



the naturals

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“I don’t know anything about music.
In my line you don’t need to.” Elvis Presley

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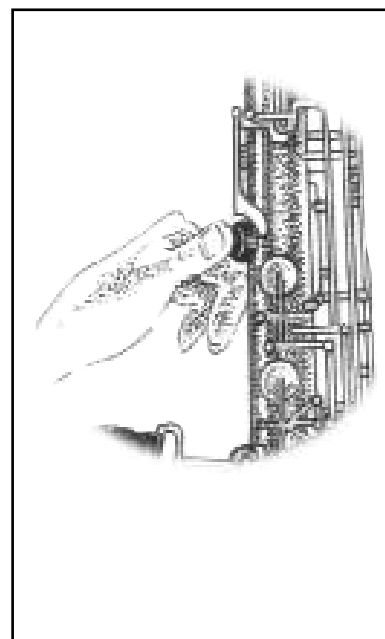


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the naturals

The Sax is split up into 2 registers, divided by a key at the back called the Octave Key (O.K.) where your left thumb WILL sit just below it on the black thumb rest.

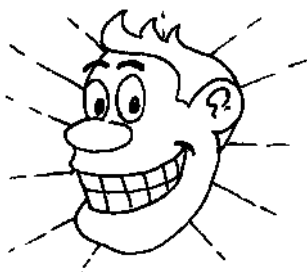
When the O.K.(as it is casually called) is pressed **down** you are in the **upper register** (high/treble) and when it is not you are playing the lower register (low/bass).





It's easy to remember ~ think of your *moods*;

On = **HIGH**



Off = **LOW**

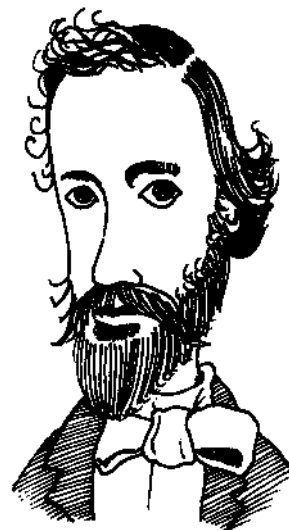


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The good thing is when ‘Our Father’ Adolph Sax created this instrument 150+ years ago, he made the *fingering position* on the keys for the Naturals exactly the same whether the thumb was **On** or **off**. The only difference in notes is one set is **high** and one set is **low**. So when you have learned the fingering of the Natural notes for one register, it is the same for the other - excellent!



There are **32** notes on the Sax and we’ll look at the lower register first, octave key **off** remember. Why?

Basically, because it’s harder to play them, and then playing the higher register will seem like a joyride.

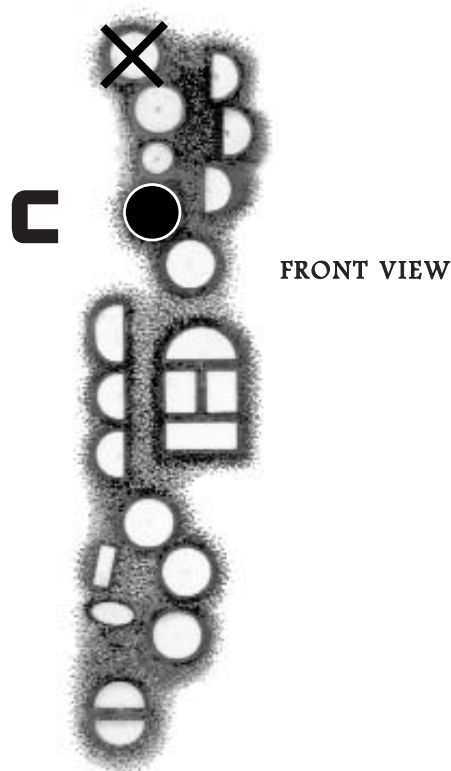
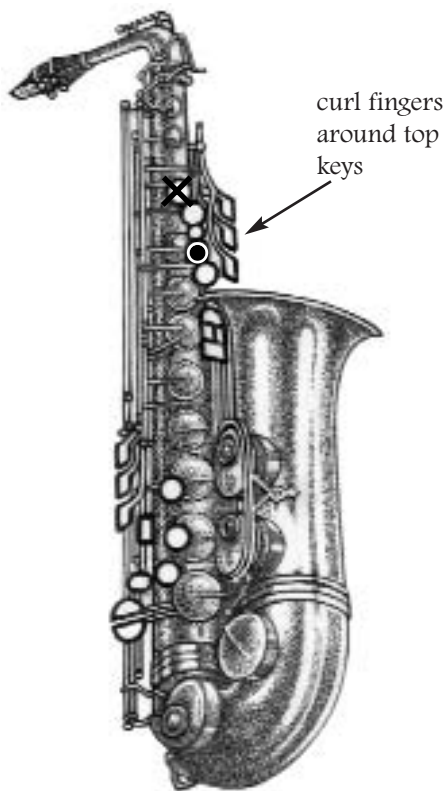
The names of the notes go from **A** to **G**.

