

Saxophone — Workbook

This workbook turns the Saxophone course into daily reps. It pairs each module with exercises, fill-in worksheets, and checklists you can take to the practice room, plus editable templates for tracking long tones, scales, reeds, and your first blues solo. Work through one section per course module and use the action plan to build a sustainable daily routine.

Setup, Sound, and the First Note

Lock in safe assembly, a controllable reed, and an embouchure that produces a clear, in-tune tone.

Exercise: Mouthpiece Pitch Check

Play only the mouthpiece and neck while watching a tuner app (TonalEnergy or a clip-on). Aim for a concert A-flat to A on the alto 4C. Adjust how much mouthpiece you take in and how firm your corners are until you hit the target, then hold it steady for 8 seconds.

- What concert pitch did your mouthpiece-only note land on, and was it flat or sharp of the target?

- Which adjustment moved the pitch toward target: more or less mouthpiece, firmer or softer corners?

- How many seconds could you hold a steady pitch before it wobbled?

Worksheet: Reed and Mouthpiece Inventory

Fill this in once after buying your first box of reeds so you know exactly what gear you are on and which reeds play best.

Saxophone make and model

Mouthpiece make and model (e.g., Yamaha 4C)

Reed brand

Reed strength

Number of reeds in current rotation

Best-playing reed number in the box (1 to 10)

Date reeds opened

Checklist: Daily Setup and Care

- Greased neck cork and twisted (not pushed) the mouthpiece on
- Held the body by metal bracing, never by the keys, during assembly
- Wet the reed 30 to 60 seconds and centered it with a hair of mouthpiece tip showing
- Adjusted neck strap so the mouthpiece meets my mouth with no neck-craning
- Swabbed body and neck and removed the reed to a flat guard after playing

Breath, Articulation, and Moving Around the Horn

Build a supported air column, clean tonguing, and the finger control to play your first melodies.

Exercise: Long-Tone Intonation Ladder

Metronome at 60. Play each note for 8 beats, rest 4, moving chromatically up from low B-flat. Keep the tuner needle within a few cents of center for the whole 8 beats. Do not let the note fade at the end of the breath.

- Which notes drifted sharp as you ran out of air (a sign of biting)?

• How far up the horn could you hold steady before tone or pitch broke down?

• Did pushing more air, rather than firming the jaw, fix the sagging or sharp notes?

Exercise: Articulation Triple Set

On written G at metronome 70, play four beats legato (doo), four beats staccato (tut), then eight slurred notes up and down a five-note scale. Keep the air constant under all three; only the tongue or fingers change.

- Was your tongue tapping the reed tip, or were you stopping the air (the common error)?

• Did the staccato notes have equal length and equal silence between them?

• At what tempo did your articulation start to get uneven?

Worksheet: First Tunes Tracker

Log each starter melody as you learn it, from silent fingering to a clean memorized performance.

Tune name

Date started

Slurred at 60 bpm (yes/no)

Tongued cleanly (yes/no)

Top clean tempo reached (bpm)

Played from memory (yes/no)

Checklist: Breath and Finger Fundamentals

- Belly expanded on the inhale, shoulders stayed down
- Held a steady 12-count hiss without the throat closing
- Kept fingers low and close to the keys during tune transitions
- Slurred cleanly between octaves on D, E, and F using only the octave key
- Practiced 10 minutes of long tones before any tune work

Scales, Keys, and Reading Music

Own all 12 major scales plus the chromatic scale, and read pitch and rhythm fluently as a transposing player.

Exercise: Scale-of-the-Week Drill

Pick the new key for the week. Say the note names, finger silently, then play slurred at 60 bpm (two notes per beat) up and down. Repeat tongued. Increase tempo by 5 bpm only after three clean repetitions.

- Which scale degree (note) caused the most finger fumbles, and why?

• What was your top clean tempo for this key by the end of the week?

• Did building the scale from the W-W-H-W-W-W-H formula help you predict the notes?

