

## TEACHING STRATEGIES

Once your saxophone section is playing on the right setup, these teaching strategies can help improve your students' playing fundamentals.

**Mouthpiece Only:** Daily mouthpiece exercises will help first-year students improve tone production and embouchure, and keep a steady air stream. The target pitch for mouthpiece exercises on alto saxophone is concert A if embouchure, air support, and tongue position are correct. More advanced students can use the mouthpiece to practice voicing (the manipulation of the oral cavity, tongue, and throat to raise and lower pitch).

**Embouchure Wheel:** Forming a correct embouchure is challenging for many students. Many place too much emphasis on the bottom teeth, and corners of the mouth are too far apart. The ideal embouchure should have the top teeth resting on the top of the mouthpiece, the lower lip gently rolled over the bottom teeth, and the corners of the mouth touching either side of the mouthpiece. When formed correctly, the embouchure looks like a wheel—the chin, upper lip, and mouth corners are round. To help students with the fundamentals of creating a good embouchure, ask them to look in a mirror and play the mouthpiece and neck. After your students experience how a correct embouchure should look and feel, encourage them to practice their embouchure with a mirror daily until it becomes natural.

**Tumbleweed Analogy:** Blowing directionless air is insufficient; the air must be focused and fast. Ask students to imagine a tumbleweed inside their mouthpiece. When the wind blows in the desert, the air moves the tumbleweed, but it doesn't necessarily make it spin. If the air is fast and focused, it catches the tumbleweed and spins it forward. Ask students to play a single note (eventually advancing to a scale, etude, or piece) and visualize blowing the tumbleweed all the way through the neck, body, and bell.

**"Darth Vader Trick":** If students are struggling with the low register, the "Darth Vader" trick may be helpful. To ensure students have a relaxed jaw and an open throat, ask your students to inhale deeply, then exhale like Darth Vader. The "ho" sound produced by exhaling is helpful for developing an open, warm air column for accessing notes below the staff.

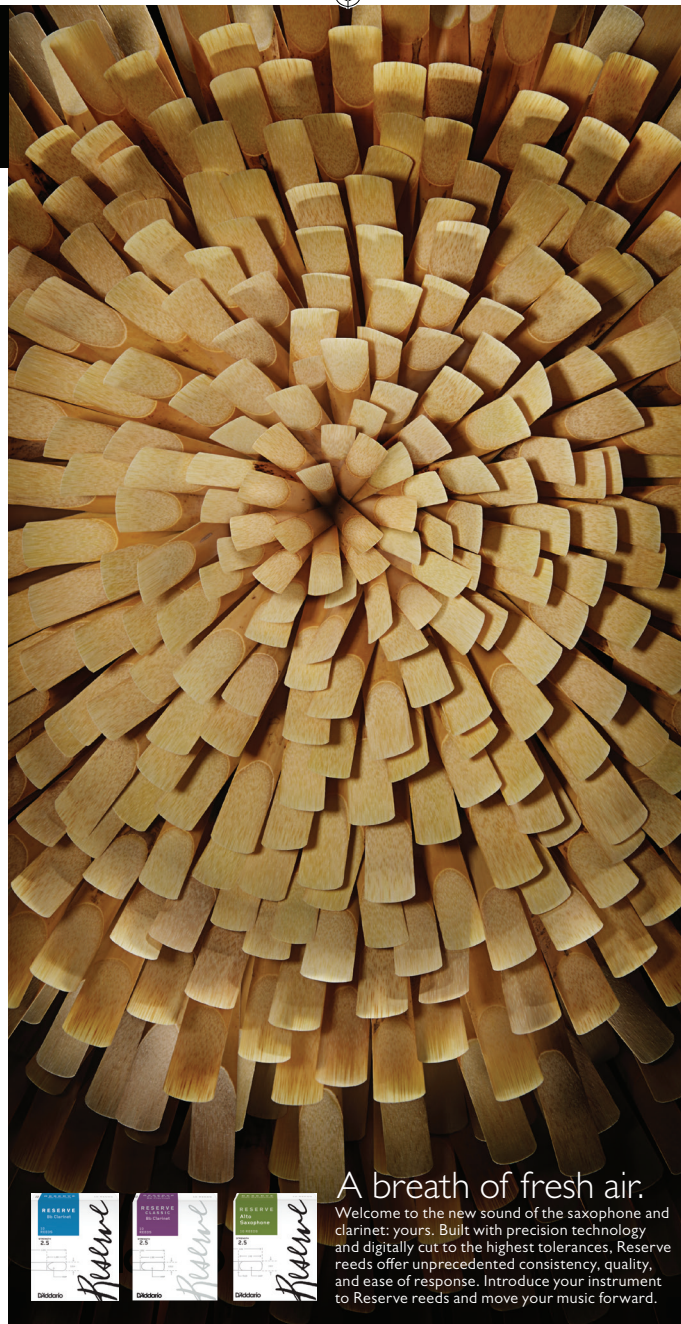
**Neck Strap:** A common problem for young players is misplacing the height of the neck strap. The neck strap is in its proper spot when, while sitting, the instrument rests at mid-thigh, and the mouthpiece comes right into the student's mouth without altering the angle of the head. Always use neck straps that have a non-stretch material. Otherwise, students may constantly need to "reach" for the mouthpiece—negatively affecting posture, intonation, and breathing.



