

Routine Home Maintenance of Your Saxophone

The Need to Step Up

Unlike clarinets and flutes where a single construction material constitutes the primary difference between beginner and step-up instruments, step-up saxophones are differentiated by a collection of features.

As with other instruments, beginner saxophones are made to be tough and durable; extra features and mechanisms as well as fine adjustments and cosmetic improvements are left off to keep the price down. Beginner saxophones are designed primarily to hold up well while the player learns to handle a saxophone and play basic music.

Within a year or so of playing, saxophonists learn to handle their instruments properly and differences in tone, response, and ease of execution become more important.

The differences step-up saxophones offer include key mechanisms that make the instrument easier to play and extend its range (high F# and G for alto saxes, low A for baritones). Some step-up saxes are made of better materials, such as annealed brass.

Ribbed construction gives the mechanisms more stability and allows the instrument to retain fine adjustments better. Blued steel springs make the keys respond more quickly without requiring additional pressure to press the keys.

An adjustable thumb rest allows the player to find the most comfortable position to hold the sax.

More attention to key adjustment and tone hole covering in final assembly help give it a quick and true response. A detachable bell makes the instrument easier for technicians to keep in top playing condition. And cosmetic improvements including brass keys, extra engraving, and mother-of-pearl finger buttons make it more visually appealing.

Although saxophonists can get by with a beginner instrument longer than flutists or clarinetists, band students who want to reach their musical potential and sound their best should have at least an intermediate saxophone. Very serious saxophonists need performer or top-line saxophones.

Tools & Equipment

There are some basic things that any performing player should carry in his/her case, you never know when an emergency repair or adjustment might be necessary. (Usually it's just before you go on stage or worse, just before your big solo spot).

Small jewellers screwdrivers for loose rods and adjusting screws

Elastic bands

Cork 1/16"

Contact adhesive

Oil

Lighter fuel

Cigarette papers

Stanley knife or scalpel