

Objectives: Assemble and put away instrument safely; Clean instrument and put on reed

It's important to know how to take proper care of your instrument when putting it together and taking it apart. Here's how to get started:

1. First remove the mouthpiece cap and take off the ligature (gold, silver or black fastener) from the mouthpiece by undoing the screws, and set aside for later.
2. Next attach the mouthpiece to the neck of the saxophone by gently twisting and pushing. (You may need to use a little cork grease if it is too difficult to attach.)
3. Twist the mouthpiece so that the flat side of it is on the underneath; hold the neck by the wide end and the flat side of the mouthpiece should be on that side.
4. Then take the reed out of its case carefully and, holding it by the thick end, put the thin end in your mouth taking care not to damage the fragile thin end.
5. Holding the reed in your mouth, wet it carefully for about half a minute.
6. Carefully remove the reed from your mouth and lay it on the flat side of the mouthpiece with the thin end coming almost to the top of the mouthpiece.
7. Holding the thick end of the reed in place with your thumb, carefully slide the ligature over the reed and mouthpiece until it is over the thick end. (If it doesn't come down far enough, you may need to unfasten the screws a bit more.)
8. Check that the reed is straight and positioned in the centre of the mouthpiece flat side, adjust as necessary and then carefully do up the screws on the ligature to hold the reed in place.
9. [Depending on how much time you have available, you could try making a sound on the mouthpiece, reed and neck – see the worksheet on blowing a steady note to learn how to do this.]
10. Put on the mouthpiece cap to protect the reed and attach the neck to the saxophone body by unscrewing the screw on the top of the body, inserting the neck and tightening the screw. The saxophone is now fully assembled.
11. To take it apart, follow the above steps in reverse, except the bit about wetting the reed.
12. Carefully place the reed in its reed holder by holding the thick end and sliding in from the side or pushing in gently from the end, depending on the make of reed. Don't push the reed in too far – you need to be able to get it out next time!
13. To remove moisture from the saxophone after playing, use a pull-through by dropping the weighted cord into the body, and the attached cloth will follow.
14. Congratulations, you now know how to assemble your saxophone safely, attach the reed and clean the instrument. Tick the first two points off your award card!