



Lesson plans – Saxophone (for students aged 10-13)

Equipment

Large computer monitor or projector linked to a computer with broadband internet access + sound system.

Optional – additional computer(s). Have Focus on Sound *Instruments* -> Jazz-Rock-Band ->Reeds ready. Log on as teacher from inside the program, so that text sizes are bigger.

Preparation

If you have sax players in the class, it's a good idea to get them to prepare a piece in advance.

Lesson

The work below can be used for a single lesson or extended to two. If there are two lessons, it would be good to have a second student playing a piece (if you're lucky enough to have more than one saxophone player in the class).

1. A student plays sax to the class. Discussion can involve the different sizes of saxophone, what kind of group they're played in, tonguing, reeds, relation to the clarinet, etc. If the material is covered in two lessons, a second player could play in the second lesson.
2. Focus on Sound *Instruments* ->Jazz-Rock-Band->Reeds. Compare the different sizes of the three saxophones. There are two slides here. Discuss how you tell them apart from looking at them.
Soprano usually straight. Tenor longer, bigger keys, barrel next to the mouthpiece not as straight as on the alto. Baritone very large. Tube doubled up.
3. *Instruments* ->Jazz-Rock-Band->Soprano sax
 - a. *Slide 1.* Student can read text to class. Why is it called soprano? *Voice names.* Listen to the recording. Discuss jazz combo. What instruments can they hear? *Bass, drum kit, keyboard.* How many beats in the bar? *Four.* How long are the soprano sax notes at the beginning? *2 beats.* What's the bass guitar doing? *Playing long held notes, then three fast notes at the end of the measure/bar.*
 - b. Optional. Listen to the whole track (fourth tab – full length tracks)
 - c. *Slide 2 (optional).* Listen to the Fauré
 - d. *Slide 3 (this is a section of the full track from slide 1 - and the full length track).*
Demonstrates improvisation and the high pitch range the soprano sax can reach. Perhaps discuss words like pitch, range, register – even *tessitura*. How many chords in the repeated sequence? *Four.* What happens at the end? *The music slows down – rit. rall.*
 - e. Watch the video
 - f. Look at the learning information.

4. *Instruments* ->Jazz-Rock-Band->Alto sax

- a. Slide 1. Why is this the most popular instrument? It's less common than the tenor in professional groups. [Cheaper, easier to carry](#). See learning info tab. Listen to the recording. What are the other instruments in this jazz combo? [Bass guitar, keyboard, drum kit](#). How many different chords in the progression? [Two](#). How many notes does the bass guitar play in each measure/bar? [Six](#). What special effects are being used? [Echo + pan right to left](#). Discuss transposition.
- b. Slide 2. What is different about this sax? [Black body](#). How common is it? [Not very](#). Listen to the recording. What is the difference in the instrumentation compared to the first recording? [Piano and double bass now, instead of keyboard and bass guitar](#). Example of improvisation. Can they recognise the instrument joining right at the end? [Trombones](#).
- c. Slide 3. Discuss the reed and how the sound is produced by forcing air through the narrow gap between the reed and the mouthpiece, causing the reed to vibrate.
- d. Video. Improvisation over an 8 bar chord sequence. What's the instrument accompanying? [Guitar](#).

5. *Instruments* ->Jazz-Rock-Band->Baritone sax (light relief!)

- a. Slide 1. Discuss the size of the instrument. Listen to recording. What is accompanying? [Drum kit – especially cymbals](#).
- b. Slide 2. Expand the picture.
- c. Video. Good example of the low notes possible, as well as the range.
- d. Learning info tab. What kind of people play it? How expensive?

6. *Instruments* ->Jazz-Rock-Band->Tenor sax

- a. Slide 1. Fast modern jazz improvisation. What technique is the bass guitarist using? [Walking bass](#). Explain the technique. Roughly how many beats per minute? (bpm) [214](#)
- b. Slide 2. Slow ballad. How many beats to the bar/measure? [Three](#). What happens to the music at the end, just as it fades? [Goes back to the music from the beginning](#).
- c. Optional. Follow the music of the same piece (music note tab). Explain that the actual written music the player would see would be in the treble clef. The score here is written in the bass clef as it sounds – a major 10th below.
- d. Optional. Listen to the whole track (full length tracks tab). They can listen to the tune coming back after the middle section (but only 8 bars long instead of 16). Then an improvised double bass solo, going very high, then very low. Then the tenor sax has an improvised solo with many rapid notes. Now louder. Tune (head) comes back at the end. Middle section up an octave. Coda repeats final phrase then slows to the end. You might ask the kids to write about the music, describing the instruments, speed, metre, improvisation, etc.
- e. Slide 3 (optional) – to see the size of the keys.
- f. Video.
- g. Learning info. The most common sax in the real world.

7. *Instruments* ->Extras ->Jazz-Rock->Saxophone

Do the test, either with the whole class, using class presentation mode (see Flute lesson plan for more info) or with students doing work on separate computers – or for homework.

[Homework/ further work](#)

Students could revise the information on all the saxes and perhaps write about the differences between the members of the saxophone family – in look and sound. Or they can compare two different tracks, e.g. the first and second tenor sax tracks. They can do the test again on their own. The extended tenor sax track could give ideas for a composition in 3/4 time.