
The First 30 Days

For the beginning band student: the first four weeks, one week at a time.

Before day 1

The whole plan

Why this pace

That's a conservatory program, and then that might be ... [an] entire year for students to learn their 12 major [scales], and while that is somewhat reasonable, my rationale for moving faster, simple: we don't have a lot of opportunities for kids to play in ensembles, and in order to retain them, they need to see themselves as young musicians as quickly as possible, and I contend, at the minute they have the ability to play their major [scales] the entire range of their instrument, that's when they will be able to see, metaphorically, the horizon and see themselves as musicians.

The goal is the whole horn

The name of the app is The Whole Horn, so it implies being able to have, eventually, wizardry in execution, freedom of movement throughout the entire range of the instrument. To suggest that the goal is to have freedom of movement within only a partial range of the instrument is not in fact the definition of freedom of movement ...

The steps

... So this has to happen in ... parts and in steps. You first [establish] position and muscle memory for a position, with a massive focus on [embouchure], then you get all of the notes to speak, ideally by the end of the third week, if you're [a] saxophonist and you're my student, all 32 notes, and then immediately you learn the [scales, one octave], all 12 major scales, and you extend that as soon as possible to the full range of the instrument, articulating each note. All of this can be done in a couple of months if you are extremely focused, extremely well organized with your time ...

Before day 1

The whole plan

Every instrument

That's for beginner saxophone, but I would argue that that basic plan should carry over to most instruments, frankly.

All instruments are gonna be treated pretty much the same way ... If you're talking about beginner [flute] players learning basic technique, ... I would say yes, the full range of the flute and the full range of the clarinet. I would also say, in terms of preparing to go deeper into the jazz curriculum, that would be the first order of business: ... making sure that students can get every note to speak on the flute and a clarinet, and can play all their major [scales] fairly fluidly throughout the entire range of the instrument.

When the student gets tired

When the student gets tired, they should revert to just blowing air into the instrument while fingering the note that they are ... focusing on.

What the free app covers

In the free app, the Milestone plays every note across the whole range, and the major scales stop at two octaves. The major scales across the full range are in the Full Studio.

The free app is a primer. It will allow a beginner to get probably through the first year, unless they're [highly] motivated, in which case hopefully the parents or the child will be able to afford to access the rest of the app, and will desire to do so ... to further explore all the various ways that [professionals] like myself practice [scales] to reinforce basic technique, and to continue to work on developing a more homogeneous sound, a ... stronger ability to adapt to various [tempos], and [an] ever increasing range. [Saxophone] players often play a full [octave] above the [high F sharp], and many [aspire] to go higher. I think because it's so commonplace, it's not really [a] question about playing high, although that creates a lot of excitement; it's more about just having more options. ... If you can play somewhat fluently in that third [octave], it really does open up infinite possibilities for [further] expanded musical expression.

Practice time and parents

For parents and teachers

How long each day

First week · 20 to 30 minutes a day

First year · 30 minutes a day

Second year · 45 minutes to an hour a day

Third year · an hour to an hour and a half a day

Fourth year on (college level) · 3 to 6 hours a day; at least three hours on a bad day

The expectation, fourth and fifth year on · 4 to 5 hours a day

These times are total engagement: études, ensemble pieces and the two hours on each of the 12 major scales all sit inside them. Parents should be told that there is a longer-term plan, with more focus on the instrument as the years advance.

The pace

I don't really want the students to practice one scale for weeks. I would much rather that they are encouraged to get through the 12 major [scales] as quickly as possible.

Parents

Understood that very young students have a shorter attention span, but again my own experience tells me that it is critical that the young students as well as the older students develop quickly, certainly in areas of the world, and in situations where they will not have opportunities to play with others, so my [preference is] that there is parental assistance and guidance, and that be explained to be an existential element of the success of a young child, given that the parents are often monitoring the time management of their children.

Practice time and parents

For parents and teachers

The first several months

Unless there is ... growth in the commitment of the student, they won't be able to grow musically, but this has to be organic. At some point the student has to want to practice, otherwise it's not gonna work. Hence, the dire necessity for a very, very steep learning curve in the first several months ... and that can be achieved by parental guidance and some strong advice with respect to being able to play their major [scales] the entire range of the instrument. I'm talking about all 12 major [scales], and I am talking about students as young as nine.

In the free app the major scales stop at two octaves; the full range is in the Full Studio.

A light experience

There are many students that will not be able to sustain this approach, and that is fine if there is an opportunity to play in ensemble in the very beginning stages and there are enough teachers to handle students whose parents are looking for a very light experience in music, which is incredibly valuable for [a] young mind, and that should be celebrated.