Neck Strap

**Paper Trick:** Place a piece of paper between the mouthpiece and the reed to show students where the point of contact occurs. Mark this point on the reed lightly with a pencil so students can see where their lower lip should be placed while playing. This combats the common problem of young students taking too much or too little mouthpiece. Also, cutting a mouthpiece patch in half and placing it farther down on the mouthpiece can be a great reminder for students of where to put their teeth and of how much mouthpiece to take.

**Voicing Check:** "A" Trick: To ensure correct embouchure, airstream, and tongue position, have the student play middle "A" (second space of the staff). Then, flick the octave key. The sound should pop immediately to the upper octave and back again. If the pitch stays up and doesn't return to the original middle "A," the student is biting and the tongue is too high. If the pitch stays low, the student's embouchure is too relaxed and the tongue is too low, both of which may be the result of taking too much mouthpiece.



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Welcome to the new sound of the saxophone and clarinet: yours. Built with precision technology and digitally cut to the highest tolerances, Reserve reeds offer unprecedented consistency, quality, and ease of response. Introduce your instrument to Reserve reeds and move your music forward.

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 **SAXOPHONE**

# SURVIVAL GUIDE



 **D'Addario**

## FINDING THE RIGHT MOUTHPIECE

### Mouthpieces 101

The **facing** measures the curve of the mouthpiece away from the reed. A facing is often identified by its tip opening: the distance between the reed and the tip of the mouthpiece.

- A mouthpiece with a close facing (smaller tip opening, less pronounced curve) is less resistant than one with an open facing (larger tip opening, more pronounced curve).
- Closer facings generally require harder reeds, while more open facings require softer reeds.

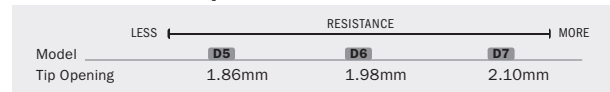
### D'Addario Select Jazz Mouthpiece

Select Jazz Alto Saxophone mouthpieces are available in three resistance options.

All Select Jazz mouthpieces are milled, not molded, from solid rubber to ensure the highest level of consistency. For teachers, the product consistency will help the entire saxophone section sound more even. Ease of playing on D'Addario mouthpieces helps encourage and foster strong fundamental habits, including proper embouchure, correct tongue position, and a steady air stream to achieve a full, resonant sound.



### Resistance Comparison Chart



For developing students, the differences found when upgrading to a hard rubber mouthpiece are often more noticeable than buying a new saxophone. The improvements in sound quality and response are often noticed immediately by both the student and the teacher, helping encourage musical growth as students develop facility on the instrument.

