Saxophone Fingering Chart

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Neal Battaglia

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Why?

Saxophone technique alone does not make a great musician.....

But it does enable a sax player to be great.

Not needing to think about technique allows the you to connect to music and share what is inside of you.
Finger Position

Correct positioning

Incorrect positioning

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About the Diagrams

The diagrams for the different notes are set up like you’re holding and playing the saxophone in front of you.

The keys on your right will be on the right side of the diagram.

This seemed more intuitive to me.
(Notes side by side are enharmonic equivalents)
Below the Staff

D

C# (Db)

C (B#)

B (Cb)

Bb (A#)
Next Five Notes

- **G**
- **F# (Gb)**
- **F (E#)**
- **E (Fb)**
- **Eb (D#)**
Next Five Notes

- C (B#)
- B (Bb)
- Bb (A#)
- A
- G# (Ab)
Next Five Notes

F (E#)  
E (Fb)  
Eb (D#)  
D  
C# (Db)
Next Five Notes

F# (Gb)
G
G# (Ab)
A
Bb (A#)
Next Five Notes

Eb (D#)  
C# (Db)  
C (B#)   
B (Cb)
Top three notes

E (Fb)

F (E#)

F# (Gb)

Beyond here lies altissimo.....
Saxophone Keys & Fingers

Left Hand

L1  L2  L3
LP  LH  LT

Right Hand

R1  R2  R3  RP
RH  RT

T=Thumb
P=Pinky
H=Hand

Fingers 1,2, 3
Saxophone Keys & Fingers

Left Hand
Main Keys

L1
L2
L3
Right Hand Main Keys

\[ \text{R1} \]
\[ \text{R2} \]
\[ \text{R3} \]
Left Hand Palm Keys

Left Hand Palm Keys, uses left hand, keep left hand fingers on the keys.

Sometimes adjustments to the palm keys make this easier.

Abbreviated LH
Right Hand Side Keys

Use the side of the right hand, keep fingers on right hand main keys

Abbreviated RH
Alternate F# and high F# key

Press each with R3
Left Hand ‘Table’ Keys

All four operated with LP
Modern saxophones have
‘rollers’ to go between the
table keys easier
Eb and C keys

Use RP
High F and Bis Key
The fingering system for alto sax is fundamentally the same as tenor, bari, soprano, etc (all saxophones).

Certain notes come out cleaner on alto using a particular fingering though- ie high F# using the side Bb key with the three palm keys

There are 22 (23 with high F#) keys to press.

If you don’t have that 23rd key (high F#), don’t worry about it! The note can be played without that key.

And actually, there are alternate fingerings for a number of the notes. Sometimes they aren’t quite as in tune, but may be executed more cleanly in certain situations.
Enharmonic Equivalents

Notes can be written different ways to describe the same pitch.

Example: A# is the same as Bb to the ear.

Music notation rules keep written music cleaner.

In this fingering chart, pitch equivalents that are both used commonly are set side by side:

Ab a.k.a. G#

Not as common pitch equivalents are written below:

E
(a.k.a. Fb)
Some alternate fingerings are more equal than others.

Example: Side Bb and bis key Bb are both good fingerings.

Sometimes, however, alternate fingerings are a little less in tune than the main fingering, you can use them for convenience in certain situations, but generally don’t want to sustain notes with these fingerings.

Notes are made within the fingering chart.
Saxophones play music in treble clef, so there is not a treble clef written next to each note, it’s implied.
Both ‘Bb’ and ‘A#’ show up in music.

There is only one fingering for this note, maybe Chuck Norris knows another
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C (a.k.a. B#)

L1
L2
L3
R1
R2
R3
RP
C# a.k.a. Db

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LP

L1
L2
L3

R1
R2
R3
RP
Eb a.k.a. D#

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E (a.k.a. Fb)

L1
L2
L3
R1
R2
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F
(a.k.a. E#)

L1
L2
L3
R1
The first note with an alternate fingering!

Generally, use the usual fingering, the alternate can be useful in some situations - for example F -> F# at high speeds.
G# a.k.a. Ab

Main Fingering

Alternate Fingerings
(Pinky used for all table keys)
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Bb a.k.a. A#

Three good fingerings

Two more alternates
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B
(a.k.a. Cb)

L1
C (a.k.a. B#)
C# a.k.a. Db
Eb a.k.a. D#

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E (a.k.a. Fb)

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F (a.k.a. E#)
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F# a.k.a. Gb

Main fingering

L1
L2
L3
R2

Alternate

L1
L2
L3
R1
R3
G# a.k.a. Ab

Main fingering

Three alternates
Bb a.k.a. A#

Three main fingerings:

- L1
- L2
- RH

Two extras:

- LT
- LT
- LT

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B (a.k.a. Cb)

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C
(a.k.a. B#)

(Alternate, doesn’t sound quite as good)
C# a.k.a. Db

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Eb a.k.a. D#

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E
(a.k.a. Fb)

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Either fingering works, think about the context in which the note appears.
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Thanks to Bret Pimentel for creating the software that helped make this possible.
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