Encouragement and ensemble

It is important to say that in a household [where] students are not encouraged by their parents to practice on a regular basis and where there is no regular ensemble performance, there literally is no possibility for the development of musical talent. That being said, many students find that spark somewhat by accident and [are] suddenly engaged in practice ... so for those students that are not practicing, it is important to keep encouraging them.

Practice time and parents

For parents and teachers

The choke point

The point being that the parents are the choke point. [Unless] the parents decide that practicing is a priority and it is as important as academics, or at least an incredibly positive part of their academic success, students will end up practicing once a week and be frustrated.

A good instrument

It is also important that every effort be made to ensure that saxophone students have really good instruments.

Recommendations: Recommended Gear & Instruments

[Open the page](#)

Week 1 • Days 1–7

Position, posture, hands, embouchure

The first week is position, posture, hands, most importantly [embouchure], and they are asked to go home and to [form an embouchure], use a mirror, and just work on making sure that the muscle memory is developed primarily for the [embouchure], but also for posture and hand position, and they blow air into the instrument, and we have learned the fingerings for a few notes.

How long each day

20 to 30 minutes a day.

Ready for week 2 when

It's very simple. You have formed a good embouchure; a good hand position and good posture is icing on the cake, but the main goal is to form a good embouchure, with muscle memory that is maintaining that good embouchure ...

Week 2 • Days 8–14

More notes, both registers

Second week, they learned more notes and are encouraged to do their own research online ... for the [fingerings], but they're taught during the limited time. At this point [a] fair number of notes in both registers, ... and they [are] asked to play with sound, to produce sound until they get tired, which could be very quickly, and then go back to no sound.

How long each day

30 minutes a day.

By the end of week 2

The student should be encouraged to do their own research to try to learn the fingerings for all the notes on the instrument by the end of the week, and play long [tones on as] many of those notes as possible.

Practice link

Long tones
3.5 hours for the week

Open in the app

Week 3 • Days 15–21

The whole instrument: the Milestone

Third week, they're shown all the instrument ... at that point. The Milestone ... becomes incredibly appropriate, because they are asked to articulate every single note ... 16 times, then [eight], and four, [then] two, [then] one, and do it over and over again.

By the end of week 3, ideally

... then you get all of the notes to speak, ideally by the end of the third week, if you're [a] saxophonist and you're my student, all 32 notes ...
... The end of week three should be called a success, and this is the ideal ... when the student demonstrates an ability to articulate every single note on the instrument and easily get every note to speak.
By the end of the third week, ... the student should be able to play a chromatic scale throughout the entire range of [the] instrument.
The Milestone runs each instrument's own range: from G up to the top, back down through G to the bottom, and back up to G.

The Milestone: long notes, and the first note is a release

The note[s] should be long ..., with a slightly heavier articulation to start with, kind of like your hand is slapping the table, but not as aggressive.

Week 3 • Days 15–21

The whole instrument: the Milestone

On a reed instrument

The entire tip of the tongue should be covering the front part of the [reed] for the first note that sounds, and we're gonna call that a [release]. You take a breath and put your tongue on, [you finger] the note, and you release the tongue, and the air will then proceed into the instrument and start the vibration of the [reed]. The release of the tongue, along with the air pressure, should allow for an immediate ... resulting sound being heard, not a delay. This is something that needs practice, and in fact is a lifetime endeavor. Subsequent notes ... we do call an articulation ... The first note, however, is a release. We have our tongue already on the [reed], the entire front part of the [reed]; the tongue is released, and subsequent articulations happen when the tongue interrupts the vibration of the [reed] for a millisecond, and it should be quite [light]: the faster you tongue, ... the lighter the articulation, and the closer towards the tip of the tongue you are as you attempt to [interrupt] the vibration of the [reed].

How long each day

30 minutes a day.

Practice link

The Milestone
Tenuto · 3.5 hours for the week

Open in the app

Week 4 • Days 22–30

The twelve major scales, one at a time

Then the fourth week, they [are] asked to learn all 12 major scales one at a time, taking the first scale, learning the note[s], memorizing the note[s], [there] are only seven, and just going up [an octave], and playing that over and over again with very little sound, very little pressure, ... so [they] don't let themselves get tired, and make an attempt to get through all 12 [scales]. Realistically, they only get through a couple in that way, but that is the idealistic plan of events for each young student, and whether it's four weeks or four months, that's the way [it] will play out.

How long each day

30 minutes a day.

