The Ultimate Fingering Chart for Saxophone

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Dear Saxophonist

Since the beta version of the ultimate fingering chart has been downloaded several 100,000 times throughout the last 10 years, it has now been revised and translated. The feedback has been exclusively positive and confirmed that this fingering chart is being used by beginners as well as experienced musicians. Particularly the mirror inverted graphics generate favorable responses and are now being used in other fingering charts. Thank you for using this fingering chart!

I wish you lots of joy and success with the bent horns,



Special thanks to Linus Wyrsch in New York for the english translation! ©



The author before...



... and after

The small print: GTC

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The place of jurisdiction is in Lucerne, Switzerland.

Content

page 4 - Left Hand and Right Hand, Thumbs and Normal Position of Hands

The following pages 3 and 4 require no further explanation. The mirror inverted fingering graphic helps you to learn the fingerings tactually by feeling, rather than visually.

page 6 - Basic Fingerings

The basic fingerings are shown on three pages, ascending chromatically beginning with the lowest tone. The notes E6 and F6 include alternate fingerings which should be used from the start.

My thinking for the notes A# and Bb is as follows: in key signatures with Bb, use the Bb double fingering. In key signatures with A# and with a B following (B major, F# major) I recommend the A# side key. The side key is also useful when a Bb follows right after a B or vice versa. The resulting philosophy suggests to use the double fingering as a norm and the A# side key as an alternative for B - Bb or Bb - B sequences.

page 9 - Trills

When playing trills and fast repetitions of neighboring tones, the saxophone frequently offers simplified fingering combinations. These alternatives help to overcome anatomical crutches. On one hand, they are helpful fingerings with specific keys. On the other hand, keys can often remain closed during fast sequences of notes without considerable negative effect on the sound. All trills that are not listed must be played with the basic fingerings.

page 12 - Tremolo Thirds

Similar to the trill, a tremolo is a fast change between two notes - however, not with a neighboring tone. The fingerings shown here are helpful for tremoli with the interval of a third. All third tremoli that are not listed must be played with the basic fingerings.

page 15 – Alternate Fingerings

Alternate fingerings help to simplify difficult sequences of notes. However, the intervals are larger than the ones of trills. Some can also be found under Tremolo Thirds beginning on page 12. Furthermore, a better-tuned alternative for the constantly sharp D5 can be found in this section.

page 17 - Top Tones

Here you can find one of the largest collections of top tones for saxophone. Thank you very much to everyone who sent me their top tones throughout the past 10 years. If you use top tones that are not listed in this chart, feel free to send them by e-mail so I can continue to expand this collection. Thank you very much.

page 41 - Honking: False Fingerings

So-called false fingerings create slight differences in intonation and/or timbre that resemble the sound of the basic fingering. The basic tone is being played with the blacked-out keys; the false fingering occurs by using the greyed-out keys. The interplay of the basic tone and the false fingering creates a wah-wah effect, just like the brass players create with mutes.

page 43 - Honking: Multiphonics

Much anticipated, the ultimate fingering chart for saxophone now also contains multiphonics. Together with false fingerings, multiphonics are popular honking effects, especially among rhythm and blues saxophonists since the 1940s. Here is an attempt at a rudimentary explanation: In a multiphonic, a tone cannot decide between two tones. That is why it jumps back and forth between the two tones. Sometimes another tone sounds throughout. "You are doing it right, if the saxophone sounds like an old, rusty, gargling waste pipe" (quote: Albie Donnelly). Often times the embouchure needs to be adjusted for a quick response, therefore it is difficult to establish an exact pitch. The defined pitches are hence subject to correction. But to cleanly tune a multiphonic is as absurd as polishing an Inderbinden saxophone until it shines.

Left Hand



index finger

- 1 front F
- 2 B key
- 3 Bb double stop

middle finger

4 A key

ring finger

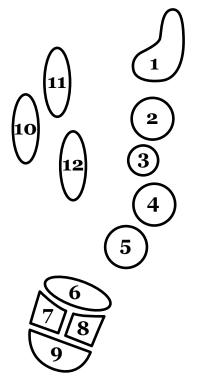
5 G key

pinkie

- 6 Gb/Ab
- 7 deep C#/Db
- 8 deep B
- 9 deep Bb

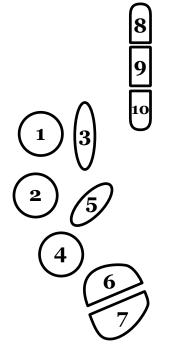
palm

- 10 high D
- 11 high D#/Eb
- 12 high F



mirror inverted graphic

Right Hand



mirror inverted graphic

index finger

1 F key

middle finger

- 2 E key
- 3 high F#

ring finger

- 4 D key
- 5 F# trill

pinkie

- 6 D#/Eb
- 7 deep C

palm

- 8 high E
- 9 C trill
- 10 side A#/Bb



(without high F#)

Thumbs

right hand thumb

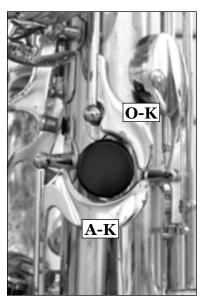


thumb rest to support the saxophone

left hand thumb



thumb plateau and octave key [O-K]



low A key [A-K] on the baritone saxophone

Normal Position of Hands

This graphic shows above which keys the fingers should rest.

