

EXERCISE 1 Throat pressure points

Follow the diagram on the left and the indications in this exercise to feel how the breath in your throat moves position as the pitches change. The markings showing where to apply pressure help you speed up the small emissions of breath from the glottal stops in legato-staccato playing, as well as giving extra focus to your sound generally. The throat pressure points fall naturally into the directions of the Power Lines.

- Play this exercise slowly.
- Play at a mid-dynamic somewhere between *mp* and *mf*.
- Prepare to play with the Power Start-up, and imagine the Dynamic Triangle.
- Keep your throat relaxed – do not attempt to ‘open’ your throat artificially.
- Feel the position of the breath-flow change according to register and pitch.
- Imagining the Power Lines will assist in locating the throat pressure points.
- The dotted arrows above the notes indicate the downward or upward movement of pressure in your throat.
- Alternate between single- and double-lip embouchure with each repetition.

The diagram illustrates four staves of music in 4/4 time, each with specific throat pressure point annotations:

- Staff 1 (ROOT):** Annotated with "pressure inwards at high front of throat" (red dashed arrow) and "ROOT" (red text). A red curved arrow spans the staff.
- Staff 2 (TILT 1):** Annotated with "pressure downwards" (green dashed arrow) and "(mid-point)" (green text). A green curved arrow spans the staff.
- Staff 3 (TILT 2):** Annotated with "pressure downwards" (green dashed arrow) and "TILT 2 pressure inwards at back of throat" (blue dashed arrow). A blue curved arrow spans the staff.
- Staff 4 (ROOT):** Annotated with "pressure inwards at mid front of throat" (red dashed arrow), "ROOT" (red text), and "pressure inwards at high front of throat" (red dashed arrow). A red curved arrow spans the staff.

QUICK INSIGHT

The throat pressure points exactly follow the angles and effect of The Power Lines (as introduced in Chapter 10), but adds that awareness to your throat. The feeling of the throat pressure points is quite subtle and may not come immediately, so please refer back to these pages at any time.

1

SAXOPHONE DETOX

The foundations of a good sound – a relaxed and efficient approach

This chapter takes you from picking up your saxophone to playing your first fully supported and expressive notes, and sets the foundations of your relationship with the instrument. Take your time to work through at your own speed, and refer back to it at any time. Many of the exercises are performed without the saxophone.

This chapter covers:

- The Playing Body – guidelines for good body position and a relaxed approach
- Saxophone breath – healthy and efficient breathing
- The embouchure – forming a balanced and powerful basic embouchure
- Saxophone contact – the angle of your mouthpiece for fluent playing
- The vocal folds – the gateway of breath to your throat, mouth and reed
- The Power Start-up – how to make an immediate and powerful sound
- Pulling power – how to make a supported and in-tune sound

The Playing Body

Playing the saxophone requires your body to be alert and flexible. The exercises below will help you balance your body and the saxophone without the weight of the instrument causing muscular tension.

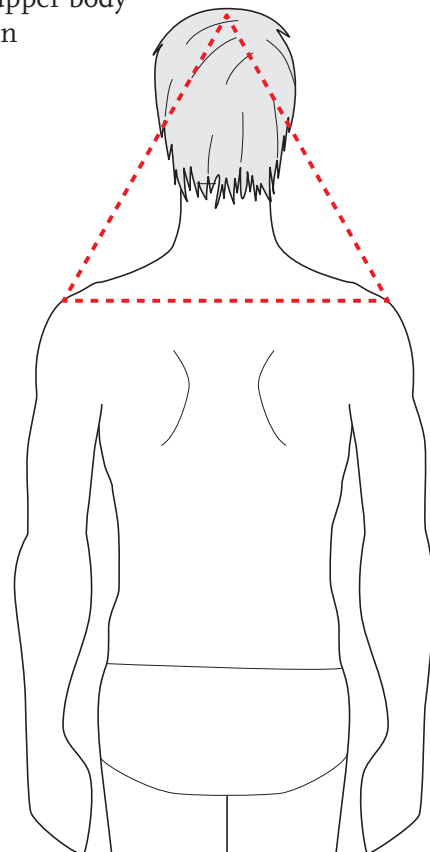
Being relaxed as you play does not mean that you relax to the point of limpness – you work the muscles that you need to work, with the rest of your body in a state of neutral alertness – present, but not tense.