A, B, C, D, E, F, G ~ there is no note **Q, T** or **Z** but it’s a wacko idea.





So, starting without the thumb on the octave key, the first note to blow is **C**. Only using the second finger of the left hand, to depress the key as shown. Curl the left hand around the top keys and make sure you do not touch them. Bend and lift the left hand so it looks as if you are limp-wristed. Blow **C** softly and cleanly.



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What an odd place to start!

Beware touching the **illegal key** at the top of the neck, marked by an 'X'.

Had a geezer call me after buying a Sax.

'I can't get a note out' he screamed frantically.

'Are you holding down the illegal key at the top?', I replied

Problem solved.

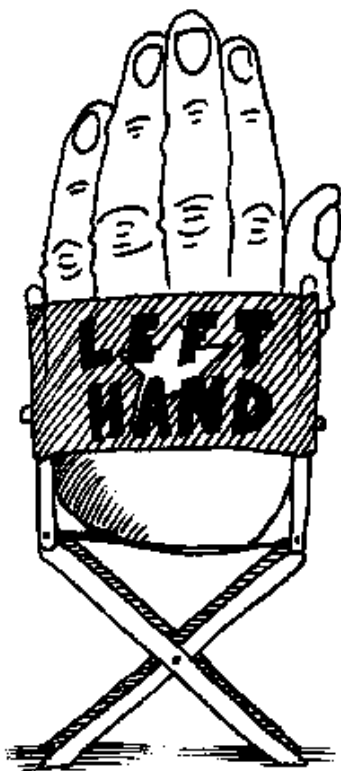
I suggest putting some sticky tape or Blue Tack on the Illegal key, so you know when you are accidentally touching it.

Take care too that you're not clumsy with the reed as you take the horn out of your mouth. Tears have been shed on reeds ripping on jumpers and jackets through absent-mindedness.





So breathing low from your tum/guts, cheeks tight, blow **C** again.



The Sax is left hand dominant. When I started, all my left hand did was, while driving, change gears, hold down paper while writing and wear Russian Wedding rings. Yet suddenly, it needs to retrain itself real quick. The left hand does become skilful over a period of time, and takes the *main role*. If you are left-handed you are a real lucky rascal, and you should thank your lucky stars.

So you will learn to breath properly and be ambidextrous ~
supple up those fingers for lots of uses!



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Blow softly through the mouthpiece. Keep your lips towards the tip. Keep the sound of each note steady. Keep your cheeks tight and relax your bottom lip.

If you feel like you don't have enough wind, try this style of breathing ~ **The Active Gulp**. Instead of only being able to blow for 7 seconds, you can blow for nearer **30!**

What you do is rest the two front teeth on the mouthpiece and drop the bottom jaw and gulp air deeply, at the same time keeping your stomach pushed out.