Exercise: Note-Naming Sight-Read Sprint

Open any beginner etude. Set a timer for 2 minutes and name out loud every note on the page as fast as you can without playing. Then sight-read one new 8-bar line slowly with a metronome.

- How many notes did you misname, and were they above or below the staff (ledger lines)?

• Which rhythm tripped you up when you counted aloud?

• Did you confirm you were reading the E-flat (Alto Sax) part, not a concert part?

Worksheet: 12-Key Mastery Grid

Track every major scale from first slow play to brisk tempo, working around the circle of fifths.

Key (written): C

Key (written): G

Key (written): D

Key (written): A

Key (written): E

Key (written): B

Key (written): F-sharp

Key (written): D-flat

Key (written): A-flat

Key (written): E-flat

Key (written): B-flat

Key (written): F

Chromatic scale (one octave)

Top clean tempo per key (bpm)

Checklist: Reading and Theory Confidence

- Can name every line and space of the treble staff instantly
- Can count 1-and-2-and rhythms aloud while clapping
- Know the alto sounds a major sixth below what I read
- Always download or buy the Alto Sax / E-flat part
- Can play the chromatic scale slurred for one full octave

Lead Sheets, Jazz Phrasing, and the Altissimo Register

Read a lead sheet, swing the blues with shaped phrasing, and start the overtone work behind altissimo.

Exercise: 12-Bar Blues Roadmap

In a concert B-flat blues (written C for alto), clap and count the 12-bar form, then play the root of each chord in whole notes. Loop a B-flat blues backing track at 80 bpm and play the head of a simple blues such as C-Jam Blues.

- Could you always tell where bar 1 of the form was while playing?

- Which chord changes (I, IV, or V) did you lose track of, and at which bar?

- Did the roots line up with the backing track harmony?

Exercise: Blues-Scale Call and Response

Over a slow blues backing track, improvise using only the blues scale (written A: A, C, D, E-flat, E, G). Play a short 3 to 4 note idea, rest a full bar, then answer it. Develop one motif across several bars instead of playing nonstop.

- Did you swing the eighth notes long-short, or were they still even?

- How much space did you leave; did your phrases breathe and answer each other?

- Which one motif did you develop, and how did you vary it?

Worksheet: Overtone and Altissimo Log

Track your overtone progress off the low notes before chasing altissimo fingerings.
Fundamental fingered (e.g., low B-flat)

Highest overtone reached by voicing alone

Voicing vowel that worked (ee / oh / other)

First altissimo note attempted

Did it speak (yes/no)

Minutes spent before embouchure fatigue

Checklist: Jazz and Altissimo Readiness

-] Can read melody, chord symbols, and form on a lead sheet
-] Memorized one 12-bar blues head in one key cold
-] Swing eighths long-short with accented upbeats
-] Leave space and develop a motif rather than playing random notes
-] Practice 2 to 3 minutes of overtones off low B-flat daily

Your Action Plan

1. Week 1: Drill safe assembly, swab-and-store care, and the mouthpiece pitch test until each is automatic.
2. Week 2: Add 10 minutes of daily long tones at 60 bpm and form a relaxed, centered embouchure on written G.
3. Week 3: Build clean articulation (legato, staccato, slur) and play three starter tunes from memory.
4. Week 4: Learn the five friendliest scales (C, G, F, D, B-flat written) and start a 12-key mastery grid.
5. Weeks 5 to 8: Complete all 12 major scales around the circle of fifths plus a one-octave chromatic scale.
6. Week 6: Run daily note-naming sprints and sight-read one new 8-bar line each day in E-flat parts.
7. Week 9: Memorize the 12-bar blues form and play the head of one blues over an 80 bpm backing track.
8. Week 10: Improvise with the blues scale using call-and-response, swung eighths, and a developed motif.
9. Weeks 11 to 12: Start a 2 to 3 minute daily overtone routine off low B-flat, B, and C.
10. Ongoing: Record one long tone and one 12-bar solo weekly, and listen daily to Desmond, Adderley, or Parker.

