

# Saxophone

A member of the woodwind family of instruments, the saxophone, or sax for short, is usually made of brass. It's considered a woodwind instrument because it uses a single-reed mouthpiece, and brass instruments utilize the player's lip vibration to produce sound. A **reed** is a thin, flat strip of material used in some musical instruments. Reeds used to be made only of cane wood, but are now often **synthetic**, or man-made. The saxophone was in fact created to be a middle ground between woodwind and brass instruments.

Created by Belgian inventor Adolphe Sax in 1846, the saxophone was made to be the most powerful and vocal of the woodwinds and the most **adaptive**, or able to change easily, of the brass instruments.

Saxophones were originally designed for military bands. They are mostly thought of as jazz and classical music instruments, but are often used in school bands, symphony orchestras, opera, choral music, and even blues, rock, and pop music. They are sometimes used by street performers.

Someone who plays the saxophone is called a "saxophonist." The saxophonist plays by blowing air through the single-reed mouthpiece. The reed vibrates depending on the speed and power of the breath.

The air moves through the conical tube of the saxophone and changes notes as the saxophonist holds down a combination of buttons.

The buttons work to either open or close one or more of the 20 to 23 tone holes that are in the body of the tube. Both hands and all fingers are used in various combinations for different notes. The opening of the tube is a bell shape to help with the sound projection.

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1. **New terms:** See how these three terms are used in the text, and write a definition next to each one.

**reed**      a thin, flat strip of material used in some musical instruments

**adaptive**    able to change easily

**synthetic**    man-made

2. Is the saxophone a woodwind or brass instrument? Why?

it is a woodwind instrument because it uses a reed

3. The saxophone was originally designed for the opera.

True or False?

4. How many tone holes are in the tube of a saxophone? 20 to 23 tone holes