

How to Care for Your Saxophone (I)

Assembly: How to Put Your Saxophone Together

Before you open your case, make sure that it is right side up. Grease the cork on the neckpiece so that the mouthpiece goes on easily. Put the mouthpiece and reed on the neckpiece. Place the neckpiece in the body of the saxophone. To avoid bending the neckpiece, do not apply any downward pressure. Use a gentle rotating, twisting motion. The octave key lever should go *under* the ring on the neckpiece.

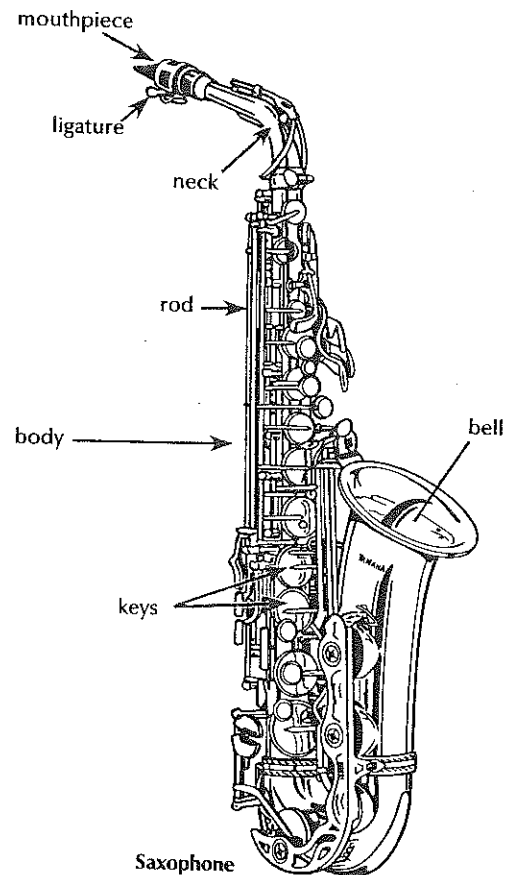
Tuning

To tune the saxophone, adjust the length of the instrument by moving the mouthpiece in or out. If you need to lower your pitch, pull the mouthpiece out, making the saxophone longer. If you need to raise your pitch, push the mouthpiece in.

When You Have Finished Playing

Moisture left in the instrument after you have finished playing will cause the pads to deteriorate. Swab your saxophone out each time you play. There are two kinds of swabs available for the saxophone. The most common is a cloth attached by a string to a weight. The weight is dropped through each section and the cloth pulled through. The other kind of swab is a brush type that is pushed through and left for storage in the body of the instrument and neck.

Wipe the keys with a cloth to remove finger marks and acid left by perspiration. This acid will tarnish the metal if it isn't removed.



Remove your reed from the mouthpiece and place it in a reed guard. This will extend the life of the reed. Leave the ligature on the mouthpiece to keep it from getting bent, swab out the mouthpiece, and be sure to replace the mouthpiece cover on the mouthpiece.

Always keep your saxophone in its case when you are not playing it. To prevent damage to the octave key lever, always replace the end plug when you put your saxophone away. Never put anything into your case that it was not designed to hold because the pressure from papers or music can bend the rods and keys.

How to Care for Your Saxophone (II)

Regular Maintenance

Try to keep dust from accumulating in the key mechanism of the saxophone. If you are extremely careful, you can use a small brush or cotton swab to clean under the keys and rods. If this is not done with great care, springs could be pushed out of place, or rods bent. Vacuum your case several times a year. Once or twice a year apply a small amount of thin key oil to all key joints and posts.

Under each key is a pad that seals the tone hole when the key closes. If pads stick, they are dirty. To clean the pads place a clean cloth under the pad, close the key, and pull the cloth through. To keep pads clean, don't eat candy or chew gum before playing! Pads can and should be replaced after several years of use, but this is expensive, so make them last as long as possible.

Wash the mouthpiece regularly with lukewarm water and clean it using a mouthpiece brush.

The body of the saxophone can be polished with a soft cloth. Never use polish on the saxophone as this can damage the finish. Avoid bumps when you are playing. Dents in the saxophone look ugly and are very expensive to have removed. This is especially important to watch for when playing sitting down because it's very easy to bump the sax on your chair. Rest the saxophone against your right hip—not against the chair.

Always use a neck strap as additional support for holding the sax, and as a safety measure to prevent accidental dropping of the instrument. However, don't depend entirely on the neck strap to hold the saxophone. The strap itself can snap, or the hook can break or bend. Keep both hands on the saxophone at all times.

Supplies needed to Care for the Saxophone

1. Swab
2. Cloth to remove finger marks
3. Thin key oil
4. Cork grease
5. Clean cloth
6. Mouthpiece brush

Handling the Saxophone

The saxophone is a delicate instrument which must be handled carefully. Do not let anyone else but your teacher play your saxophone. If you must set it down during rehearsal or during practice, put it on a flat surface with the keys up. Never leave your saxophone on a music stand or on a chair. The saxophone can even be damaged when it is inside the case! The saxophone is an expensive instrument—not a toy—and should be handled with care.

How to Care for Your Saxophone (III)

Directions: Match each clue in the left column with the correct answer in the right column. Write the letter of the answer in the blank.

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|---|----------------|
| 1. _____ Never put anything in this that it was not designed to hold. | A. hip |
| 2. _____ Rods might do this if papers are crammed into the case. | B. brush |
| 3. _____ To prevent chipping, keep this on the mouthpiece. | C. case |
| 4. _____ Before you put the mouthpiece on, you should do this to the cork. | D. gently |
| 5. _____ Once or twice a year you should apply this to key joints and posts. | E. grease |
| 6. _____ This is under each key to seal the tone hole when the key closes. | F. end plug |
| 7. _____ Rest the saxophone against this—not your chair. | G. cover |
| 8. _____ This cap helps prevent damage to the octave key mechanism. | H. pad |
| 9. _____ Always twist the neckpiece onto the body of the saxophone this way. | I. candy |
| 10. _____ You can use this to clean dirty pads. | J. polish |
| 11. _____ This can scratch the surface of your saxophone. | K. clean cloth |
| 12. _____ You should do this to the saxophone every time you finish playing. | L. swab it out |
| 13. _____ Never eat this before playing your saxophone. | M. key oil |
| 14. _____ Use this to wash and clean the mouthpiece. | N. bend |
| 15. _____ Always remember that your saxophone is an _____ musical instrument and handle it with care. | O. expensive |