
Week by Week

THE FIRST YEAR

From the first note in October to the final exam in July. One link a week, written for every wind and brass player.

One link a week. Every student, their own key.

The problem: in one room, a flute reads C, a trumpet reads D, an alto sax reads A, a horn reads G — for the same note.

Watch the video · 21 s
thewholehorn.com/curriculum/first-year/

Watch the video

The solution: each week in this plan is one link. Paste it into Google Classroom, WhatsApp or email; every student opens the week written for their own instrument. Anything you assign opens free for your students — up to two octaves; the full range is the Full Studio. No student accounts.

STUDIO

each player in their own written key, the full plan.

BAND

concert pitch, so the whole band sounds together, in a beginner range with lighter hours.

The year at a glance

OCTOBER

the first four weeks

NOVEMBER–FEBRUARY

two hours on each key — each major with its relative harmonic minor and arpeggios; students are encouraged to get through all 12 as quickly as possible.

MIDTERM

early March · the scale requirement is the same at the midterm and the final.

APRIL–JUNE

the four rhythms, then ♩ =60 to 70.

The year at a glance

FINAL

early July

Week 6 · F major + D harmonic minor + F arpeggios
Studio · one octave
Band · concert pitch · first notes (arpeggios one octave)

Studio

Band

Week 7 · C major + A harmonic minor + C arpeggios
Studio · one octave
Band · concert pitch · first notes (arpeggios one octave)

Studio

Band

Week 8 · G major + E harmonic minor + G arpeggios
Studio · one octave
Band · concert pitch · first notes (arpeggios one octave)

Studio

Band

The year at a glance

Week 9 · B ♭ major + G harmonic minor + B ♭ arpeggios
Studio · one octave
Band · concert pitch · first notes (arpeggios one octave)

Studio

Band

Week 10 · D major + B harmonic minor + D arpeggios
Studio · one octave
Band · concert pitch · first notes (arpeggios one octave)

Studio

Band

Week 11 · E ♭ major + C harmonic minor + E ♭ arpeggios
Studio · one octave
Band · concert pitch · first notes (arpeggios one octave)

Studio

Band

Week 12 · A major + F # harmonic minor + A arpeggios
Studio · one octave
Band · concert pitch · first notes (arpeggios one octave)

Studio

Band

The year at a glance

Week 13 · A ♭ major + F harmonic minor + A ♭ arpeggios
Studio · one octave
Band · concert pitch · first notes (arpeggios one octave)

Studio

Band

Week 14 · E major + C # (the app spells it D ♭) harmonic minor + E arpeggios
Studio · one octave
Band · concert pitch · first notes (arpeggios one octave)

Studio

Band

Week 15 · D ♭ major + B ♭ harmonic minor + D ♭ arpeggios
Studio · one octave
Band · concert pitch · first notes (arpeggios one octave)

Studio

Band

The year at a glance

Week 16 · B major + G # (the app spells it A ♭) harmonic minor + B arpeggios

Studio · one octave

Band · concert pitch · first notes (arpeggios one octave)

Studio

Band

Week 17 · F # major + D # (the app spells it E ♭) harmonic minor + F # arpeggios

Studio · one octave

Band · concert pitch · first notes (arpeggios one octave)

Studio

Band

SUMMER · the Lifetime Workout

Weeks, not dates — if your year starts in August, Week 1 is your first week.

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

Recommended Gear & Instruments

[Open the page](#)

October • The first four weeks

The first four weeks follow Tom's Teacher's Guide to Four Weekly Lesson Plans. Daily practice (see Practice time and parents, above): 20 to 30 minutes a day in the first week, then 30 minutes a day.

Watch the video · 22 s
thewholehorn.com/curriculum/first-year/

Watch the video

1

Building the foundation: posture, air, and tone
Week 1 is non-negotiable. Posture, embouchure and diaphragmatic breathing; silent airflow; then first long tones on middle G, A or B at a very low volume. One good note is the only goal.

Studio

Band

2

Mapping the instrument: registers and intonation
Week 2 is where the instrument becomes one voice. Do your own research: five new fingerings a day. Slow, low-volume chromatic scales up and down the full range; slurs between registers.

Studio

Band

October • The first four weeks

The first four weeks follow Tom's Teacher's Guide to Four Weekly Lesson Plans. Daily practice (see Practice time and parents, above): 20 to 30 minutes a day in the first week, then 30 minutes a day.

3

Giving notes a voice: articulation

Articulation is a release, not an attack. The 16-8-4-2-1 drill on every note of the instrument; then the F major scale, one octave, each note tongued cleanly and evenly.

Studio

Band

4

Achieving fluency: scales and application

All 12 major scales from memory, in the 12-key rotation. Learn the melody of one standard: "So What," "Autumn Leaves" or "All Blues." The Movie Method: scales up and down at a very low volume.

Studio

Band

November • Two hours a key

Weeks 6 to 17 lay out one key a week; students are encouraged to get through all 12 major scales as quickly as possible, two hours on each. Those two hours are part of the daily practice time, along with études, ensemble pieces, etc.

