The Classical Tenor Saxophone Resource Guide is a free educational resource for students and teachers. Its purpose is to provide quality yet concise information about playing the tenor saxophone while encouraging further research and study.

This document assumes that the reader has a basic understanding of saxophone mechanics. It uses Scientific Pitch Notation (C4 = c′, middle C) to identify notes. Texts in blue are hyperlinks.

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Fundamentals

Posture and Holding Position

Adjust support, instrument neck, and mouthpiece rotation to keep one’s head, neck, and back straight and upright in any playing position. Editor strongly recommends a harness for support instead of a standard neckstrap.

If standing, hold the instrument either:

A) Vertically straight with the saxophone resting against front right thigh.

B) To the right with the saxophone resting against the outer right thigh. Adjust instrument neck and rotate mouthpiece to ensure head is not titled. Adjust support to ensure upright posture.

If sitting, hold the instrument either:

A) Between legs if one is tall enough to reach the right-hand stack of keys while maintaining correct posture; adjust instrument neck and mouthpiece accordingly.

B) To the right with the saxophone resting against outer right thigh; adjust instrument neck and rotate mouthpiece to ensure head is not titled. If one has difficulty keeping the instrument in an upright position with the right hand, elevating the right foot with a pedal or block can help balance the instrument against outer right thigh.

Note that the body’s head, neck, and back are upright and centered in all examples.

Courtesy of Dr. Casey Grev and Dr. Diane Hunger.

Used with permission.
General

*Practicing fundamentals (longtones, scales and patterns, overtones, etc.) is always recommended.*

Mouthpiece pitch: Concert F♯ or G [traditional American school target is G]
Neck pitch: Concert E (following ascending overtones: F♯, D, Eb)
Tuning notes: Concert A and E in the context of ensemble work

If switching from alto, be prepared to spend some time adjusting to tenor, both in playing and holding

- One major difference between alto and tenor is the amount of air required; one may need significantly more for tenor than alto to play similar phrases
- Keys are larger and farther apart, instrument is larger and heavier; good posture and support is imperative
- See Leung dissertation (Section 4) in OTHER RESOURCES; Leung interviews several professional saxophonists worldwide to discuss differences between playing alto and playing tenor
  - Requires “more open” oral cavity than alto (p. 56)
  - [Embouchure forming syllables with mouthpiece: “ee—oo”, “eew”, or French “u”]
- “Larger size and less ergonomic positioning” than alto (p. 62)
- See Watkins in OTHER RESOURCES for detailed comparisons of oral cavity on SATB saxophones

Octaves and Octave Slurs

- Practicing octave slurs will help solidify correct embouchure pressure, oral cavity and tongue position
  - Practice to eliminate response delay when releasing the octave key with and without articulating (both air and tongue)
- Addressing written G5 split octave (incorrect overtone, may sound like a multiphonic)
  - Check that embouchure pressure is not too tight and use a consistent, supported airstream
  - Solidify flexible octave and overtone leaps with and without octave key

Articulation

- Low range may require more open oral cavity and softer or “farther back” attack from the tongue
  - “tu” [soft “t”], “du”, or “deh” syllables may help
- Check for the back of the tongue rising too high in oral cavity when articulating
  - Written G4 may be good note to check that tongue position results in clear articulation

Overtones

- See Rascher, Rousseau, and Sinta in OTHER RESOURCES for information on practicing overtones
- Written C overtone series is a suggested starting point
- First octave overtone of the B♭ series is very resistant
- Overtone chromatic scale practice is recommended

Intonation

- Written B4 (concert A) can be flat without proper air support, be aware when tuning
- Be aware of pitch tendency differences on tenor from alto
  - Long and short tube pitch tendencies are similar, but long tube notes with octave key (written D5 through E5) are sharper on tenor than alto
  - Written G4 is sharp on tenor
- Practice with tuner, Tuning CD, drones, or similar device to learn individual tuning tendencies
  - Tuning CD: see OTHER RESOURCES
Equipment