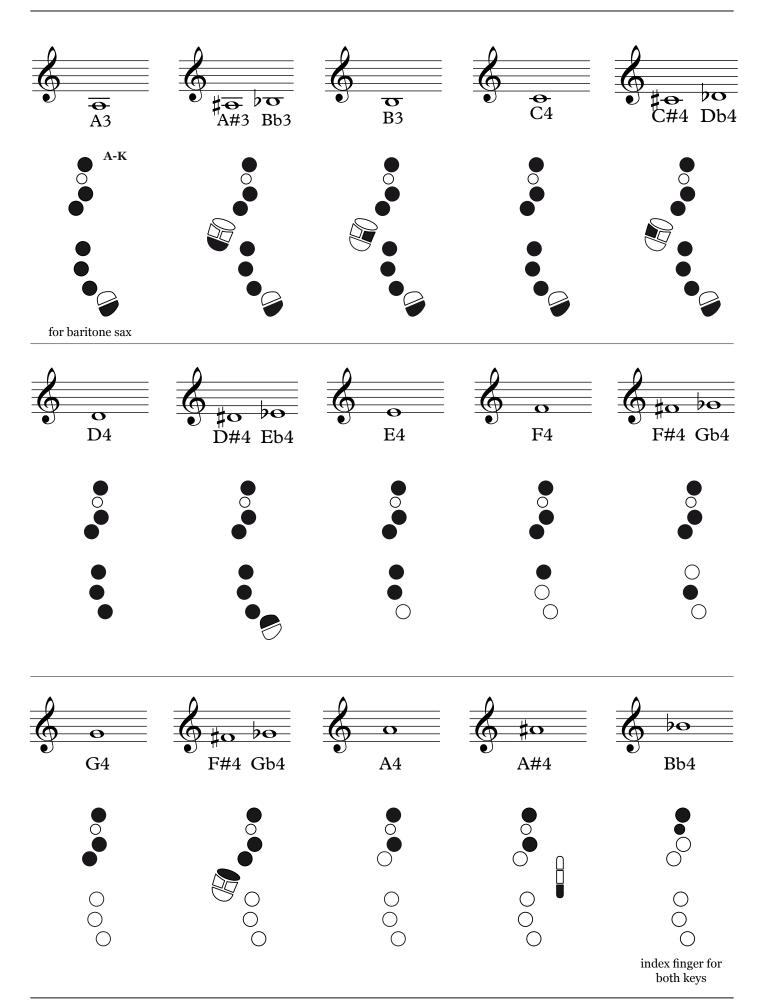
The thumb of the right hand is under the thumb rest and supports the saxophone.

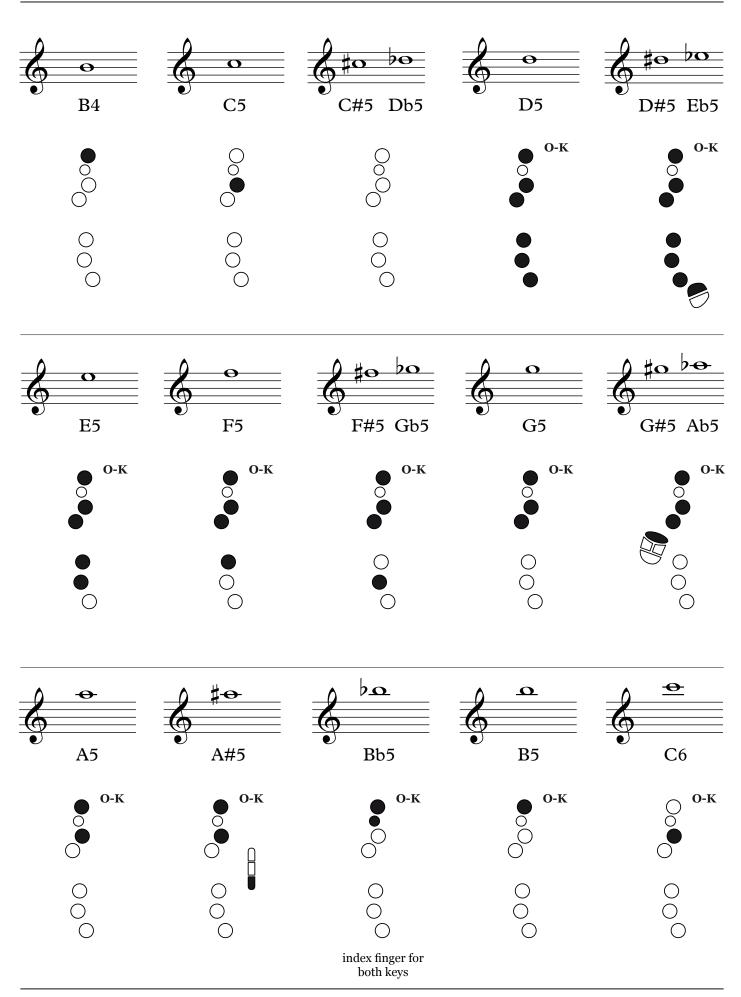
The thumb of the left hand is on the thumb plateau. The top of the thumb is above the octave key.

Become accustomed to resting your fingers close to the keys. The distance should not be more than 2 cm.

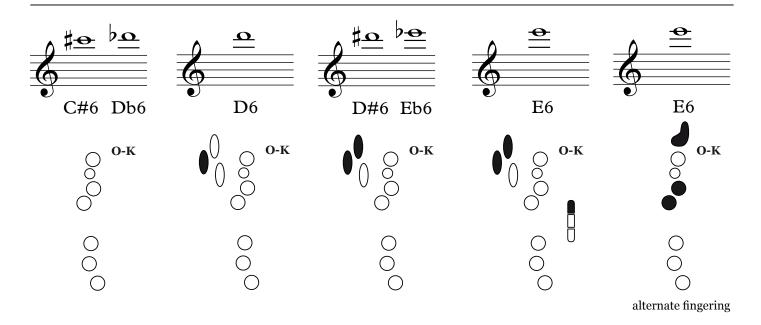
Make sure that your fingers are relaxed and not tense.

