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# Saxophone

## FOR DUMMIES®

### *Learn to:*

- Choose the best saxophone for you: soprano, alto, tenor, or baritone
- Perform a variety of musical styles
- Clean and care for your saxophone



Play along with audio samples  
on the CD-ROM

**Denis Gäbel**  
**Michael Villmow**



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# ***Saxophone For Dummies***<sup>®</sup>

**by Denis Gäbel & Michael  
Villmow**



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## **Saxophone For Dummies**<sup>®</sup>

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## About the Authors

**Denis Gäbel** studied saxophone at the renowned Conservatory of Amsterdam, in Holland and has taught as a visiting lecturer at the Johannes Gutenberg University, Mainz, Germany.

In 2003, he won first prize at the international Pim Jacobs Concours in Rotterdam, Holland. He was also a finalist at the Dutch Jazz Competition, and won the 2009 Jazz Award from Germany's Federal Association of Music Industry for his work as composer and arranger on his brother Tom Gäbel's CD *Don't Wanna Dance*.

Denis Gäbel is also a bandleader in his own right, primarily with his group the Denis Gäbel Trio. In collaboration with Jasper Blom, he released two CDs with Nagel Heyer Records (2006 *Keep on Rollin'*; 2009 *Love Call — Impressions of Ellington*).

You can find further information about Denis Gäbel at [www.denisgaebel.com](http://www.denisgaebel.com).

**Michael Villmow** has played with many renowned musicians such as Ray Charles, Sammy Davis Jr., Caterina Valente and Johnny Logan. He is the founder of the Cologne Big Band, in which jazz giants such as Randy Brecker, Bendik Hofseth, Manfred Schoof and Chad Wackermann played.

As a composer, Villmow has created works for the German radio stations WDR and NDR, and for the opera in Cologne. In 1999, the Norwegian Music Committee commissioned Villmow to write a piece for their national big band and choir, which inspired him to be more involved in vocal music. Since then, he has written several compositions for saxophone and choir, including several masses.

Since 1980, Michael Villmow has worked as music teacher at the Rhein Music School in Cologne, where he mentors students of all ages through individual lessons, and leads many ensembles, and is the head of the Jazz-Rock-Pop Department. In addition, he has worked as guest lecturer for saxophone at the University of Cologne and has conducted ensembles at the Robert Schumann University for Music in Düsseldorf, Germany. Since 1993, he has worked as a conductor, composer, and arranger of the musical executive team at the Youth Jazz Orchestra of Nordrhein-Westfalen in Germany.

## Dedication

**Denis Gäbel:** Thanks to my parents Monika and Peter and my brothers Oliver, Tom, and Colin.

**Michael Villmow:** Thanks to my children Annika and Frederik

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# Introduction

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Are you fascinated by the saxophone? Is it your dream instrument? Maybe you already know how to play this wonderful instrument or perhaps you want to try it out. Well, *Saxophone For Dummies* is exactly the right choice for beginners and anyone else looking to expand their skills and knowledge.

The saxophone has influenced many styles of music. Whether it's in the big bands of Count Basie and Duke Ellington, Bill Haley's legendary rock 'n' roll band, or the funk master James Brown, saxophonists have left their indelible mark on music. In the bossa nova song "The Girl from Ipanema," the breathy saxophone is the icing on the cake.

Saxophone also plays an essential role in the so-called "serious music." Maurice Ravel's *Boléro* shows another side of the instrument. Here, it's not about the roaring R&B sax that King Curtis played or what you might recall from the pop hit "Baker Street." Instead, in Ravel's piece, the saxophone has a fine, clear sound that's a beautifully integral part of the classical orchestra.

The many faces and voices of the saxophone ensure that it remains a popular instrument. Whether as a solo instrument, as part of a horn section in a big band, or at home in your living room, the dynamic and rich sound is captivating!

## About This Book

*Saxophone For Dummies* helps you to discover the world of the saxophone. This book provides you with everything you need

— from help in selecting your instrument and accessories, to sounding out your first notes, to unlocking the secrets of the different musical styles including blues, jazz, pop, and classical. This is a comprehensive guide to playing and understanding the instrument.

We've combined our individual experiences, wisdom, and insights as saxophone players and teachers into this book. We have mixed manageable, short exercises and helpful background information in between the melodies and songs. And you can also let yourself be accompanied by the audio tracks that accompany the book. The philosophy of *Saxophone For Dummies* is a blend of profound knowledge, goal-oriented exercises, and musical applications for a variety of music styles.