*Needs and preferences vary; there are more options available beyond the following general recommendations. Research, teacher consultation, and testing before purchase are highly recommended.*

*Prices (USD) are approximate as of 2018; distributors may vary.*

Professional Model Saxophones

**Selmer Paris**
- Series III (~$6,500)
  - Jubilee (~$8,500)
- Series II (~$6,000)
  - Jubilee (~$8,000)

**Yamaha**
- Custom 875EX (~$5,000) [consider upgrading to V1 neck]
- Custom 82ZII (~$5,000) [comes with V1 neck]

**Yanagisawa (distributed by Conn Selmer)**
- T-991 (discontinued; ~$4,000)
- T-992 (~$6,000)
- TWO10 (~$5,000)

**Mouthpieces**

*Reed preferences vary; most mouthpieces are recommended with 3–3.5 strength reeds.*

*In general, the more open the mouthpiece, the softer the reed.*

**Vandoren**
- TL3 ($130) [large barrel, may need to replace cork more often]
- T20 ($130, more open than TL3)

**Selmer**
- S90 ($200)
  - 170 (less open), 180, 190 (more open)
- S80 C* ($190, other S80 openings available)
- Concept ($250) [longer than other mouthpieces, may have to push in farther]

Chart via VANDOREN [date unknown]:

![TENOR Chart](chart.png)
Reeds

The Editor, Contributors, and many professionals prefer cane reeds; the general consensus is that cane produces a better tone quality than synthetic.

Professional saxophonists generally use and recommend cane reeds from the following brands:
- D’Addario (classical reed options include Reserve, Reserve Classic)
- Vandoren (classical reed options include Traditional, V12, V21)

These brands offer various cuts of reeds for different strengths and purposes

Synthetic Reeds
- Legere (~$30–40)
  - Editor and Contributors prefer Signature over Classic cut
- Some players prefer using Bass Clarinet synthetic reeds
- Depending on equipment and climate, using 1/4 strength variance (softer or harder) on plastic reeds from cane reed strength may be more effective

Additional Equipment

Ligatures

Some brands’ ligatures only fit their corresponding mouthpieces or have varying sizes.
- Bay (several styles, $70)
- BG ($60–$150; material options vary price)
- Ishimori ($110–$250; material options vary price)
- Rovner Versa ($50)
- Vandoren
  - M/O ($30–$90; material options vary price)
  - Optimum ($70)

Cases
- BAM
  - Cabine ($350) [popular choice among professionals, no extra space for other gear/music]
  - Trekking ($490) [extra space for other gear/music]
  - Trekking Carbon ($490) [extra space for other gear/music]
- Protec ProPac Contour ($150) [backpack strap extra $20; some extra space for other gear]
- SKB Pro Contour ($150) [some extra space for other gear]
- Wiseman London (custom-made only, minimum ~$1,000) [highly regarded by professionals]

Supports and Harnesses
- BG (different styles available, $40)
- Breathtaking Neckstrap* ($190–$250)
- Jazzlab Saxholder* ($60)
- Neotech Harness [non-stretch only to ensure correct posture]
- Vandoren Harness* ($120–$150)

*Mutes

- Will Peak (multiple thickness options, customizable color, ~$20)
- Nathan Mertens (multiple color options, ~$20)
- Neotech ($10)
- DIY (like pipe cleaners and felt, etc.)

*Recommended for female players

** Saxophone mutes do not damper sound like brass instrument mutes. They are put into the bell of a saxophone to help improve intonation, sound, and response in the low register.
Fingering Chart Sigla
Displayed from the front of the saxophone

Created with
Fingering Diagram Builder
By Bret Pimentel
Fingering Charts

Effectiveness of fingerings may vary depending on equipment.

See Londeix, Kientzy, Rousseau, and Weiss/Netti in OTHER RESOURCES for comprehensive charts, including those for quarter/micro tones, corrective fingerings, and multiphonics.