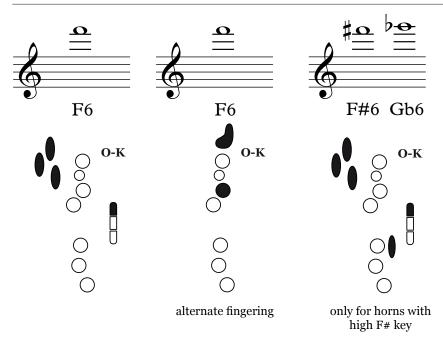




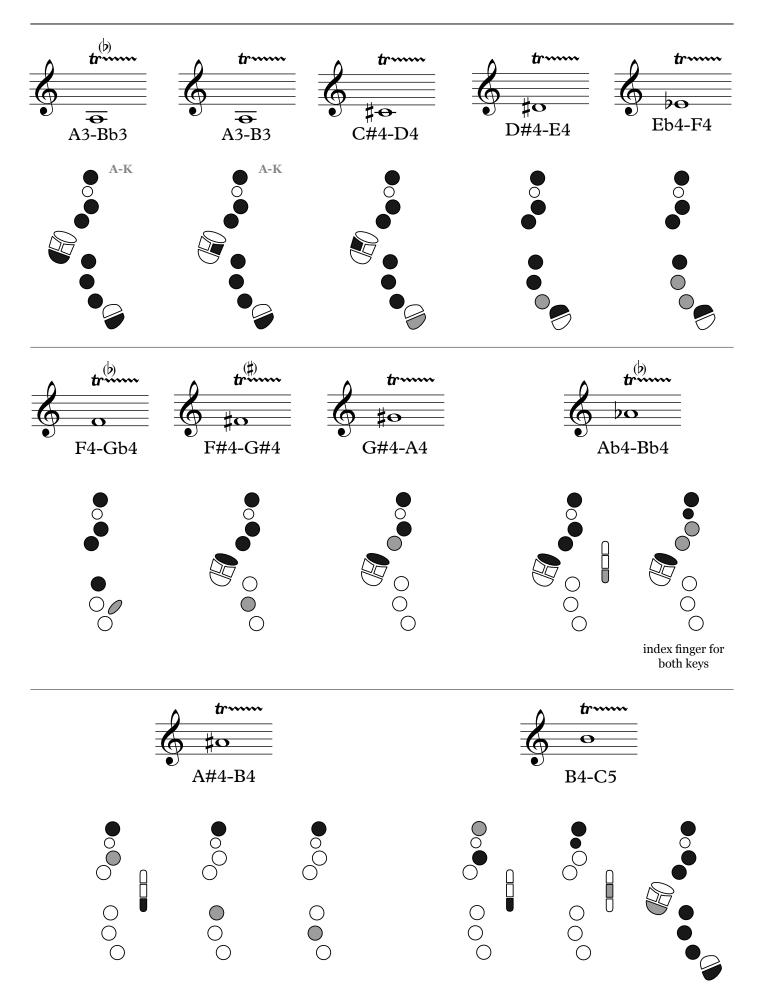


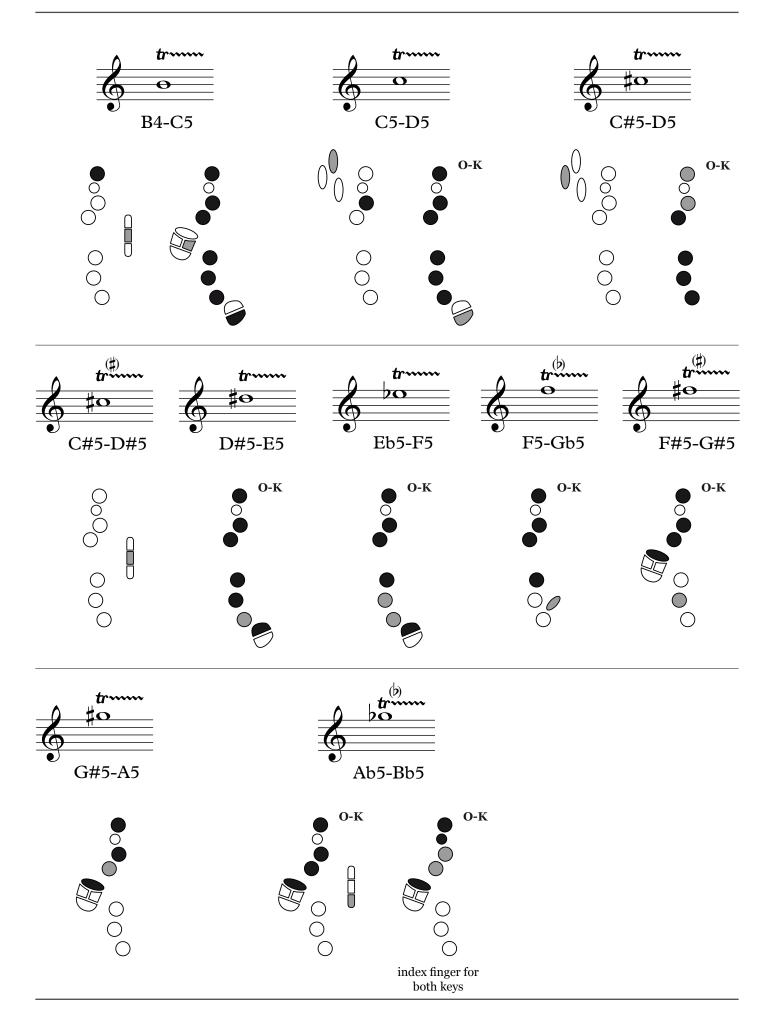
Basic Fingerings C#6 to F#6

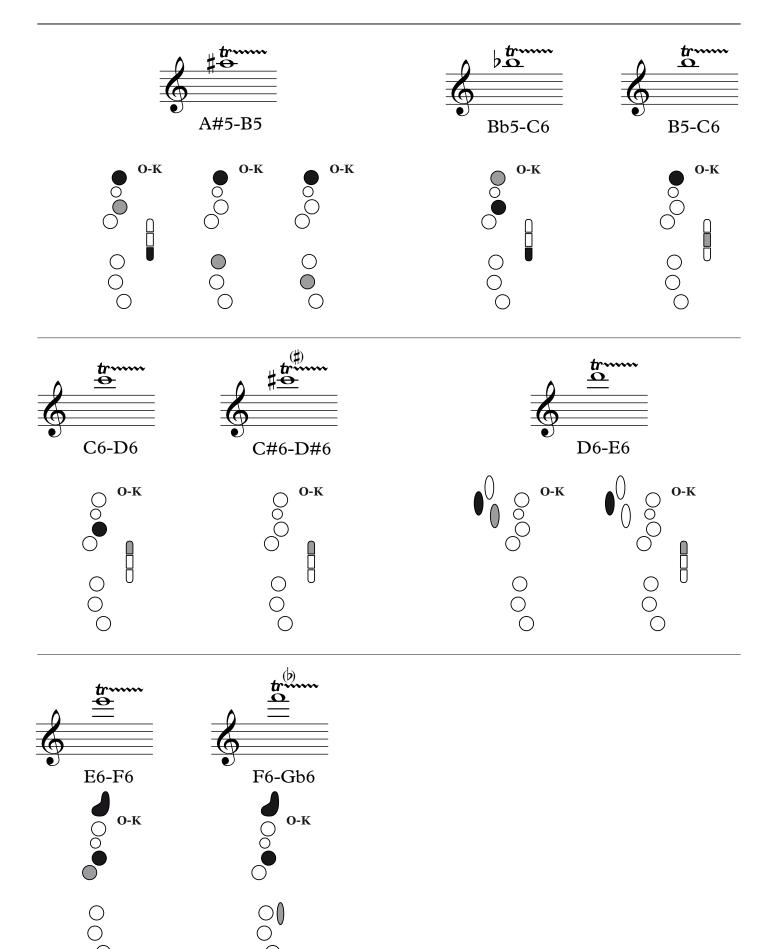




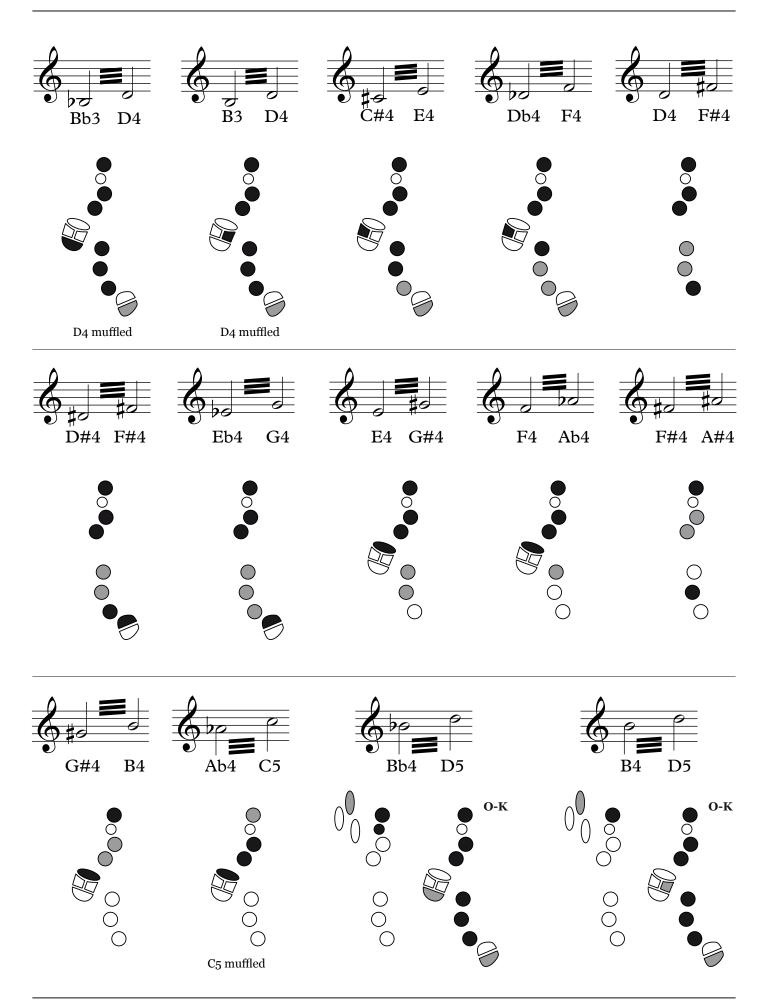
Trill A3 to Bb4



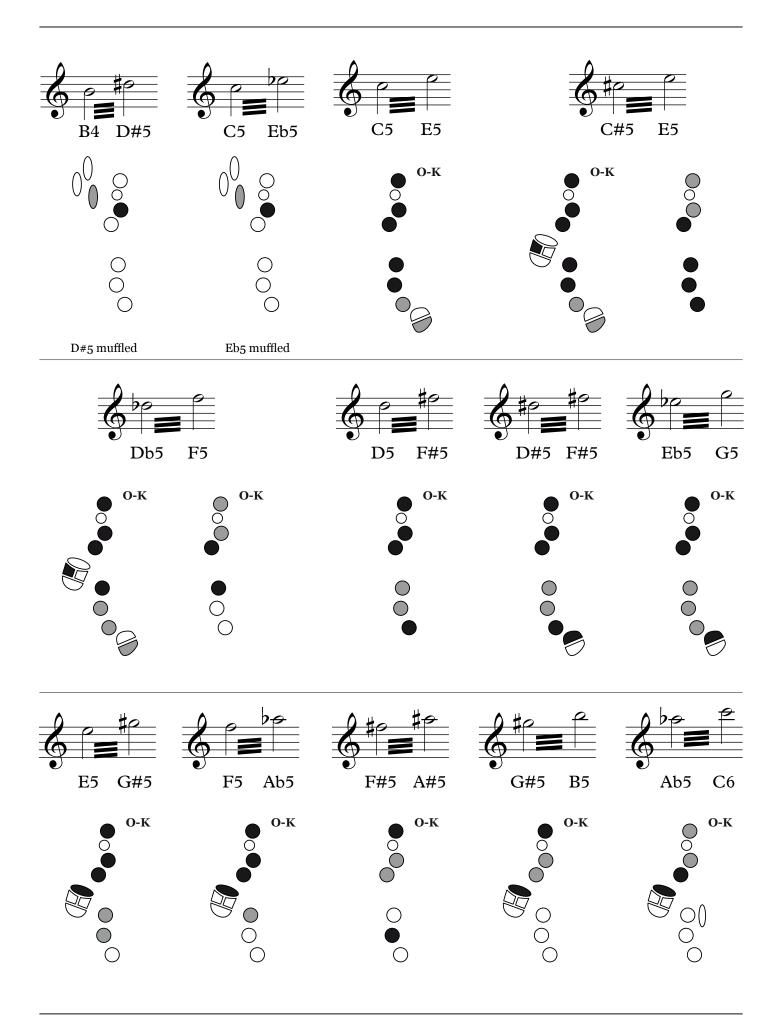




