

Finger Calisthenics

If one wants to excel in music, he has to practice. Practicing to improve oneself is not restricted to musicians only. One can look at Baseball players and Golfers for instance. Golfers will go to the driving range and hit hundreds of balls in order to work out the mechanics of their swing. Baseball players will spend hours in batting practice working on their mechanics as well. Their goal is to make their movements second nature. With the saxophone, we too can go to the driving range or spend time in the batting cage. These exercises I like to call "Finger Calisthenics." Weight training for the fingers. If you lift weights in the gym, you might have heard the axiom, "No pain, no gain." We can apply it as well to our practice. These exercises will help acclimate your fingers to the horn. They train your fingers to keep them close to the horn so that you can execute passages more effectively. There are certain technical problems with the sax in which these exercises will help. These exercises do not take a lot of time to do, I can do them in 15 minutes, but they will greatly improve your overall playing ability. You should not over do these exercises. Once you feel a little pain, you should move to the next finger. I like to start with the right pinky finger and move up. I practice each individual finger in as many different ways as it will be used. You can make your own practice exercises using the guidelines below.

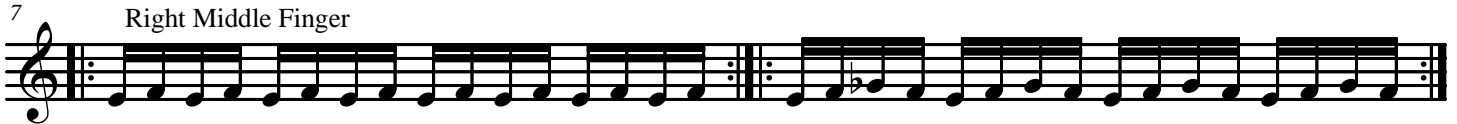
A Right pinky finger



B Right Ring Finger



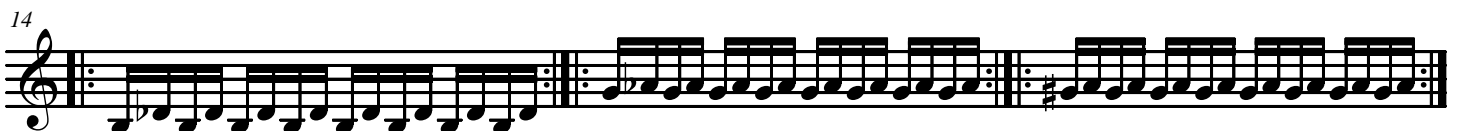
C Right Middle Finger



D Right Index Finger



E Left Pinky



Finger Calisthenics

F Left Ring Finger

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G Left Middle Finger

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H Left Index Finger

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I Palm Key Exercises

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Knowing the Side C fingering will help facilitate smoothness and speed. You will not use the side C in all situations. In general, you can use the side C when a B is next to it as with the examples below. You can readily see the difference with the first measure, try it with the middle finger and then try it with the side key.

J Side C Exercises

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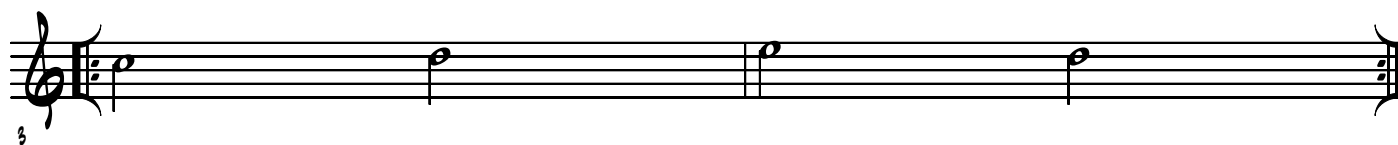
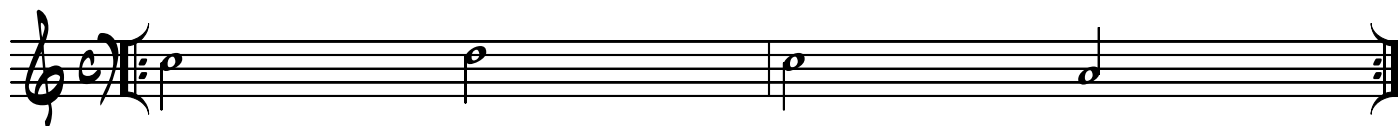
OCTAVE KEY EXERCISES

These exercises are for the left thumb octave key. When operating the octave key, the thumb should roll onto the octave key. The thumb does not lift off of the thumb rest to apply the octave key, instead, a small roll of the thumb is all that is needed to apply the key.

The exercises below will help develop smooth octave key usage. Remember,

DO NOT LIFT THE THUMB TO APPLY THE OCTAVE KEY!!!!

Repeat each line 10 times



SIDE B FLAT

THE SIDE B FLAT KEY IS THE BOTTOM SIDE KEY AND IT IS REACHED BY THE RIGHT HAND. IN ORDER TO PLAY A B FLAT, FINGER AN "A" AND APPLY THE SIDE B FLAT KEY. THE SIDE B FLAT IS PREFERRED OVER THE ONE AND ONE FINGERING AND THE BIS B FLAT IN MOST CIRCUMSTANCES.

PRACTICE THE FOLLOWING EXERCISES BELOW USING THE SIDE B FLAT KEY