### Characteristics:

When looking for a mouthpiece, listen for **response** and **sound**.

- **Response:** Is the sound produced easily? If it is too difficult, consider a closer facing or a softer reed. If it is too easy, consider a more open facing or a harder reed.
- **Sound:** Is the sound focused and with a good core? If the sound is spread or lacks center, consider a more open facing or a harder reed. If the sound is buzzy or too covered, consider a closer facing or a softer reed.

## REED SELECTION



### Entry-Level

Rico reeds are ideal for students and revered by educators worldwide. The Rico cut features a thinner vamp that allows students the ability to produce a clear, full sound right from the beginning of their study. Today's Rico reed is more consistent than ever, due to countless improvements in our cane fields and at the factory.

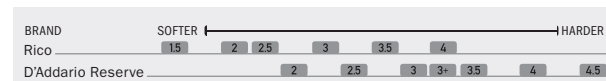


### Step-Up

For advancing and professional players, D'Addario Reserve reeds are exceptional options. Crafted using a digital technology, these reeds feature unprecedented quality and consistency for ease of performance.

- **Reserve** is a thick blank reed that offers tonal complexity and warmth.

### Strength Comparison Chart



### Suggested Reed Strengths

	RICO			D'ADDARIO RESERVE		
Beginner	2	2.5		2		
Intermediate	2.5	3	3.5	2.5	3	
Advanced		3	3.5	3	3.5	

As students develop as saxophonists, reed strength will need to be gradually increased to facilitate high register access and proper articulation and tone development.

### Reed Selection Tips

- Just like selecting a mouthpiece, reeds should be selected based on response and sound. If response is difficult or the sound is fuzzy, try a softer reed strength. If response is too easy or the sound is brash, try a harder reed strength.
- If a student's reed sounds too soft, check the age of the reed before moving up in reed strength completely. A common problem with younger students is use of reeds past their acceptable life span—reeds eventually become soft due to age and use.
- Make sure the ligature is placed comfortably on the smooth bark of the reed, beneath the moon of the vamp and/or the file marking.
- Start with the reed placed so that a very small black sliver of the mouthpiece tip is visible above the tip of the reed. If a reed responds too easily or the sound is spread, move the reed up slightly to add a little resistance. If a reed feels a little too hard or the sound is buzzy, move the reed down slightly to lower the resistance.

## INSTRUMENT CARE TIPS

### Mouthpiece Care

The following tips will help keep your mouthpiece in great condition:

- Use a mouthpiece patch to protect the mouthpiece from teeth marks. This also helps keep teeth from sliding and prevents biting while playing.
- Always use a mouthpiece cap when not playing and while the instrument is being stored in the case to protect the mouthpiece from being damaged.



Reserve Mouthpiece Patch



Mouthpiece Cap

### Reed Care

Proper reed care can not only help saxophonists play better, but can also help save money and time. Good reeds are a vital component of building strong fundamentals and promoting musical growth.

- Play reeds for only a short time on the first day, then gradually increase the duration of playing time each day.
- Purchasing a full box of reeds is always recommended over purchasing individual reeds. This encourages good rotation habits and is more cost effective.
- Rotating reeds can increase their lifespan. Make sure that the same reed is not played every single day. Consider having students date and number their reeds with a pencil.
- Always have more than one good reed ready for use at all times. For beginners, having 3-4 good reeds on hand is appropriate. More advanced students should have 5-8.
- Never store or leave reeds on the mouthpiece when putting the instrument away.
- Store reeds in a humidity-controlled environment, such as the Multi-Instrument Reed Storage Case. This helps prevent warping and keeps reeds ready for optimal performance. Replace the humidity pack inside the case when it hardens.
- Place the ligature on the mouthpiece first, then lift up the ligature slightly and slide the reed down behind it. This will prevent accidental damage to reed tips during the assembly process.



D'Addario Multi-Instrument Reed Storage Case