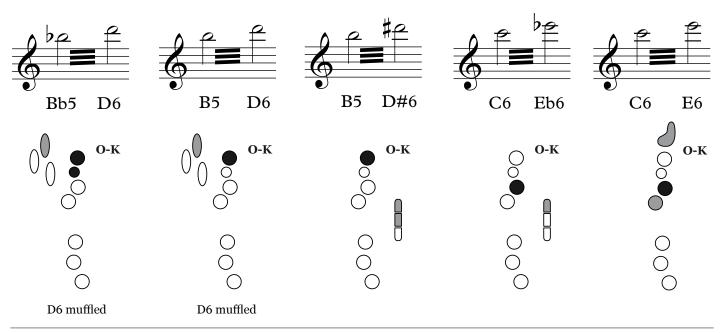
Tremolo Thirds

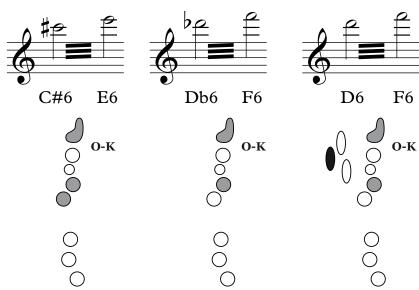


Tremolo Thirds

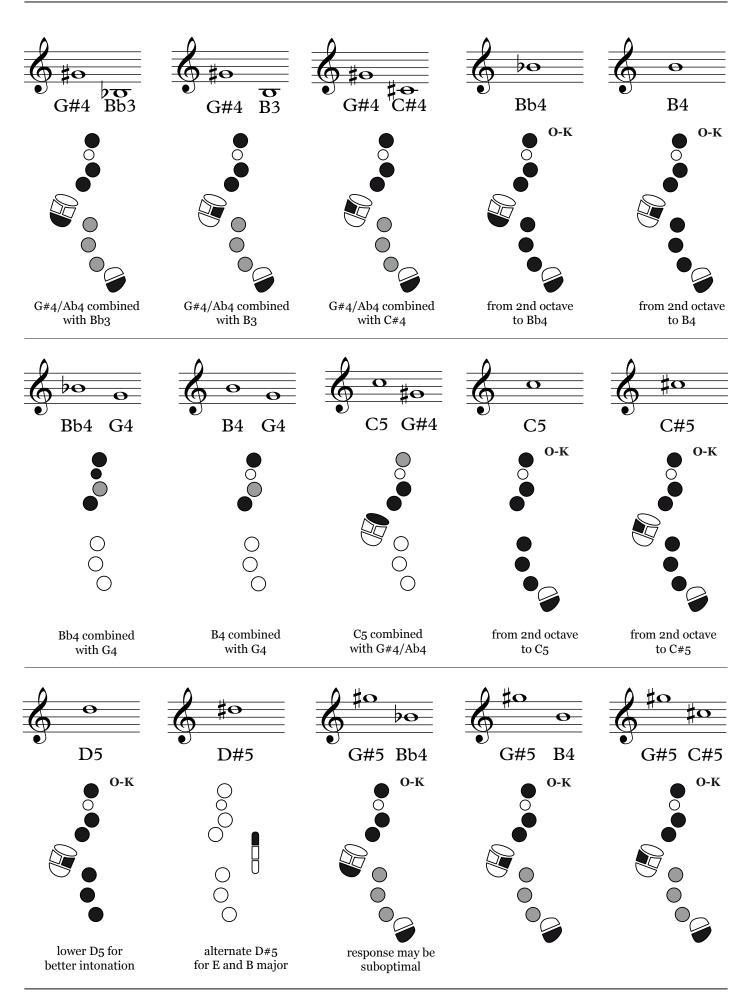


Tremolo Thirds

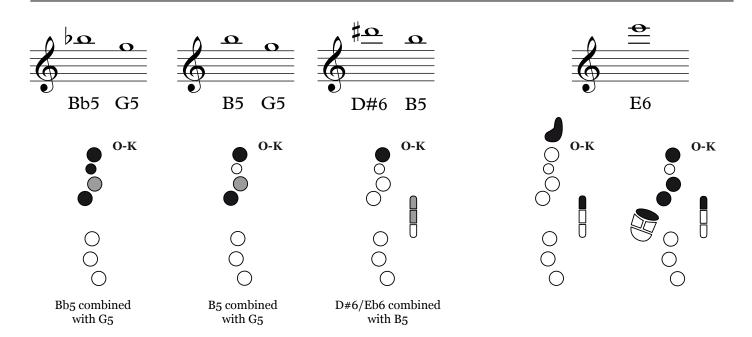


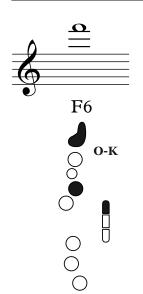


Alternate Fingerings



Alternate Fingerings





Info

Top tones – also known as falsetto, altissimo, or high notes – expand the regular range of the saxophone above F6/F#6. The fingerings for them are specific combinations, and in contrast to the basic fingerings, they are usually not as comfortable and somewhat illogical in sequence.