Week 4 • Days 22–30

The twelve major scales, one at a time

Practice link

Major scales, all twelve keys
One octave · 3.5 hours for the week

Open in the app

The Movie Method

Musicians that are ... really great at their instruments play all the time, and they play all the time because they love it ... Much of the ... prerequisite work that is done has just about everything to do with muscle memory ... These are very, very, very physical, non-intellectual endeavors, and so a student that [is] encouraged to play one major scale up and down for two hours could potentially keep doing that while watching a movie. The [argument] that would counter that would suggest, you know, if you're gonna practice you need to focus, but I would argue that students, especially young students, don't have the bandwidth to focus all their energy on practice when they have all kinds of other homework, and practicing needs to be their release valve. It needs to be their private time. It needs to be their meditation. They have to associate playing their horn with relaxing and enjoying their time, so I see no harm; in fact, I see great benefit in taking a major scale, learning it for a few minutes, and then turning on a movie and continuing to play through that scale at the same time that they're watching the movie. A whole long list of beautiful things happen, not [least] ... a student learns to relax and maintain a singular position, the singular [embouchure], in a relaxed position throughout the range of the instrument ... If they are able [to] relax when they practice, then practicing becomes their refuge, their yoga, [their] safe place, [their] quiet time ... If they practice while they watch a movie or watch a TV show, they can time themselves to a certain extent; they could say, I played F major for the entire movie, and ... this is probably the most important part, they will unconsciously associate playing their instrument with their downtime, their time to recharge their batteries and [relax], and they will decide that playing the saxophone, or ... playing the flute, or playing the double [bass], is exactly that: that's where they go when they're feeling tired and they need a boost ... and I think that is the [core] ingredient for success: someone that really wants to play ...

Week 4 • Days 22–30

The twelve major scales, one at a time

Days 29 and 30

Days 29 and 30, from my perspective, should be about review and record and ... personal accountability for what they have learned, but it should also be the moment where there's supposed to be an ability to use the achieved skills as a warm-up for whatever performance might come later.

Ready to go past day 30 when

[The] sign that the 30 days are done would be the ability to play all 12 major [scales], the entire range of the instrument, but I would acquiesce on that a little bit and be satisfied that the student can complete all 12 [scales] in a single octave.

After day 30

F major, two hours

The next step

In the week following that first ... 30 [days], the immediate concern is that the major scale[s] that the student has learned ... become ... the genesis of so many beautiful and amazing things to come, but the next step ... would be to be able to play those [scales] the entire range of the instrument, and then, gradually, with the help of this app, The Whole Horn, developing virtuosic technique within the context of each of those major scales, using all of the patterns and shapes and intervals ... And then they start developing technique and ability, basic technique, learning to play those major [scales], and as soon as I can ask him to take F major and play it up and down, one [octave], for two hours, that single exercise, and that effort will teach him stamina, will teach him ... time management, energy management ... If they can play all 12 scales each for two hours, that's the point where they will, as far as I'm concerned, play music for the rest of their lives, if they finish that. Two hours on each of the 12 major scales is part of the daily practice time, along with études, ensemble pieces, etc.

Then the whole range

... and then immediately you learn the [scales, one octave], all 12 major scales, and you extend that as soon as possible to the full range of the instrument, articulating each note ...

After day 30

F major, two hours

Practice link

F major
One octave · two hours

Open in the app

The first time a student opens a link, the app asks what they play; the exercise is waiting underneath.

Brass

The Milestone for brass players is a much more delicate issue, because brass players get tired very quickly, especially trumpet; euphonium is quite a bit easier. ... I would say the Milestone ... can be used for just a few minutes every day, and only until the [trumpet] player finds that they are having difficulty in proceeding. ... In order to strengthen the [embouchure] for [trumpet] players and brass players, it's a matter of consistency of practice every single day, so the Milestone ... can be used with that in [mind], and the extension of the range ... takes longer. ... Being able to play with an extended range on the trumpet is a real mark of maturity. ... When the trumpet player gets really tired, I ... myself recommend just blowing air and fingering the note [and] articulating the note that way. This exercise could potentially continue for the entire range if the student is focused and brave enough to play without sound, just blowing air into the instrument for a very long period of time. I personally think that could be very, very valuable, taking great care to make sure that the fingering is correct. ... Their progress may take a longer period of time, but the goals need to remain the same. ... The hard truth is that the development of the trumpet [embouchure] is something that has to be carefully done over a longer period of time, whereas a beginner saxophonist can engage without putting a lot of pressure [and] can actually hear the notes being played, and that's true for the [flute], that's true for the clarinet. ... I would still push the same [overarching] goal ... most importantly, the realization that young people who are not going to [play] in ensembles will likely quit if the learning curve isn't very steep, and if they find themselves a year later still [without] a fair amount of competency with their instrument. And playing melodies is probably not enough to keep them if they are playing on their own.

Practice link for brass

The Milestone, for brass
A few minutes every day · Tenuto

Open in the app