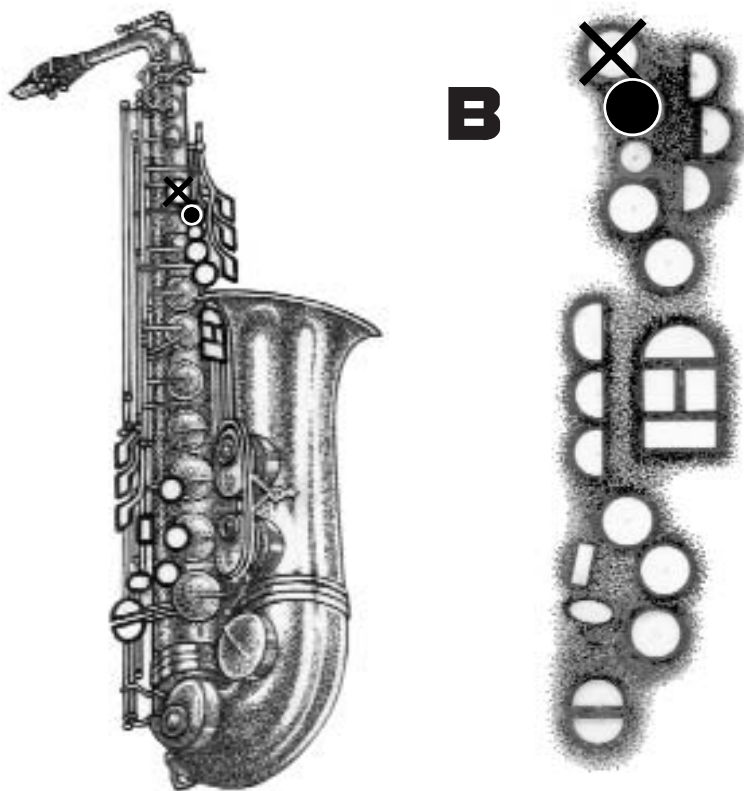


This is a billion times more useful than setting your embouchure and then just using the air inside your body. Because when you're blowing, that isn't an awful lot of air. You look like a goldfish and it sure is not pretty, scoring few points for cred, but it really works! So drop the jaw and **Actively Gulp** the air in.





Now using the first finger of the left hand play **B**. Be careful with the **B** not to just touch the **illegal** key.



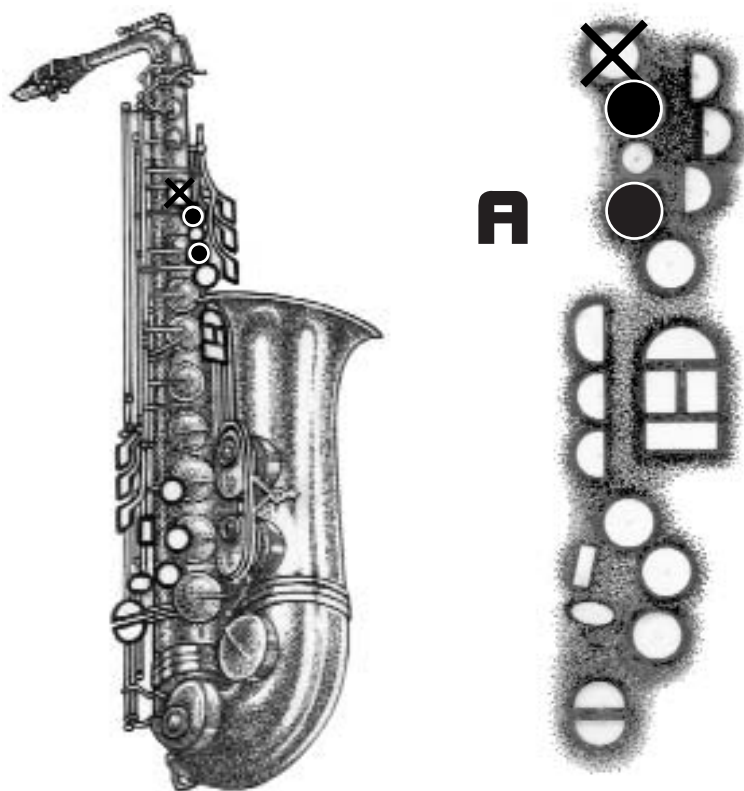
Once you've got this sounding sweet, alternate playing between **C** and **B**. I call this 'The Switch'. Blow gently and softly back and forth, **C** ↔ **B**.



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Next, the **A**. Press the top two keys together like those legends Winston Churchill, John Lennon and Harvey Smith.