In most cases, top tones can be played using multiple fingering possibilities. C7 comes with over 40 variations in this fingering chart. Generally speaking, there are no bad fingerings for top tones. However, some fingerings may work better, worse or not at all on certain instruments.

Top tones fingering charts also exist specifically for tenor or alto saxophones. Others recommend individual fingerings for tenor, alto, baritone or soprano saxophones. However, I cannot confirm this experience.

It is necessary to make an optimal selection from the huge range of possibilities. This choice should be based using the following criteria:

- 1. Response, intonation
- 2. Tangibility, touch
- 3. Logic of fingering sequences

Since saxophones behave differently in the top tones range, a specific collection of top tones needs to be defined for each instrument. Moreover, with a variation of the instrument setup (for example, a change of mouthpiece) proven fingerings may render themselves useless.

When I recently replaced my Guardala Brecker I tenor mouthpiece with an Inderbinen Rich, neither response nor intonation stayed the same on several tones. With the new setup, I now use fingerings that previously responded very badly or not at all. The interesting part is that now I even use fingerings on my tenor sax that I have found on an alto sax fingering chart.

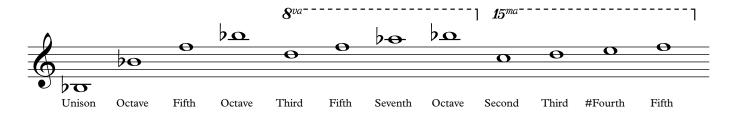
Basics First: The Saxophone as Alphorn

Due to the saxophone's odd shape, multiple notes can be played with one and the same fingering. Just as with brass instruments or the alphorn, the resulting sequence of notes is the harmonic series or overtone series. The first interval of the harmonic series is the octave. This explains why many fingerings for the lower and upper octave are identical. The octave key helps over-blowing the tone in its octave. The other intervals (fifth, fourth, third etc.) can be generated with a modified embouchure.

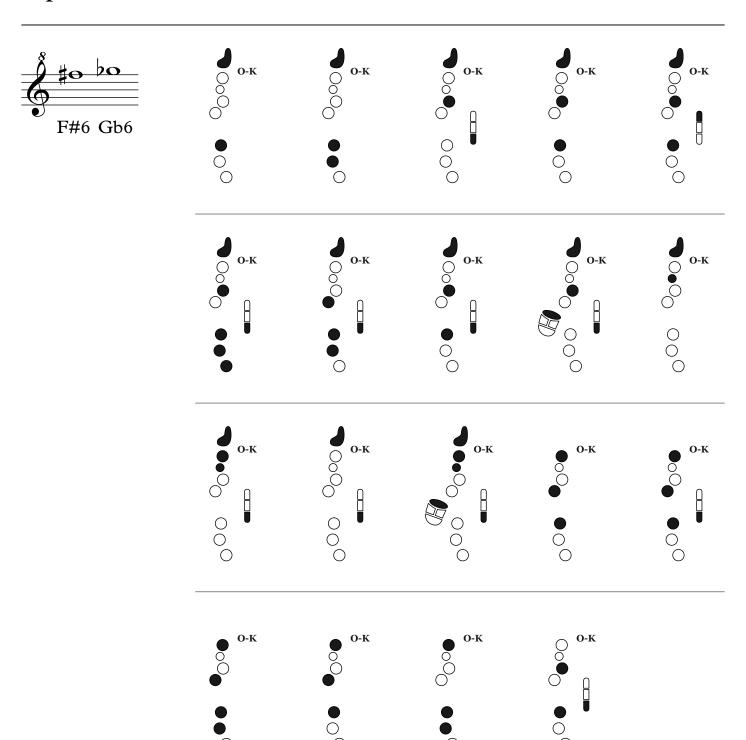
Simply put, for top tones, the saxophone is being played from a harmonic, wherein the special fingering lets the instrument sound as a regular tone. Without the right feel for the other harmonics above the octave, it is impossible to play top tones on the saxophone. Before you work through the fingerings, you have to be able to play the harmonic series up to the fifth in the fourth octave. Proceed as follows:

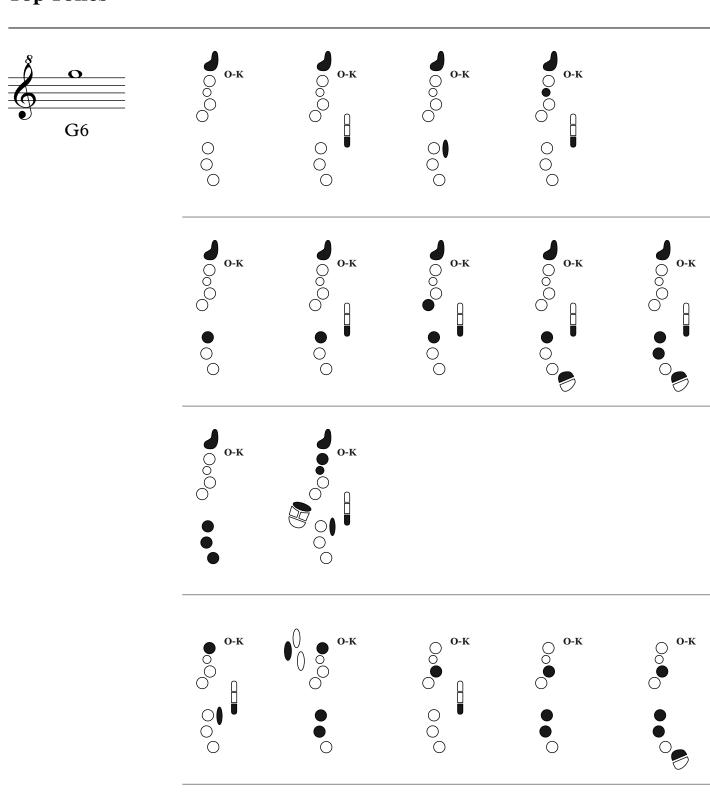
- 1. First lock your dog and cat out of your room.
- 2. Play a low tone (for example Bb) and elicit the tone series of the alphorn from your saxophone.

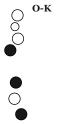
It is hardly possible to give specific advice for this. Experiment first with jaw pressure, mouthpiece position, breath support and embouchure, until the other harmonics resonate. This is how you develop a feel for this range. Stabilize your embouchure gradually so that you end up playing the harmonic series more or less with your usual embouchure.

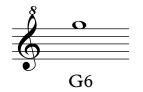


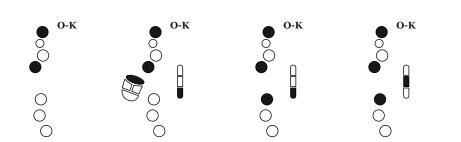
The ability to play alphorn on your saxophone is the gateway into the big wide world of top tones. Without this skill, the process of learning top tones quickly leads to frustration and may result in abandonment of the pursuit.

