

Alternate Fingerings for the Saxophone

The image shows a musical staff with notes and accidentals, and below it, two rows of fingering diagrams. Each diagram consists of two parts: a top part showing the left hand (fingers 1-4) and a bottom part showing the right hand (fingers 1-4). The diagrams are arranged in columns corresponding to the notes on the staff.

D#-E trill sharp (+15) E \flat -F trill F-G \flat trill A-B \flat trill in passages with no B-naturals B-C trill C#-D trill flat (-20) D \flat -E \flat trill flat (-20) trills involving these notes

Tone is similar to tone above the break. Use octave key.

How to Use This Chart

The keys are shown the as they would look to people standing behind you if they could see through both your body and the tube of the saxophone. This will seem natural when you're holding the horn and looking at the chart, but it's a mirror image of what you'll see if you turn the instrument around and actually look at it.

How to Choose a Fingering

Basically you should always use the standard fingerings unless they are impossible (or in the case of the alternate C# fingerings, to avoid a discontinuity in sound across the break). Many professional woodwind players advocate using almost nothing but standard fingerings except in a few situations. Alternate fingerings tend to move your hands out of position, and it may be difficult to connect groups of notes if they use different types of fingerings.

Some alternate fingerings are out of tune. (The

numerical values above are ones I measured, in units of hundredths of a semitone.) For this reason, as well as to facilitate connecting between standard and non-standard fingerings, it is a good idea to end trills on a standard fingering.

B-Flat Fingerings

The basic B-flat fingering as well as the two alternate fingerings shown above all play in tune, so intonation is not a reason to choose among them. Most people use one B-flat fingering as a default (either the one I call the basic one or the one using the palm key), and then use the others in specific situations. Almost everyone uses the basic fingering in the chromatic scale, and the left-hand fingering in arpeggios like B-flat major and G minor.

Articulated Pinkie Fingerings

You can hold down the A-flat pinkie key while playing other notes in passages that don't contain any A naturals, and likewise with E-flat. This can be

useful in rapid playing, but beware of losing the mobility of your hands by doing this habitually.

The Fine Print

These copyrighted materials are available online for free: www.lightandmatter.com/music

They are subject to a licensing agreement. If you don't accept the licensing agreement, then you are bound by the normal provisions of copyright law, and may not copy them. The original editable computer files are available on request via e-mail if you accept the licensing agreement.

Licensing Agreement

1. If you accept this licensing agreement in full, then you may copy this document for yourself, and give copies to other people who also accept the agreement.
2. You agree not to remove the author's name, the copyright notice, the reference to my web site, or this licensing information.
3. You agree not to sell this document for money, or to incorporate any part of it into any commercial product.

(c) 2000 Benjamin Crowell, all rights reserved.

