



# DAILY PRACTICE ROUTINE FOR SAXOPHONE



by Dale Wolford

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Time    Activity

2-3 min. 1. **Breathing**— work for a “full tank”. Fill lungs completely with the following routine: 1-bottom lungs (gut), 2-lower back, 3-upper chest. Shoulders should not rise!

3-5 min. 2. **Longtones**— there are two different types I recommend:

a) a straight tone without vibrato and dynamic change

b) Start with air, **slowly** bring in the tone, growing to the loudest you can play (with a good sound!), then **slowly** die away to nothing.



•Listen for a steady tone without wobbles, pitch change, or tone variation. Work on 3 or 4 different notes each day in different registers, striving for a rich, open, *round* sound. Use a tuner with a drone pitch or hold down a key on a electric keyboard to match pitch as you play.

3-5 min. 3. **Intonation**—use a tuner to check notes that are typically a problem on most saxophones daily! Play with a drone pitch to improve your ear whenever possible as well as checking the meter. *Get SmartMusic at www.smartmusic.com*

10-15 m. 4. **Overtones**—daily practice on this very important and difficult skill is necessary to development of altissimo and control of the embouchure and throat. Begin with Sigurd Rascher’s *Top Tones for the Saxophone* overtone exercises on p. 12.

15-20 m. 5. **Scales**— a **very** important part of your playing!

a) **Major**: do as Circle of Fifths and also begin on low B<sup>b</sup>, then B, C, C<sup>#</sup>, etc. Practice with eighth and sixteenth notes working on evenness, tonguing and speed **with a metronome**. Use different articulations and rhythms to keep them interesting!



b) **Minor**: melodic one day, harmonic the next; practice the same way as major scales.

c) **Chromatic**: begin with “mini” Five-Note Exercise pattern—starting on low B<sup>b</sup>, like so:  
3x's perfect!



etc.

Then work on chromatic scale from low B<sup>b</sup> to high F. Again, always use a metronome for speed and accuracy.

3-5 min. 6. **Vibrato**— “Vuv,Vuv,Vuv,Vuv...” do half, then quarter note scales to develop a continuous, even vibrato in all ranges. Then work to develop different speeds. (See Larry Teal’s explanation in *The Saxophonist’s Manual*, p. 11-14)

5 min. 7. **Tongueing**— Having warmed the tongue up with scales, practice an etude or short piece with continuous tongueing; i.e. Bach’s *Am Sonata for Solo Flute*, the first movement.

30-90 m. 8. **Etudes and study pieces**— work on phrasing, breathing, tongueing, vibrato; all the things you’ve practiced to this point to incorporate them into playing a piece of music. Break each piece into several sections, mark breaths, know where phrases begin and end, make exercises out of technical problems. Remember to always work for PERFECTION!