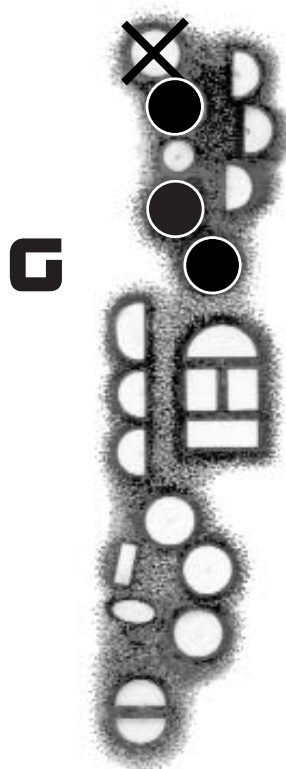
Now alternate the three notes;





Slowly, carefully and softly. There's no point in knacker-ing yourself 'parping' like a demented demon. Keep the volume down and turned down. Blow every note and hold it steady for a good 10 to 15 seconds. Play long notes.

Now to complete the left hand, with three keys pressed down, here is **G**. Accommodate the **G** key, by bending your ring finger slightly more than the other two.



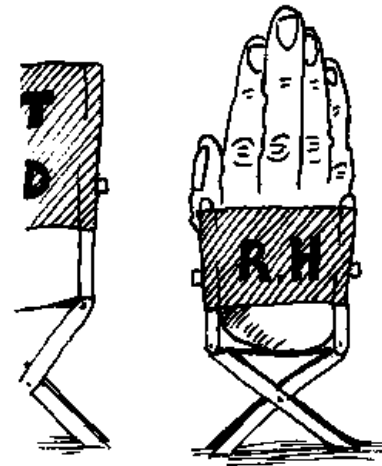
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The three fingers of the left hand are always covering all three keys even when they are not being pressed down. Try to just touch the tips of the keys, not cover the whole of them, as this will help with hand speed later.

So far the right hand has been 'Bone Idle' and in the early stages you will **never** use the right hand unless your left hand has *all 3 fingers down*. The right hand up to now, has just had a *supporting role*. Now curl the right hand around the side keys. Place the tips of your fingers over the keys so they are 'Touchtight'.



The awesome Charlie 'Bird' Parker use to skin-up 'Jamaican Woodbines' with his right hand while playing with his left. This is wonderful flamboyance, but you get the general idea. Store up all this arrogance for *later*.





Keep the right hand poised and ready, sitting on the pearl keys. It's useful to practice in front of the mirror watching your hand positions, so there isn't a *taxi journey* to the keys.



You will **NEVER** put the right hand down on the keys unless the left hand has **all three fingers** pressed down.

Now let's introduce the right hand into our '*organised mayhem*'. For these lower natural notes, still with the thumb off the trick is, whether you have been playing for 12 minutes or for 96 years, to **blow really softly** and **push out from the stomach**. If it ever squeaks, relax your bottom lip a little more.

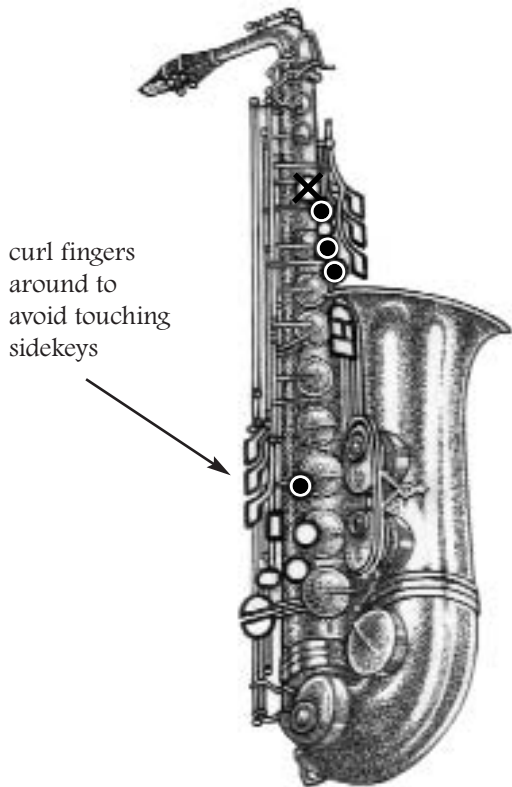


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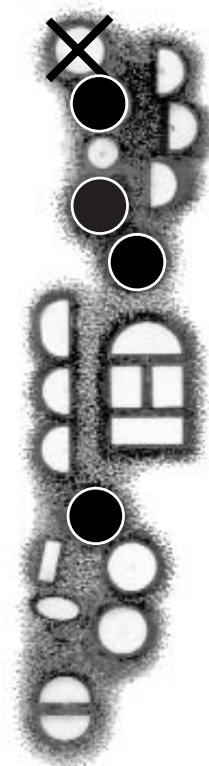


Next the **F**.