Charts are for written pitches in Scientific Pitch Notation: C4 = c’, middle C, Fingings in (parentheses) are optional variations.

Note: Selmer saxophones depress the Bis key concurrently with 3, therefore some fingerings do not transfer.

Short tube and/or Trills

D5:
C1, (tC) [very flat]
1, C2, (3) [from B♭4 add 4/5/6]
2, C2

D♯/Eb5:
(C1), C2, (tC) [very flat]
(1), C3
C3 (tA, tC to raise)
C3 (2, 3 to lower)
Bis, C4

E5: C5 (2, 3) [sharp]
C4 [very flat]
F5: C1, C2, C3, C4, C5 (tC) [flat]

Altissimo (all with Octave Key)

F♯/Gb6: X, C5 or tA
X, 2, 4, tA

G6: 1, C5 (tA)
1, tA
X, C4 [very resistant]
X, C5
X, tA [sharp, resistant]

G♯/Ab: 1, 2, 3, (G♯), tC
1, tC
1, 3, 4, tC, (tA)
1, 4, C5, tC
2, tA

A: 2, 3, (G♯), tC
2, 3, 4, tA, tC
2, 3, (4, 5, 6)
3, (4)

A#/Bb: 2, 3, C1, tC
3, (4), tA, tC
C1 (3, tC)

B: C1, (3), 4, tA, tC
(C1), C2 (tC)
2, 3, C1, C2, tC

C7: (C1), C2, C3
C1, C2, (4, tA, tC)
C2, 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6
1, 3, 6

C#/Db: X, 4
C1, C2, C3
(C1), C2, C3, C4
D: C4, C5
C1, C2, C3, C4, (C5)
X, (4, tA, tC)

D#/Eb: X, 4, tA, tC, C5
C1 (C5) [higher partial]
C5
E: 2, 4, (C1)
C2 [higher partial]

Resistant alternatives to short tube

B♭4: 1, (3), 4, tA, (OK)
B4: 1, 3, tA, (OK)

C5: 2, 3, G#
2, 3, tA, (OK), (G#)

Eb6: 1, 2, 3, C1, C2, OK
E6: 1, 2, 3, C1, C2, C3, OK
## Solo Repertoire List

**Organized by Composer Last Name**

For a comprehensive tenor saxophone repertoire database, please see the [Tenor Saxophone Index](#) in OTHER RESOURCES.

The pieces listed here are generally collegiate/professional level. Please see EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES for beginner/intermediate level material.

### Type Sigla:

- **B:** with Band
- **O:** with Orchestra
- **U:** Unaccompanied
- **E:** with Electronics
- **P:** with Piano

Works with orchestra/band usually have piano reductions available.

Electronics refer to a track, delay, or other manipulations.