The Dynamic Triangle

The Dynamic Triangle is the main guide for your upper body to align itself correctly, and should be maintained in practice and performance.

- 1 Imagine a triangle with the highest point at the top of your head (at the back) with two lower points at the bony ends of the shoulders.
- 2 Make the Dynamic Triangle as big as possible, without straining upwards or downwards.

What happens? Your shoulders come down to a natural position of rest, your neck naturally lengthens and your head moves up and forward. Your back has straightened without feeling restricted or held.



The balance between your saxophone and body can be re-calibrated and stabilized at any time during practice or performance by imagining the Dynamic Triangle.

QUICK INSIGHT

Relaxing your neck and shoulders will make your sound more immediate and easier to project.

4

THE SAXOPHONE IS YOUR VOICE

Singing and the saxophone – how the techniques connect

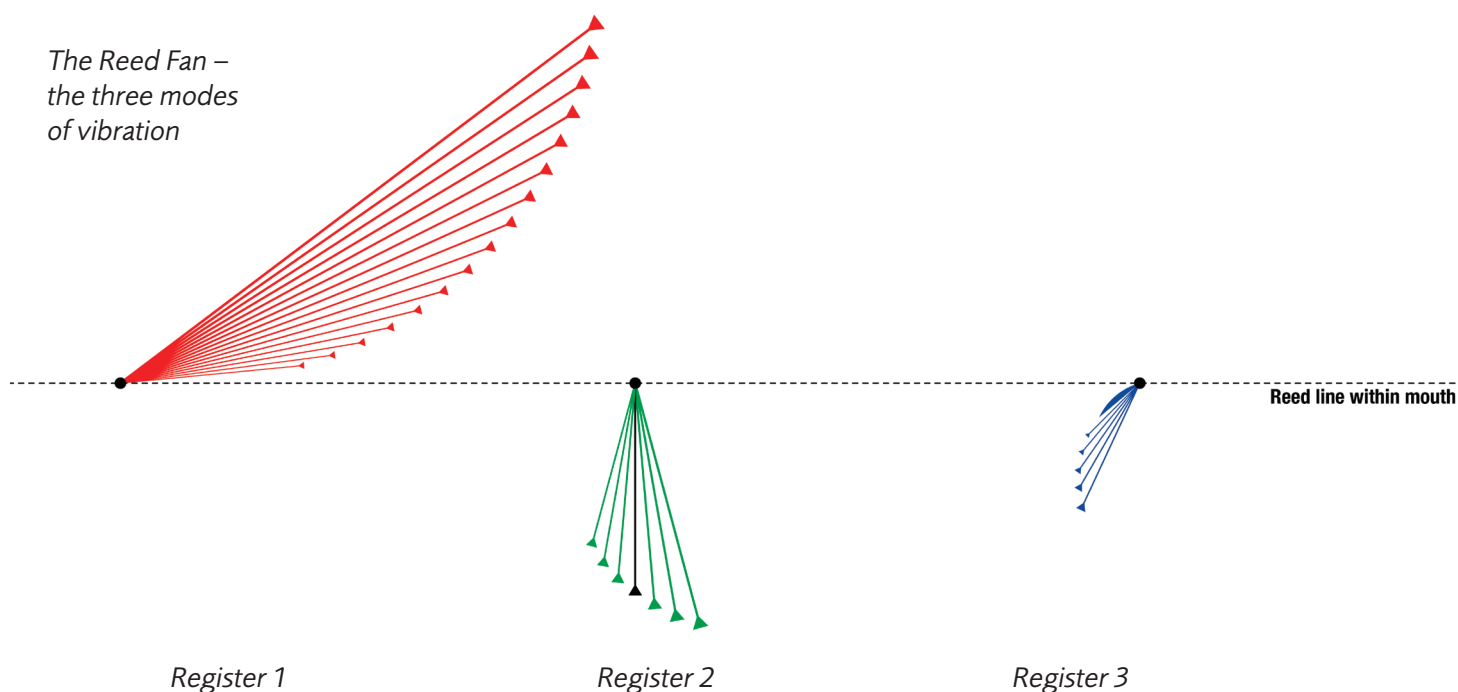
In this chapter you will be learning and feeling how to change registers when you sing. Chapter 5 applies these techniques directly to the saxophone.