Watch the video · 24 s
thewholehorn.com/curriculum/first-year/

Watch the video

5

All 12 major scales, one octave · first method book
one octave · ♩ = 60 · tenuto · 2 h this week

Studio

Band

November • Two hours a key

6

F major, one octave · the single exercise, two hours
one octave · ♩ =60 · tenuto · 2 h on this key

Studio

Band

7

C major, one octave · the single exercise, two hours
one octave · ♩ =60 · tenuto · 2 h on this key

Studio

Band

8

G major, one octave · the single exercise, two hours
one octave · ♩ =60 · tenuto · 2 h on this key

Studio

Band

December · Two hours a key

Watch the video · 24 s

9	B ♭ major, one octave · the single exercise, two hours one octave · ♩ =60 · tenuto · 2 h on this key	Studio	Band
10	D major, one octave · the single exercise, two hours one octave · ♩ =60 · tenuto · 2 h on this key	Studio	Band
11	E ♭ major, one octave · the single exercise, two hours one octave · ♩ =60 · tenuto · 2 h on this key	Studio	Band
H	Holiday · The Lifetime Workout, 15–20 minutes a day all 12 majors + arpeggios · two octaves · ♩ =60 · 2 h this week	Studio	Band

January · Two hours a key

Watch the video · 22 s

12

A major, one octave · the single exercise, two hours
one octave · ♩ =60 · tenuto · 2 h on this key

Studio

Band

13

A $\flat$ major, one octave · the single exercise, two hours
one octave · ♩ =60 · tenuto · 2 h on this key

Studio

Band

14

E major, one octave · the single exercise, two hours
one octave · ♩ =60 · tenuto · 2 h on this key

Studio

Band

15

D $\flat$ major, one octave · the single exercise, two hours
one octave · ♩ =60 · tenuto · 2 h on this key

Studio

Band

February · The midterm requirement

Watch the video · 25 s

16

B major, one octave · the single exercise, two hours
one octave · ♩ =60 · tenuto · 2 h on this key

Studio

Band

17

F # major, one octave · the single exercise, two hours
one octave · ♩ =60 · tenuto · 2 h on this key

Studio

Band

18

Every key, major and minor
two octaves · ♩ =60 · tenuto · 5 h this week

Studio

Band

19

The whole requirement, quarters and eighths
two octaves · ♩ =60 · tenuto · 5 h this week

Studio

Band

March • Midterm

20

The whole scale requirement
two octaves · ♩ =60 · tenuto · 5 h this week

Studio

Band

21

Triplets join
two octaves · ♩ =60 · tenuto · 5 h this week

Studio

Band

Midterm • early March

The scale requirement is the same at the midterm and the final.

Études: the first half of the book.

Be ready to play 5–6 études at random — one slow (musicianship), one fast (technique).

Midterm · the scale requirement: all 12 major scales, harmonic minors and arpeggios · quarters and eighths · ♩ =60 · tenuto · full range · Full Studio; two octaves on the free app — Studio

Open in the app

April • The four rhythms

Watch the video • 28 s

22

Sixteenths join
two octaves • ♩ =60 • tenuto • 5 h this week

Studio

Band

23

All four rhythms
two octaves • ♩ =60 • tenuto • 5 h this week

Studio

Band

24

All four rhythms, staccato
two octaves • ♩ =60 • staccato • 5 h this week

Studio

Band

25

All four rhythms, ♩ =63
two octaves • ♩ =63 • tenuto • 5 h this week

Studio

Band

May • The second half of the book

Watch the video • 20 s

26

Staccato, ♩ =63
two octaves · ♩ =63 · staccato · 5 h this week

Studio

Band

27

♩ =66
two octaves · ♩ =66 · tenuto · 5 h this week

Studio

Band

28

Staccato, ♩ =66
two octaves · ♩ =66 · staccato · 5 h this week

Studio

Band

29

Chromatic scale joins
two octaves · ♩ =66 · tenuto · 7 h this week

Studio

Band

June • Final preparation

Watch the video • 24 s

30

♪ =68
two octaves • ♩ =68 • tenuto • 5 h this week

Studio

Band

31

Staccato, ♩ =68
two octaves • ♩ =68 • staccato • 5 h this week

Studio

Band

32

The final requirement, ♩ =70
two octaves • ♩ =70 • tenuto • 5 h this week

Studio

Band

33

Dress rehearsal
two octaves • ♩ =70 • staccato • 5 h this week

Studio

Band

July • Final

Watch the video · 29 s

34

The whole scale requirement, ♩ =70
two octaves · ♩ =70 · tenuto · 5 h this week

Studio

Band

Final • early July

- 1 · Scales & arpeggios — major scales and their harmonic minors, across the entire range of the instrument, ♩ =60–70.
- 2 · The studies from your method book — any study, chosen at random.
- 3 · The piece — last, but finish strong.

Final · scales & arpeggios: all 12 majors, harmonic minors and arpeggios · all four rhythms · ♩ =60–70 · tenuto · full range · Full Studio; two octaves on the free app — Studio

Open in the app

The exam

‘Most students make the mistake of thinking the exam is about the imposed piece. Nothing could be further from the truth.’

Four articulations

Every note tongued / detached (détaché) · Articulate every other note · Slurred two by two · Three slurred, one tongued.

The four articulations, played over all 12 majors and harmonic minors · the app plays tenuto · quarters · ♩ =60 · full range · Full Studio; two octaves on the free app — Studio

[Open in the app](#)

The four articulations, played over all 12 majors and harmonic minors · the app plays staccato · quarters · ♩ =60 · full range · Full Studio; two octaves on the free app — Studio

[Open in the app](#)

The app plays each scale staccato or tenuto; the four articulations are played over it.

Summer • The Lifetime Workout

'It is possible to write down on a single page the work that can take a lifetime to master. That page would contain: All 12 major scales. All 12 major arpeggios. Various patterns and shapes derived from them.'

Summer • all 12 major scales + all 12 major arpeggios • two octaves (as the Holiday week) • ♩ =60 • tenuto • 2 h a week — Studio

[Open in the app](#)

15–20 minutes a day.

Make it yours

Every week here is a starting point. To change one, open For Teachers in The Whole Horn, set the key, tempo, range or hours, add your own sentence, make the link, and paste it over ours.

What this plan leaves to you: percussion, rhythm reading, your method book and your concert music.

KEY

TEMPO

RANGE

HOURS

thewholehorn.com