

Objective: Tongue

Tonguing is the word for using the tongue to separate notes when playing a woodwind instrument. Here's how to get started:

1. First look in the mirror and put your finger on the tip of your tongue.
2. Then look at your saxophone reed and identify the area near the tip of the reed where your tongue will touch.
3. With your neck, mouthpiece, reed and ligature assembled, but without putting it in your mouth, look in the mirror and touch the tip of your tongue on the reed.
4. Then put the mouthpiece in your mouth and get your mouth into position for playing.
5. Start with your tongue touching near the tip of the reed and try blowing; no sound should come out yet and you should feel a bit of air pressure.
6. Move your tongue down off the reed, the air will go through and you should hear a sound.
7. The next step is to blow a nice strong long note.
8. Then practise moving your tongue off and on the reed while blowing a long note; make sure you keep blowing, just using the tongue to start and stop notes.
9. You may find this takes a bit of getting used to, so practise each day until you feel confident; go back and repeat the instructions above until you can do it.
10. Aim for a four beat note divided into four one beat notes with the tongue; you may struggle to do this at first but the more you practise the easier it will get.



(As if you were saying 'tee tee tee tee' or 'dee dee dee dee')
tee tee tee tee

11. Move on to using the fully assembled saxophone and playing the note B.
12. For an added challenge, once you have mastered the technique, you could practice changing between two or three notes while tonguing.
13. Try playing an easy piece from your book while tonguing the notes; add the backing track if your book has a CD.
14. If you are in contact with a friend learning an instrument, you could try demonstrating tonguing to each other over the phone.
15. Demonstrate your tonguing to an adult in your house and tick off on your Red Award card. Congratulations, you can now tongue!