This chapter covers:

- The different registers of singing and where you can feel the pitches vibrate
- Moving your tongue to assist register-changing in singing
- How those tongue movements relate to saxophone playing
- Singing exercises for tongue mobility and changing resonance areas

The issue and the solution

The saxophone reed vibrates in three different directions, depending on which register you're playing in. The diagram below shows the vibrations of all three registers. This has implications for the changes in embouchure and tongue positions needed to direct the air supply to the apex points of the vibrations in registers 2 and 3 (which vibrate below the reed's central line in your mouth).



Changing register when singing involves movements that stretch your vocal folds to sing higher notes and also change the direction of air in your mouth. These movements have immediate applications to saxophone playing and are the key to the embouchure and tongue positions needed to accurately play registers 2 and 3.

It's important that you both understand and practise the very basic singing exercises that follow, as they form a template for the saxophone exercises in the next chapter. Please do not feel embarrassed about your voice. It's simply important that by the end of this chapter you have a basic understanding of how your voice changes register, even if the musical result isn't ideal!

11

LEGATO-STACCATO

Release your virtuosity – clear diction and expert articulation

Legato-staccato is a technique of tone production and articulation together that is the foundation for colourful and expressive playing at medium to very fast speeds. This chapter introduces the glottal stop as a means of articulation, and joins that with single-tonguing to create the legato-staccato system. The area of the throat is studied to strengthen and balance throat articulation with tonguing. Exercises in legato-staccato begin study of the full articulation of the saxophone that is continued in the daily practice exercises.

This chapter covers:

- The language of legato-staccato
- The speed of legato-staccato
- The glottal stop and how to use it to articulate
- The throat pressure points and how they speed up your breath-flow
- The legato-staccato action and exercises

Just as a great public speaker uses good diction and a clear vocal delivery to capture the attention of an audience, a saxophonist must use a vocabulary of different inflections and articulations to create interest and variety for the listener. Vowel sounds in speaking or singing need consonants to give definition and meaning as language, just as *legato* sound on the saxophone needs articulation to give it definition and meaning as music. As we speak, consonants run alongside vowels without us giving the first thought to how that happens – we simply speak. Consonants and vowels are so interconnected that to remove one or the other is an amusing joke rather than a serious proposition. However, in saxophone playing, the study of ‘tonguing’ is often seen as separate from the study of tone or sound. This encourages the belief that the two studies are different things with different rules, and makes the possibility of studying sound (vowels) and articulation (consonants) as one interconnected language often seem a remote possibility.

Legato-staccato

Legato-staccato is the saxophonic language that joins vowels and consonants together into one musico-grammatical form. The study of sound and articulation together is implicit in the name legato-staccato. It is an integral, organic and elegant foundation for the articulation of moving passage-work from medium to very fast tempi.

Legato-staccato runs like a continuous river of breath support under the articulation of that breath. It alternates a single-tongue stroke with articulation by your vocal folds in a continuous flow. Because its very nature joins together a tongue stroke with breath contact, it is not an ‘add-on’ that enables articulation, but a fundamental, structural underpinning of your playing that ensures consistently supported sound, good intonation and eloquent articulation.

Once legato-staccato has been practised, it has a number of different applications. It adds inflections to passage work, bringing moving quavers or semiquavers to life with a conversational flow that has the quality of ‘inégaie’ playing, adding weight, tension and structure to passages that would otherwise be bland or indistinct. It can be adapted to add definition and groove to streams of improvised music in jazz or rock playing or refined into a stratospherically fast double or triple staccato in classical showpieces, just as a violinist would use fast *spiccato* bowings in Paganini. The technique of legato-staccato has its origins in the great American players of the early 20th century, Rudy Wiedoeft and Kenneth Douse.