Basic Technical Concepts for the Saxophone
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Fingering Considerations

There are four fingerings for Bb (A#). Each can be very beneficial when used properly. The following examples show where to use the these fingerings. Side Bb (A#) should be the basic fingering. 1 / 1 Bb (A#) is most useful when going from F to Bb (A#). 1 / 2 Bb (A#) is most useful when going from Gb (F#) to Bb (A#). The bis Bb is useful everywhere except when going from Bb to C. *Example 1* illustrates these options.

Side Bb (A#)   **bis Bb (A#)**   **1 / 1 Bb (A#)**   **1 / 2 Bb (A#)**

Side Bb or Bis Bb

① Side Bb or Bis Bb

Side Bb

1 / 1 Bb

1 / 2 Bb

Bis Bb or Side Bb

1 / 1 Bb

1 / 2 Bb

Bis Bb or Side Bb

Certainly all modern saxophones have an articulated G# (Ab) key. *Example 2* is designed for practice using the articulated G# (Ab). This exercise can be played easily provided this principle (key) is used. The G# (Ab) can be produced by fingering the lower note and raising the first three fingers of the right hand. This will allow *Example 2* to be played by just moving three fingers.

The G# (Ab) can be held down while playing other pitches (*Example 3*). This will aid in speed and accuracy but does not alter or effect the sound or pitch.

The problem of trilling to D can be solved by using the high (palm) D and Eb keys. In *Example 4*, trilling C to D can be done by holding down C and trilling with the high Eb key. In *Example 5*, trilling from C# to D can be accomplished by trilling with the high (palm) D key. Note that the octave key is not used.

To avoid the sloppy piston-like fingering when going from F to F# (Gb) use the side (forked) F# key. Side F# is made by fingering F and adding the side F# key with the third finger of the right hand. This fingering is especially useful when trilling F to F# (Gb) and in chromatic passages. Practice *Examples 6, 7, and 8* in both octaves.

To avoid the sloppy piston-like fingering when going from B to C use the side C key. Side C is fingered by playing B and adding the middle side key with the side of the right hand (the side key immediately above the side Bb (A#) key). Like side F#, this fingering is especially useful when trilling B to C and in chromatic passages. Practice *Examples 9, 10, and 11* in both octaves.

Extremes

Examples 12, 13, and 14 are for high note development. Each should be done at various tempos and with a variety of articulations. Be sure to keep in mind the concept of a good sound: blow and support from the diaphragm, focus the sound, and listen for intonation. Do not be timid when first working on these exercises. Play with a strong sound. This will open the throat and help build confidence. Remember to keep the palm and fingers curved and close to the keys, this will aid in accuracy and speed.

Once comfortable with executing this exercise, consider expanding into the altissimo register. Adding at least high F# and G would be wise. Only expand into the altissimo once comfortable with overtones and basic altissimo fingerings. While most new instruments have a high F# key (which greatly aids in this exercise), it would be wise to use a variety of fingerings. Having a number of choices will provide the player with options when considering intonation and ease of fingering.
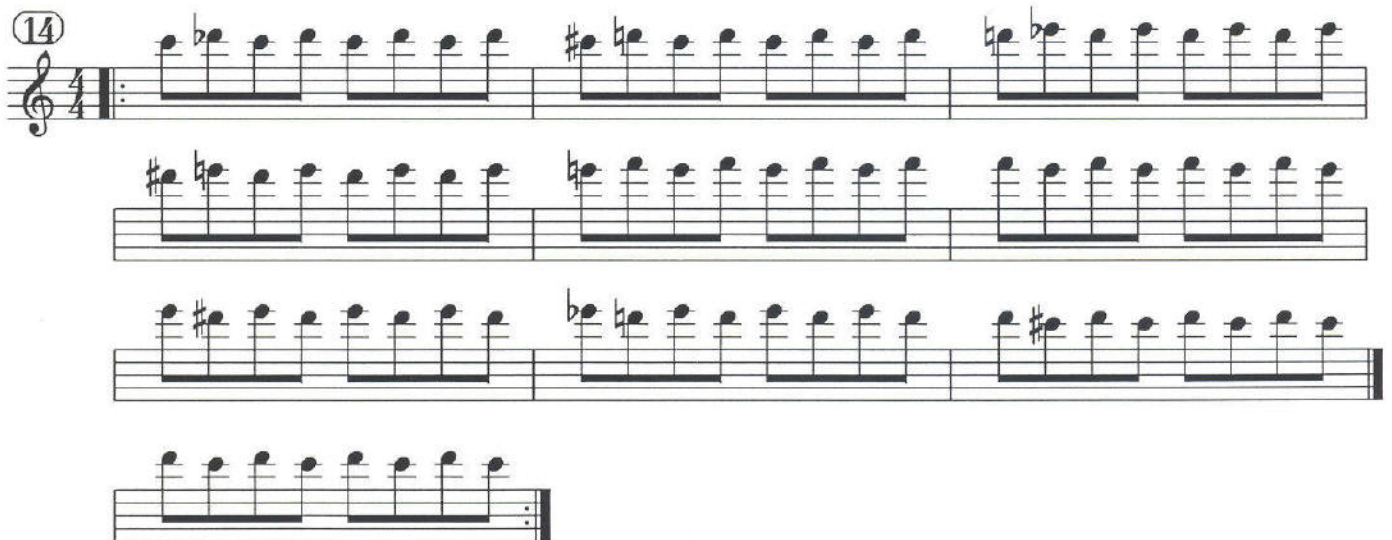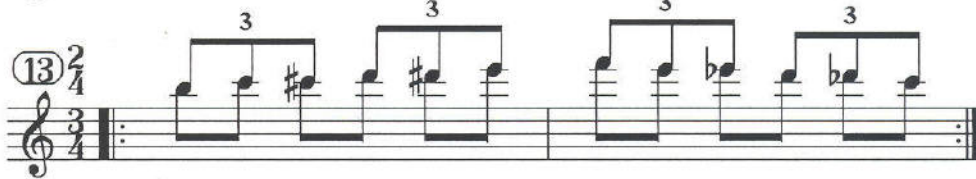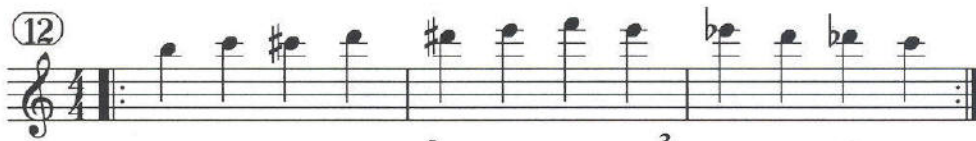

Going to and from high C and C# to high E and F can be done easily by using a forked fingering (also know as front). Forked F is made by playing high C and moving your first finger up to the altissimo key immediately above the B key of the left hand (*Example 15*) Forked E is made by adding the G key to the forked F fingering (*Example 16*). It is necessary to master these two fingerings before beginning work in the altissimo register. This concept can also be used with high F# , G and Ab.

Forked/Front F   **Forked/Front E**
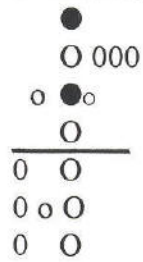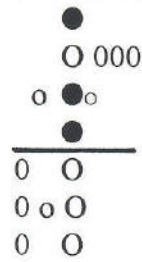
Examples 17 and 18 are for low register development. The same concepts and goals for the upper register development also apply for these exercises. However, instead of curving the palm, strive to keep the left hand close and use the rollers when moving in this area.

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