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<td>Jean-Claude</td>
<td>1938–2016</td>
<td>Voilements</td>
<td>1987</td>
<td>E</td>
<td>15</td>
<td></td>
<td>Kientzy: <em>Sax Computer</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>Ruggiero</td>
<td>Charles</td>
<td>b. 1947</td>
<td>Tenor Attitudes</td>
<td>2014</td>
<td>P</td>
<td>ca. 20</td>
<td>Jazz crossover, improvisation</td>
<td>Nichol, <em>Tenor Attitudes</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>Scelsi</td>
<td>Giancinto</td>
<td>1905–1988</td>
<td>Tre Pezzi</td>
<td>1956</td>
<td>U</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>For B♭ saxophone</td>
<td>Delangle (sop.), <em>The Solitary Saxophone</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Schmidt</td>
<td>William</td>
<td>1926–2009</td>
<td>Concerto</td>
<td>1983</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>15</td>
<td></td>
<td>Information on publisher site</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scott</td>
<td>Andy</td>
<td>b. 1966</td>
<td>Numerous works</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Composer/Performer Site Publisher Site</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Singelée</td>
<td>Jean-Baptiste</td>
<td>1812–1875</td>
<td>Fantaisie Pastorale, op. 56</td>
<td>1858</td>
<td>P</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>For violin or B♭ saxophone</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Singelée</td>
<td>Jean-Baptiste</td>
<td>1812–1875</td>
<td>Concerto, op. 57</td>
<td>1858</td>
<td>P</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
<td>Delangle, <em>Historic Saxophone</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Singelée</td>
<td>Jean-Baptiste</td>
<td>1812–1875</td>
<td>Adagio et rondo, op. 63</td>
<td>1859</td>
<td>P</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
<td>Mauk, <em>Tenor Excursions</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Singelée</td>
<td>Jean-Baptiste</td>
<td>1812–1875</td>
<td>Solo de concert, op. 83</td>
<td>1862</td>
<td>P</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Adapted by Voxman</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ter Veldhuis (TV)</td>
<td>Jacob</td>
<td>b. 1951</td>
<td>May This Bliss Never End</td>
<td>1996</td>
<td>E&amp;P</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>Mature language; arr. by composer from cello</td>
<td>Berman (cello), <em>Shining City</em> Bornkamp, <em>Buku of Horn</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Villa-Lobos</td>
<td>Heitor</td>
<td>1887–1959</td>
<td>Fantasia</td>
<td>1948</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>Complicated history regarding instrument (for B♭ sax.) and key</td>
<td>Arai, <em>Fantasia</em> Kerkezos (sop.), <em>Music for...Orchestra</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wanamaker</td>
<td>Gregory</td>
<td>b. 1968</td>
<td>des ondes et les temps</td>
<td>2012</td>
<td>U</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Also for flute</td>
<td>Grev, composer site</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wilson</td>
<td>Dana</td>
<td>b. 1946</td>
<td>Incantation and Ritual</td>
<td>1996</td>
<td>P</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
<td>Composer site (performer uncredited)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Classical Tenor Saxophone Resource Guide
Keeney et al., 2018
**Albums**

Commercial albums referenced in the Solo Repertoire List are notated here in full.

Arai, Yasushi: *Fantasia* (2013)
Berman, René (cello): *Shining City: Jacob TV* (2007)
Bornkamp, Arno:
   - *Buku of Horn: Arno B Plays Jacob TV* (2009)
   - *Hot Sonate!* (1997) [discontinued, see Bornkamp’s website]
Creviston, Christopher: *The Snell Sessions* (2011)
Delangle, Claude:
   - *Historic Saxophone: Music Written for and Published by Adolphe Sax* (2003)
   - *The Solitary Saxophone* (1994)
Goury, Jean-Michel: *Manhattan Rhapsody: Denis Levaillant works for and with saxophones* (2014)
Hemke, Frederick: *The American Saxophonist* (digital re-release of 1971 *Music for Tenor Saxophone*)
Houlik, James:
McAllister, Timothy: *Glint* (2010)
Nabb, Nathan: *Tangled Loops* (2009)
Scott, Andy: *My Mountain Top* (2016)
Tomioka, Yuko: *Épisode Quatrième* (2015)

**Additional Performers from Solo Repertoire List**

Fusik, James (Austin Peay University)  
Grev, Casey (SUNY Potsdam)  
Hunger, Diane (Mana Quartet, SUNY Fredonia, Syracuse University)  
Muncy, Ryan (International Contemporary Ensemble)  
Ridel-Komppaa, Susanne (Vierfraben Saxophon)  
Rollefson, Justin (Phoenix College, Zinnia, Rogue Trio, Eos Sextet)  
Snydacker, Tom (Northern Illinois University, University of Illinois at Chicago)
Educational Resources

