warm up and are relaxed, so I begin to play my scales more quickly. I keep the metronome at 60, but I am playing twice as fast – 32nds (or 16ths

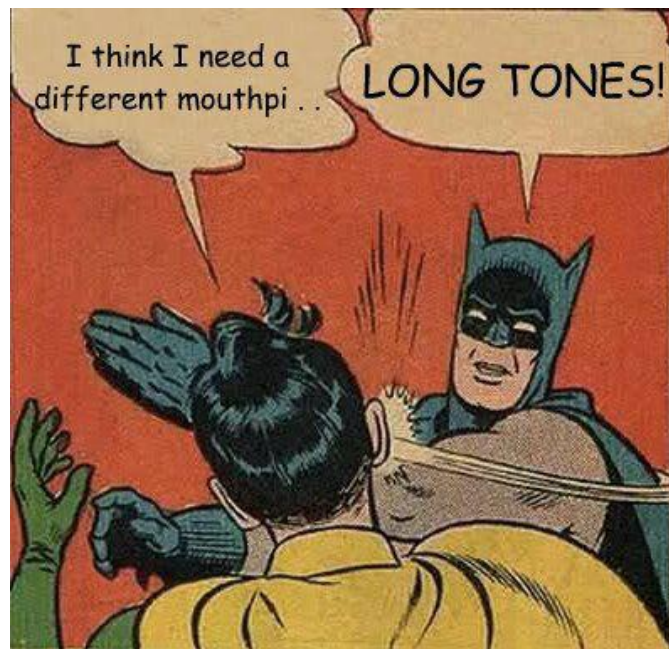
at 120). I begin on low Bb and play each major scale twice through, full range, slurred, all notes even. I then play all my harmonic minor scales, again beginning on low Bb and ascending chromatically.

By this point my fingers are beginning to feel very fluid and I concentrate on the tongue. I used to play a pattern of arpeggios and scales for this, but I have recently found an etude that is very similar but much better. This is page 22 of the Langenus studies for clarinet (see Saxophone Warm-up, p. 7). I do this at 120, 130, 140, 150, 160, 170, and 180. I usually single tongue the exercise through 150 and begin double tonguing at 160. I suggest you begin at 100 and repeat each time a little faster. Feel free to take the last note up an octave! There is no ultimate tempo goal here, though this exercise is essential in developing a light, quick, and natural articulation. Clarinetist Robert Spring believes this exercise is the single most important one for developing a quick articulation.

Finally, I repeat the all-state pattern, but this time ascending one octave only, but all notes articulated. I start at 140 and then do 145, 150, 155, 160, 165, 170, and on good days, 175.

This warm-up takes me anywhere from 45 minutes to an hour to get through. Most days I do a little more than is mentioned here (minor thirds and major and minor arpeggios), but I do this at the very least, and I do it every day, in this order. I don't vary my routine on days I am giving performances. After the warm up I practice performance music for an additional 45 minutes to an hour.

Please note, this is not intended to be a scale guide. Far from it! The idea is simply to lay the foundations for the most important aspects of performance: to develop a beautiful tone, to play in tune, to develop a fluid technique, to have a quick articulation.



# Saxophone Warm-up: Long Tones

♩ = 60

Musical staff 1: Treble clef, 4/4 time signature. Measures 1-4 contain a half-note scale: C4, B3, A3, G3. Measures 5-8 contain a half-note scale: F3, E3, D3, C3. A slur covers measures 1-8.

11

Musical staff 2: Treble clef. Measures 11-14 contain a half-note scale: B3, A3, G3, F3. Measures 15-18 contain a half-note scale: E3, D3, C3, B2. A slur covers measures 11-18.

19

Musical staff 3: Treble clef. Measures 19-22 contain a half-note scale: A3, G3, F3, E3. Measures 23-26 contain a half-note scale: D3, C3, B2, A2. A slur covers measures 19-26.

29

Musical staff 4: Treble clef. Measures 29-32 contain a half-note scale: G3, F3, E3, D3. Measures 33-36 contain a half-note scale: C3, B2, A2, G2. A slur covers measures 29-36.

39

Musical staff 5: Treble clef. Measures 39-42 contain a half-note scale: F3, E3, D3, C3. Measures 43-46 contain a half-note scale: B2, A2, G2, F2. A slur covers measures 39-46.

49

Musical staff 6: Treble clef. Measures 49-52 contain a half-note scale: E3, D3, C3, B2. Measures 53-56 contain a half-note scale: A2, G2, F2, E2. A slur covers measures 49-56.

# Saxophone Warm-up: Scales

♩ = 60



This sheet music contains ten staves of saxophone warm-up scales, each starting with a measure number on the left. The scales are written in treble clef with a 4/4 time signature. Each scale is a two-measure phrase, with the first measure containing a series of eighth notes and the second measure containing a series of quarter notes. The scales are as follows:

- Staff 4: Scale 4, starting on B $\flat$  (B-flat).
- Staff 7: Scale 7, starting on G (G).
- Staff 10: Scale 10, starting on F# (F-sharp).
- Staff 13: Scale 13, starting on E (E).
- Staff 16: Scale 16, starting on D (D).
- Staff 19: Scale 19, starting on C# (C-sharp).
- Staff 22: Scale 22, starting on B (B).
- Staff 25: Scale 25, starting on A (A).
- Staff 28: Scale 28, starting on G# (G-sharp).
- Staff 31: Scale 31, starting on F (F).
- Staff 34: Scale 34, starting on E# (E-sharp).

## MAJOR SCALES - THIRDS

The image displays a musical score for saxophone warm-ups, specifically focusing on major scales with an emphasis on thirds. The score is organized into ten systems, each consisting of two staves. The keys for these systems are C, F, B $\flat$ , E $\flat$ , A $\flat$ , and D $\flat$  (C $\sharp$ ). Each system contains two staves of music. The first staff in each system shows the ascending major scale, and the second staff shows the descending major scale. The notes are written in a rhythmic pattern that emphasizes the interval of a third. The notation includes various note values such as eighth and sixteenth notes, and rests. The key signatures are indicated by the number of flats or sharps at the beginning of each system.

MAJOR SCALES

This musical score displays twelve major scales, each on a separate staff. The scales are arranged in ascending order of pitch: C, F, Bb, Eb, Ab, Db, F#, B, E, A, D, and G. Each scale is written in a treble clef and consists of two measures. The first measure shows the scale ascending, and the second measure shows it descending. The notation includes various rhythmic values such as eighth and sixteenth notes, often beamed together, and rests. The key signatures are indicated by the number of sharps or flats at the beginning of each staff.

3 Studies for acquiring a light Staccato

G. LANGENUS

Allegretto  $\text{♩} = 144$

The musical score consists of 11 staves of music in treble clef, 2/4 time signature, and a key signature of one sharp (F#). The tempo is marked 'Allegretto' with a metronome marking of 144 quarter notes per minute. The piece is divided into three distinct sections. The first section (staves 1-4) begins with a piano (*p*) dynamic and features a continuous eighth-note pattern. The second section (staves 5-8) starts with a forte (*f*) dynamic and includes accents (>) over the notes. The third section (staves 9-11) begins with a piano (*p*) dynamic and features crescendos (*p cresc.*) and fortissimos (*ff*) dynamics. The score is filled with staccato markings and various dynamic and articulation symbols.