Put the first finger of the right hand on the first pearl key. Lift the right hand over the sidekeys, just touching the tip of the keys. Adjust the right hand thumb under the hook, until the fingers are *Touchtight*.



F

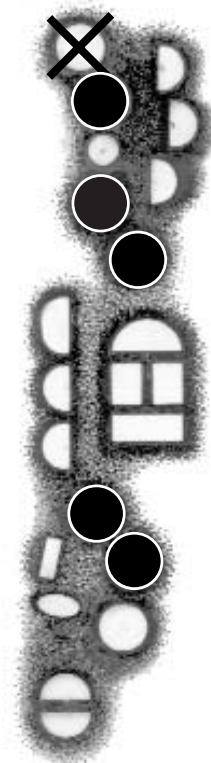




Next the **E**, now using two fingers of the right hand.



E



Make sure the notes are low. If they come out too high make sure you are not overblowing - ie; blowing too hard and fast. Keep them *low, deep* and **sexy**. Think **Low...**



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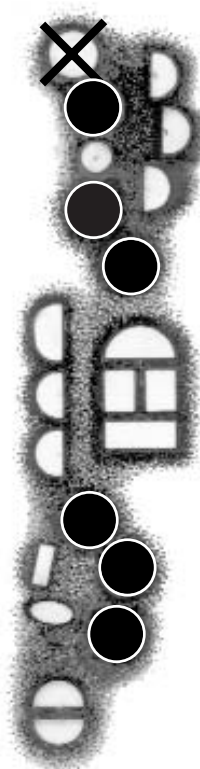


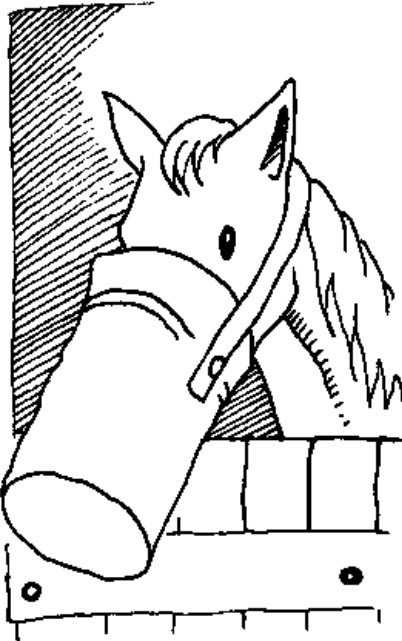
Finally, here's **D**.

With the third finger of the right hand, this completes the 7th natural. Blow really slowly, as though breathing gently into the horn. Push from the guts. *Stay relaxed!* Think **tone** 'what does it sound like'?



D





So now we have sorted out **C-B-A-G-F-E-D**, all with the octave key **off**. So you have already got **7** notes ~ we're cooking! If you want to remember the order, remember;

(C)-BAG-FED

~ just like a horse feeding out of a nosebag.

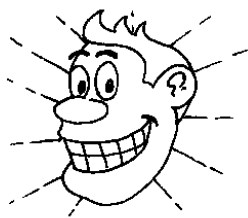
Now play all the notes blowing continuously, running the fingers down. Now try running the fingers back up; **D-E-F-G-A-B-C**. Remember when you start blowing the bottom **D** to *think low* and blow softer than you think. Take a active gulp of air so you can do this in one breath.

At the top end , between the **B** and the **C**, remember 'The Switch' is the other way around.



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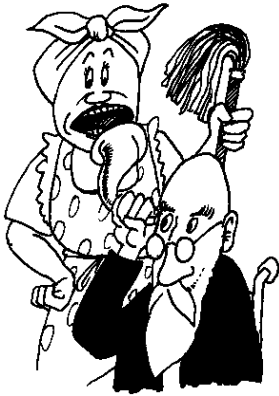


Now let's double our notes from 7 to 14, using the **Upper Register** pressing the Octave Key *down* with the left thumb. We are now **Cn**.

