

Learning to play the overtone series often is a breakthrough for young players or students of any age. The sax can be played like a bugle, where many notes can be produced off the fundamental Bb fingering.

**Goal:** To increase breath control, develop a better tone quality and lay a strong foundation for beginning [altissimo](#) studies.

**Timeline:** Once each day at the beginning of the practice session

**Options:** Use with [5ths](#), [Longtones](#), [Octaves](#) or substitute in place of them as a daily warm up.

**IMPORTANT NOTE!** It is first necessary that the player has a complete understanding and ability to breath from the [diaphragm](#). Assuming this, continue with the exercise.

1. Familiarize yourself with the sound of the overtone series from low Bb to high F (the first 6 notes written below)
2. Match the regular side Bb fingering to the overtone fingering (low Bb) then go back to the regular fingering. See "Matching Overtones" below.
3. Take a full, supported breath from the diaphragm.
4. Open the throat, as though you were yawning. You can also imagine putting a ping pong ball in your mouth to create the "open" feeling in the throat.
5. Keep the throat open throughout the exercise, adjusting your throat cavity to achieve the different overtones. Experiment with the throat position, but DO NOT change the embouchure setting!
6. The first 2 or 3 overtones should be fairly easy to produce. More control is necessary as you move higher.
7. Continue on to "Switching Overtones". All notes are produced using the low Bb fingering.
8. If at any time you feel you are biting, STOP the exercise. Relax....don't bite and continue.
9. It is most important to remember that once the [embouchure](#) is set, it should remain stationary. Most of the overtones are achieved by varying the [oral cavity](#). Any changes in embouchure pressure are minimal. Concentrate on the obtaining the correct oral cavity.

Good luck!

\*As always, there is no substitute for a qualified private teacher. Seek a professional who specializes in saxophone.

# OVERTONE SERIES

R=Regular Fingering  
O=Overtone Fingering (Low Bb)

2 3 4

## Matching Overtones

5 6 7 8

R O R

## Matching Overtones

9 10 11 12

R O R

## Matching Overtones

13 14 15 16

R O R

## Switching Overtones

17 18 19 20

O O R

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