You'll discover, step by step, all the notes that the saxophone can produce. We provide a detailed fingering chart and example of how the note is written for each pitch. With our detailed descriptions, key charts, and notation, playing is easy. You can repeat each new note through exercises and actual music to cement your ability to play it. To help you develop an expressive musical language, we also explain useful techniques for good articulation, phrasing, and dynamics.

These skills help you play in a whole bunch of musical styles. Learn to play the blues, jazz, rock 'n' roll, R&B, funk, soul, bossa nova, pop, and classical on your saxophone. Moreover, we familiarize you with the greatest saxophone players in music history and provide you with listening tips to fascinating recordings.

On the accompanying audio tracks, you can find multiple exercises and songs. When you use the playback versions, you have the opportunity to play with a band.



# Foolish Assumptions

We assume a few things about you, the reader. We assume that you share our interest in the saxophone. Actually we assume that you share our *enthusiasm* for this instrument, its sound, and the music it can produce. And we assume that you really want to learn to play the saxophone yourself — and play it well!

We do *not* assume that you already own a saxophone. We don't assume that you can read the sheet music for Rimsky-Korsakow's "Flight of the Bumblebee," but we do assume that you're slightly familiar with written music and that you want to take advantage of this tool to make great music.

And now, please excuse us if we make a bold assumption. We figure that regardless of whether you're a beginner, an advanced saxophonist, or just an interested music lover, we believe you'll benefit from *Saxophone For Dummies*.

## What You Don't Need To Read

To work successfully with this book, you don't need to read the whole book from the beginning to the end. The sidebars (shaded boxes) provide additional and in-depth information to supplement the text. For the most part, these include musical jargon that you don't necessarily need to know if you want to play. The icons also mark information that's exciting but isn't essential for you to know.

# Conventions Used In This Book

This book uses certain conventions so you can follow along easily:

- ✓ Track numbers that accompany the songs and exercises refer to the track numbers of audio tracks.
- ✓ All tracks have two versions, one for the E<sup>b</sup> saxophones alto and baritone, and a second version for the B<sup>b</sup> instruments soprano and tenor.
- ✓ Some songs feature chord symbols, which are roman numerals marked above the written music. Experienced sax teachers, pianists, or guitarists can play the chords to accompany you. Chapter 6 provides more detailed information on this.
- ✓ Every section of the book is cross-referenced so that you can easily find all related sections about a particular topic. Additionally, the table of contents at the beginning of the book and the index at the end help you navigate with ease.
- ✓ All notes and their corresponding fingerings are explained in detail in Chapters 4 and 7. A supplementary fingering chart is provided in Appendix B. You can quickly find the relevant fingering for each note.

## How This Book Is Organized

*Saxophone For Dummies* is designed to accommodate your personal preference by allowing you to read any chapter in any order. So you can enjoy browsing at will. If you get stuck at any point, the cross-references and index can help you quickly get the appropriate answer to your questions. Of course, you can also read the book from the beginning to end in sequential order.

## **Part I: Basic Information about the Saxophone**

In Part I we discuss the genius Adolphe Sax and what inspired him to build such a beautiful, admirable, and gorgeous instrument. And by the way, it's an exciting story! You'll also find out about all the different members of the saxophone family. In addition to the well-known alto and tenor saxophones, you'll meet the small soprano and the large baritone sax.

Are you looking for your own saxophone? Then, in this section, you discover tips on how to find a good-fitting instrument, regardless of whether it's new or used. We explain the basic functioning of a saxophone and how all of its parts fit together. And we discuss the foundations of playing, including the correct posture, the breathing technique, and the importance of the embouchure.

## **Part II: Getting Started: From First Notes to Special Effects**

Part II starts to get juicy. This section provides plenty of good stuff regardless of whether you are sounding out your first notes, are interested in getting those challenging high and/or

low notes, or just want to try out certain effects. All of the fingerings and notes are clearly explained and illustrated.

Chapter 5 discusses how you can use articulation to play expressively and to create excitement. Because music is a language, naturally the right intonation and pronunciation are essential. In Chapter 6 we serve up the first longer songs. And for dessert, an introduction to improvisation, but prepared so that it is easily digested.

## **Part III: A Variety of Styles: The Blues, Jazz, Pop, and Classical**

In Part III we teach you about the various music styles you can play on the sax. The best part is that saxophone plays an important role in every genre! Each chapter in this section discusses the heroes of each respective style. We present technical details that you can practice with tailor-made exercises. Then you can release all of your energy into our songs by playing with the accompanying band on the audio tracks. Eventually you can invite friends, relatives, and neighbors over for a house concert.

## **Part IV: Saxophone Accessories, Maintenance, and Practice Tips**

Part IV discusses different saxophone brands as well as important and useful equipment. In Chapter 16 we suggest many ideas. Fortunately, the market has the right saxophone for