Start playing **D** - all 6 fingers down and run them into the **E**, **F** and **G**. If your **G** 'grumbles' you are swallowing a little too much mouthpiece. Move your mouth a tiny bit towards the tip. The note should now sound pure.

For the **a**, **B**, and the **c**, slightly tighten your **bottom lip**, blow a bit faster and **think high**. Make sure each note sounds in tune by playing the same note with the Octave Key **off**. *'Let your ear be the judge'* listening hard to make sure it sounds **perfect**. Check with the recorded music.





To remember the order of playing upwards;

D **E** **F** - **G** **A** **B** - **C**

think of a deaf old man listening to a gabbling blabbermouthed ole boot.

Playing the notes up and down in the upper register, 'upstairs', is a little easier than with the thumb **off**, 'downstairs'.

Now you have **14** notes called *the naturals*. You will use these as the **mainstay** of your playing throughout your Sax career - day in, day out. Really **think** the notes when you're playing them, ie; in your head. The Sax can do anything *you* want it to do. All you have to do is **think it**.

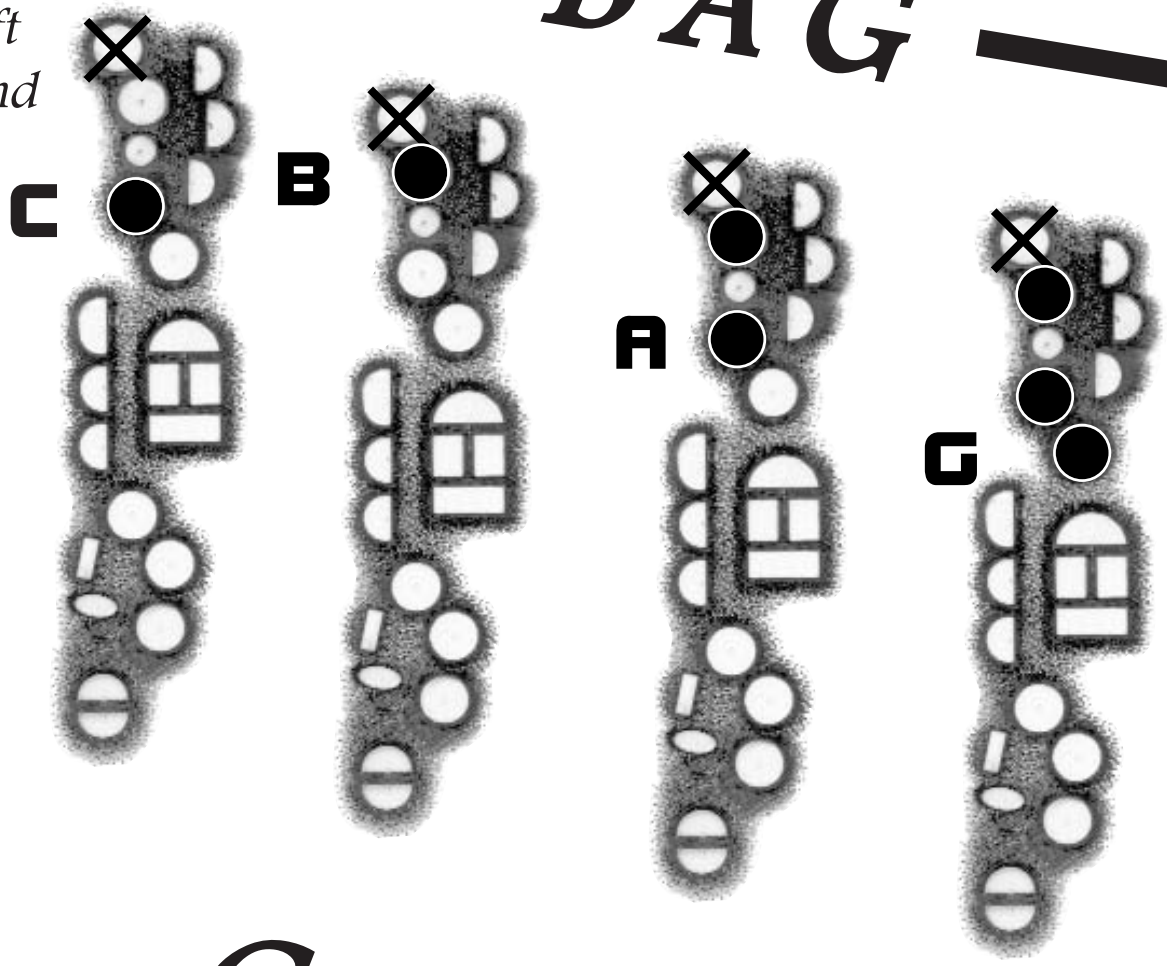
You are now in the Sax roadshow. If you can blow those sweetly you'll already sound **impressive**. Learn the name of each note by heart. All the *naturals* are superbly grouped together for you on the next 2 pages.



