

Warming up, assembling and dis-assembling the Saxophone (Aug 2024)

The correct assembly and dis-assembly of the Saxophone, and the method used to remove the instrument from the case, are important measures the player can take to protect the instrument.

Warming the crook

Before assembling the instrument, hold the crook in your hand for a couple of minutes until it is warm (or warm it with a hairdryer) *do not warm the crook by blowing into it* – this will just cause condensation problems as well as initially distorting the tuning.

Assembling the crook and mouthpiece

Before removing the instrument from the case it is best to assemble the crook and mouthpiece.

1. Grease the tenon cork on the crook and slide the mouthpiece onto the cork with a twisting motion – align the mouthpiece so the table of the mouthpiece is facing down.
2. Fit the reed to the mouthpiece using the ligature - make sure the reed is on evenly so that the arc of the reed tip matches the mouthpiece tip and the tip of the reed is just short of the tip of the mouthpiece (so the tip of the mouthpiece is visible as below).



3. Put the crook to one side while you remove the instrument from the case.

Removing the instrument from the case

The bell Bb and B keys are held in place by 'pillars' at the bottom end of the keys and by a 'mount' at the top end of the keys; the pillars are located on the bell of the instrument whereas the mount is located on the body of the instrument - so if the bell is slightly out of line with the body then both these keys will be out of line and the pads will not seat properly. Players often pick the Saxophone out of the case by grabbing the bell and lifting the instrument out however, over time, this moves the bell out of line with the body and so the Bb and B pads leak.

The best way to lift the instrument out of the case is to lift the instrument with the left hand fingers hooking under the edge of the Low C key guard (without touching the C key); the right hand grips the bell so the player has a secure grip on the instrument but the left hand carries the weight of the instrument.



Inserting the crook (with mouthpiece fitted) into the body

1. Stand the saxophone upright and grip the neck of the instrument with your left hand and make sure the neck socket screw is loose.
2. Grip the assembled crook and mouthpiece in your right hand with your thumb and first finger on either side of the crook (try to avoid touching the Octave key).



3. Insert the crook into the neck of the Saxophone with a twisting action – twisting the crook slightly left and right until it is fully inserted and holding the Saxophone at the socket (not the bell).



4. Align the crook so that it is in line with the ring (2) where the sling is hooked onto (this is the standard alignment but some players prefer to align the crook slightly to the right or left of the ring) and gently tighten the neck screw (1) to lock the crook into position.



Warming the body of the instrument

Although the crook has already been warmed the rest of the instrument is still cold and will take a while to warm up as you play. The easiest method to warm the instrument is to use a hairdryer firstly directed into the Bell for about 20 seconds and then at the outside of the instrument for a little longer. Alternatively hold the instrument over a radiator or an electric heater for 3 or 4 minutes so that the rising warm air gently heats the instrument (this is acceptable for a metal instrument but should never be done with a wooden instrument) then, once the instrument is warmed, attach the sling.

Holding the instrument (when not actually playing)

Some players fall into a bad habit of holding the instrument (when not actually playing) with the left hand middle finger closing the A key – this has the effect of crushing the corks and felts connected to this key and over time putting the instrument out of regulation. Although it is necessary to somehow steady the instrument with the left hand so that it does not swing free on the player's sling, holding closed the keys should be avoided. This is less of an issue with the right hand because the thumb is supporting the instrument on the thumb hook.

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