**Reed Music** (Barry Cockcroft, director, AUS)
- Educational Books, “My Favourite” series
  - Methods
  - Solos
  - Duets
- Solo Concert and Contest (Exam) Repertoire
  - S, A, T, B solos and collections available
  - Various forms of accompaniment
- Repertoire for various ensembles, including SATB/AATB quartet and other combinations
- Grades A (lowest difficulty) through E (highest, rivaling collegiate/professional)

**Himie Voxman Editions** (often in Rubank Series)
- Selected Studies
- Selected Duets
- Editions and adaptions of concert pieces (such as Singelée op. 83)

**Larry Teal Editions**
- *Solos for the Tenor Saxophone Player*
  - Allegro Appassionata (Saint-Saëns), Bourree (Bach), Cantilena (Goltermann), Hungarian Dance No. 1 (Brahms), Lament (Dvorak), Minuetto (Schubert), Playera (Granados), Romance (Schumann), Sarabande (Debussy), Scherzo (Beethoven), Sleighride (Tchaikovsky), Song Without Words (Mendelssohn), Spanish Dance (Moszkowski), Violin Sonata (Grieg)
  - Fifteen Two-part Inventions by J.S. Bach, adapted for two saxophones (A/A or A/T)

**Selected Intermediate Repertoire**
- Anderson, Garland: *Sonata*
- Schmidt, William: *Sonata*
- Scott, Andy: numerous works of varying difficulty, intermediate level solo works available
- Stein, Leon: *Sonata*

**Texan University Interscholastic League Prescribed List**
- List of repertoire for various middle, junior, and high school music contests in the state of Texas
- Options for S, A, T, B solo saxophones and saxophone quartet
- Grade level: 6 (lowest difficulty) through 1 (highest, rivaling collegiate/professional level)
  - Grades 3 or 2 suggested for intermediate levels
- Updates every few years

**Other Etude Books [for any saxophone]**
- Ferling Franz Wilhelm: *48 Famous Studies*
- Karg-Elert, Sigfrid: *Twenty-five Caprices (and an Atonal Sonata) for Saxophone*
- Londeix, Jean-Marie: *Nouvelles Études Variées pour Saxophone*
- Rossari, Gustavo: *53 Melodious Etudes*
Other Resources

Tenor Saxophone Index (Andy Scott, director, UK)
- **Repertoire database**
  - Searchable, timings, program notes when available, audio excerpts
  - Wide range of repertoire difficulty, including intermediate to professional
  - Accepts submissions
- **Resource Centre** (academic papers)
  - Peter Leung Dissertation (AUS): research and interviews on tenor repertoire and identity
  - Scott David Sandberg Dissertation (Iowa): James Houlik Biography, including comprehensive list of affiliated repertoire and albums
- Album recommendations and excerpts on SoundCloud
- Tenor Saxophone Collective and Media
  - @TenorCollective on Twitter

Reference Books
- Londeix, Jean-Marie: *Hello! Mr. Sax or Parameters of the Saxophone* (1989)
- Ronkin/Frascotti: *The Orchestral Saxophonist* (1978) [two volumes]
- Sinta, Donald: *Voicing: An Approach to the Saxophone's Third Register* (1992)
- Teal, Larry: *The Art of Saxophone Playing* (1963)

*The Saxophone Symposium: A Publication of the North American Saxophone Alliance*
- **Ashley Kelly Index** (comprehensive through 2014)

YouTube Channels
- Michael Lowenstern [clarinetist; tips and equipment reviews for single reed players]
- Edward Goodman (Univ. of Arizona) [“Solos for Young Saxophonists”]
- Taimur Sullivan (Northwestern University) [fundamentals]
- Robert Young (Univ. of North Carolina School of the Arts) [fundamentals]

*The Saxophonist’s Anatomy* (Steven Jordheim) [endoscopic videos of oral cavity and vocal tract while playing saxophone—potentially graphic material for some viewers]


Composer Diversity Project (Rob Deemer, director, SUNY Fredonia)

Fingering Diagram Builder (Bret Pimentel)