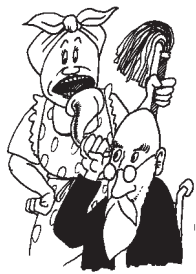


Left Hand

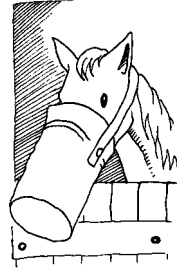
C **BAG**



C **BAG**

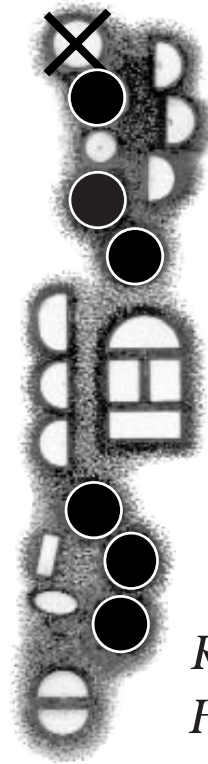
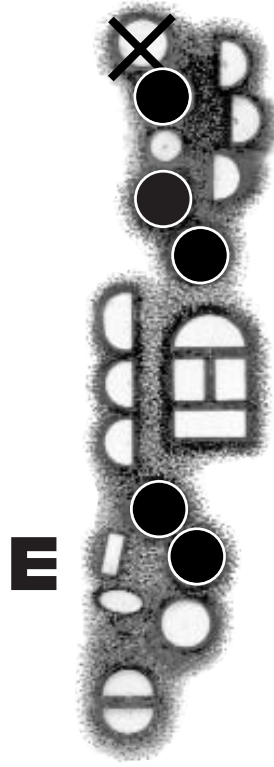
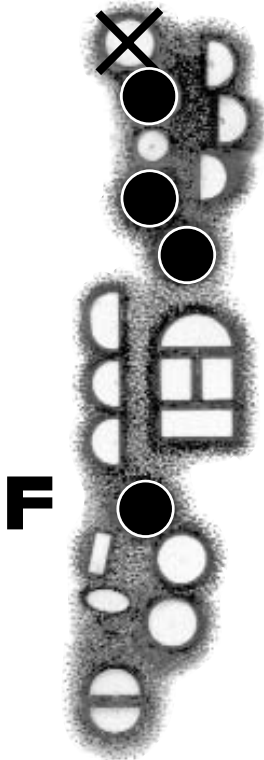


The Naturals $\frac{14}{32}$



FED

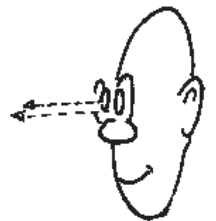
Octave Key
 On or off



Right
Hand



FED



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Now you've got the hang of the natural notes, there are a number of cunning ways for the fingers to *befriend* the keys.

The next time you are relaxing in front of the goggle-box, try this. *Without* blowing, take the whole Sax, including the Crook, **just** press the keys up and down playing legitimate *normal natural notes* - **no** wacko fingerings please.

The closing of the pads will sound like you are lightly playing the notes. This is the way to *acquaint* your finger positioning and yourself with the keys.





Getting the fingers working right is about 25% of the game. Let your fingers feel at home.

I once taught a poseur who was a life guard. He did this non stop for 8 hours a day by the pool and boy did his fingers move quick! This shows your fingers and the keys can become great mates and is also a useful pastime for when your 'chops' have gone!



Also don't forget Narcissistic learning. Get that full length mirror out. It is your self-corrective teacher. It's the ultimate way for checking for fingers, active breathing and that your bottom lip is relaxed.

