

ALTO SAXOPHONE

Welcome to G.C. Hawley Middle School! I am so glad that you want to be a part of the band! Since you have decided to play the alto saxophone, here are a few things you should know.

How To Take Care Of Your Instrument

Use the swab every day before putting your saxophone back in the case. The most delicate parts of the saxophone are the paper-like pads underneath the keys. As you play, water vapor from your breath condenses inside and settles on these pads. These pads can break down over time because of this condensation, like the way your teeth can get cavities. So, use the swab that came in your Cleaning Kit to clean out the condensation every day before you put the sax away in its case. Also, use Cork Grease on your cork once a week. And brush out your mouthpiece.

When you put your sax together or take it apart, do not twist the keys. This is the most common cause of \$\$ expensive saxophone repairs. When assembling or disassembling your neck piece, do not grip the delicate key mechanisms, or they will bend and your sax will stop working.

Play on a good reed. The most important part of the saxophone is the *reed*, the small piece of cane that vibrates to make the sound. They are delicate, so be careful with them. Store them in the plastic case, or they may break or get moldy (gross!). It is normal for them to wear out over time, so always have at least 2 with you. You can buy a box of reeds from Hills Music Shop, or for your convenience I have them in the band room for \$3 each. I recommend Rico Royal size 3 reeds, please do not buy cheap junk reeds. They sound bad and wear out quickly.

What To Expect In The First Few Weeks

Spend lots of time practicing mouthpiece placement. The most difficult part of learning to play the saxophone is simply putting the mouthpiece in your mouth correctly. For the first few weeks, this is what you need to practice *every day*. Place the mouthpiece about 1/2 inch in your mouth, against your top teeth, roll in your bottom lip, and blow a steady note for 5 seconds. Then put it down, put it back and repeat. Do this over and over for 5 minutes. Practice this in addition to practicing the music that we are studying in class.

Listen to professional saxophone players. Listening to great professional musicians on your instrument will inspire you and help you develop your “ear” for what you want to sound like. Get on Youtube or Spotify and search for “saxophone”. Have fun exploring! Make sure you listen to the Mozart Clarinet Concerto 622.

The Website and the Bandmate Chromatic Tuner iOS/Android App

www.JustinDickson.com/Band Our “textbook” is all online, on this website. You can also find information about our band program and links to articles about learning to play your instrument.

Bandmate Chromatic Tuner is a free app for Apple and Android phones and tablets that I designed, and I would like all of our band members and/or your parents to download it. It is a tuner that shows the note you are playing on a music staff, so you can check if you are playing the right note or note while you are practicing. It will really make things easier for you to learn!



Playing Tests, Practice Tips, and Expectations For Band Members

How we do tests in band. Your grade in band depends on passing our Playing Tests. You will have four tests each quarter, and you pass when you can play the music correctly. If you pass, you get a 100. If you do not pass, you get a 0, but you can come back and try again as many times as you want until the end of the grading period. The goal is for you to practice until you get it right (“mastery-based education”).

How to practice. Slow down. If you are having trouble with certain notes, practice them very slowly, and use Bandmate to make sure you are playing the right notes. Do not try to play the whole song at once, but rather stop and fix your mistakes. Just go over a few notes at a time, until you can play without mistakes.

Class rules. #1 Listen respectfully while your Director is speaking. #2 If it’s not yours, don’t touch it. #3 No gum, food or drinks except water. #3 is a rule while practicing at home, too, or your instrument will be ruined.

Everyone is important, do your part. Everyone is an important member of the band, and everyone has a job to do. As a member of the Hawley Middle School band, your job is to learn your music, to practice until it’s right, to take care of your instrument and bring it to class every day, to listen respectfully to your Band Director and follow directions, to be okay with making mistakes and keep trying, to help each other, to attend every concert, to work hard and have fun!