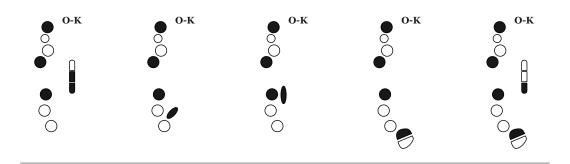


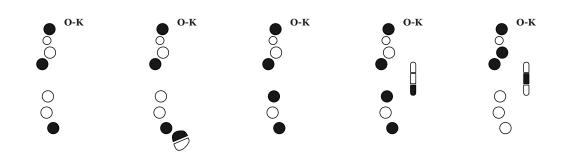


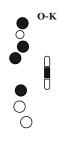


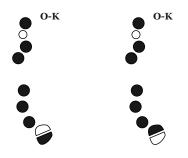






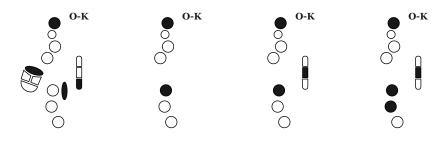


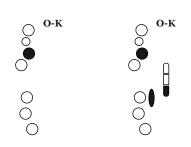


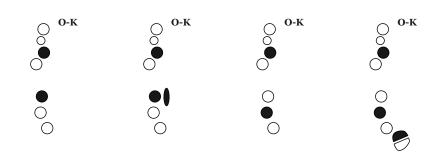


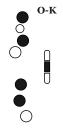




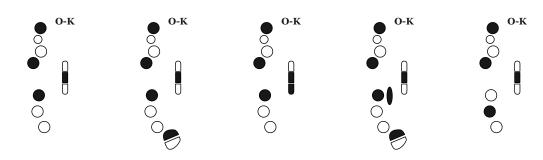


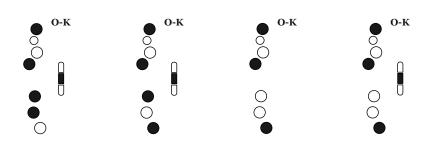


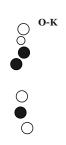


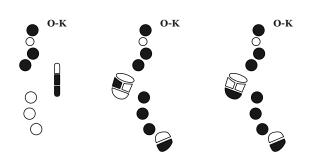


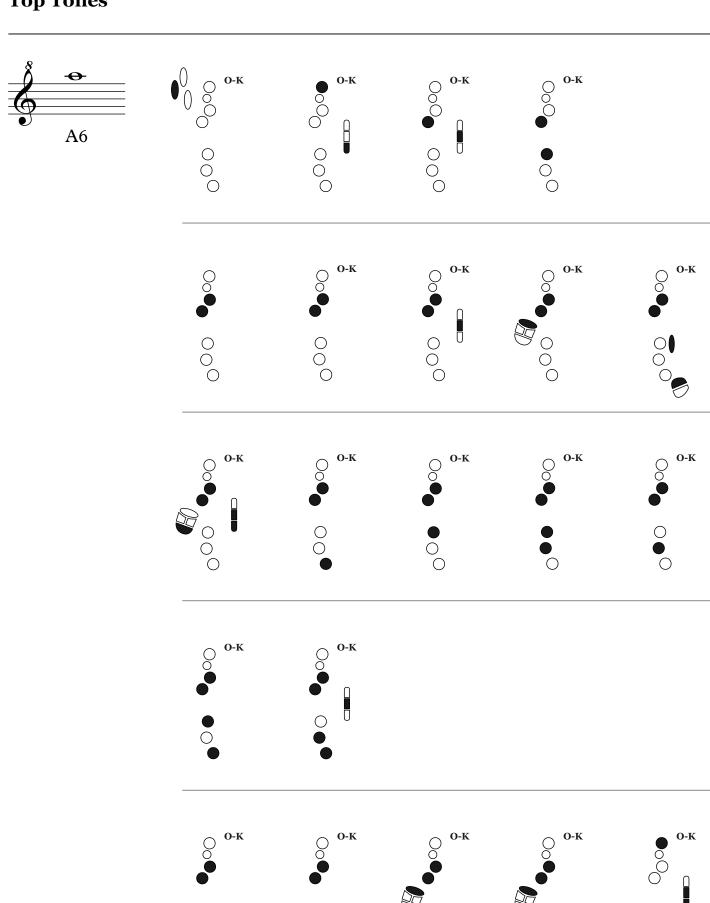


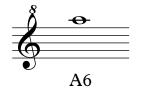


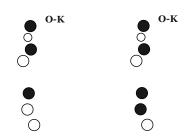


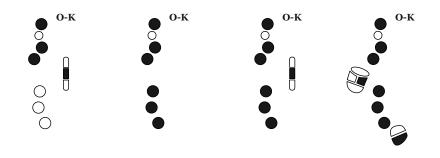


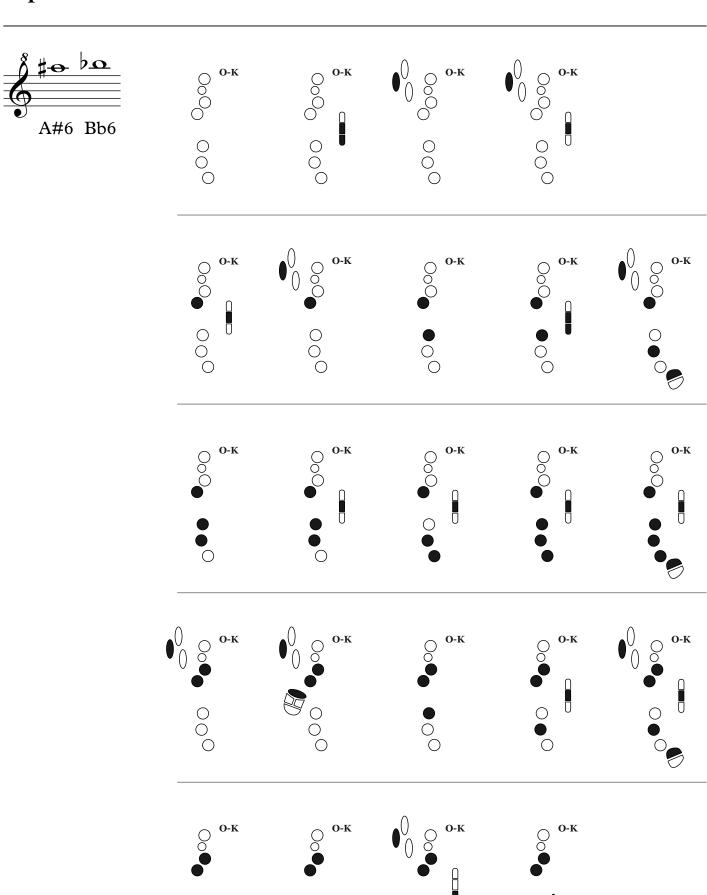




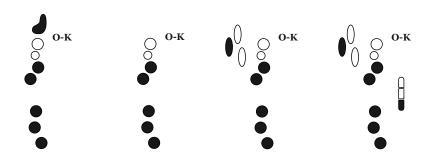


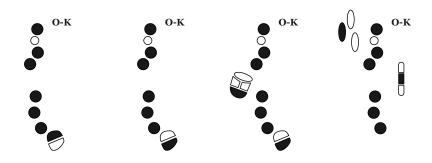


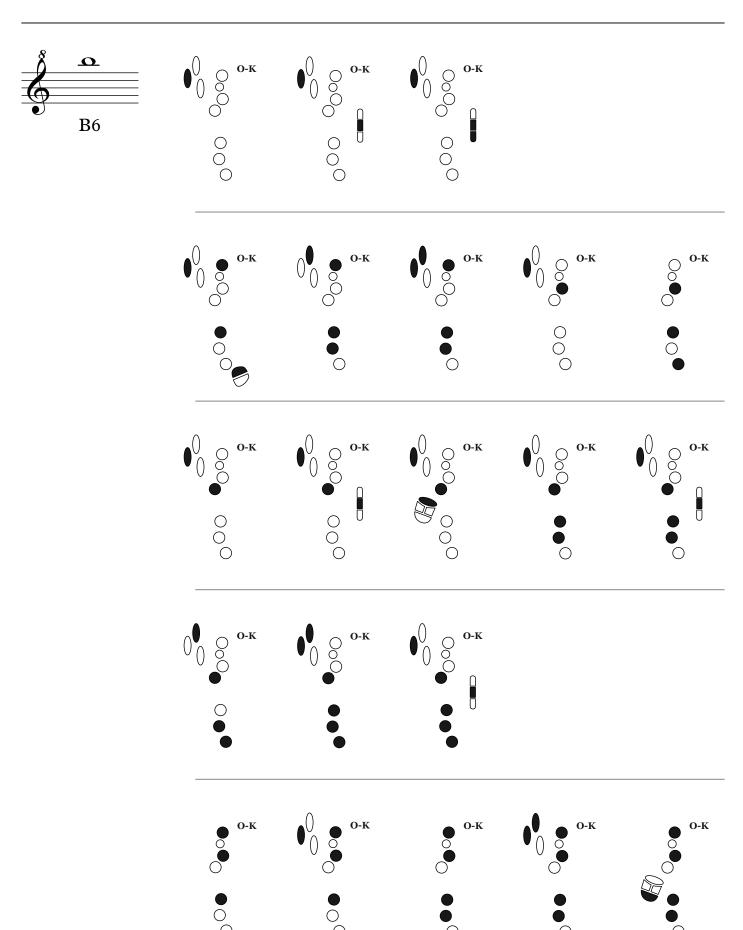


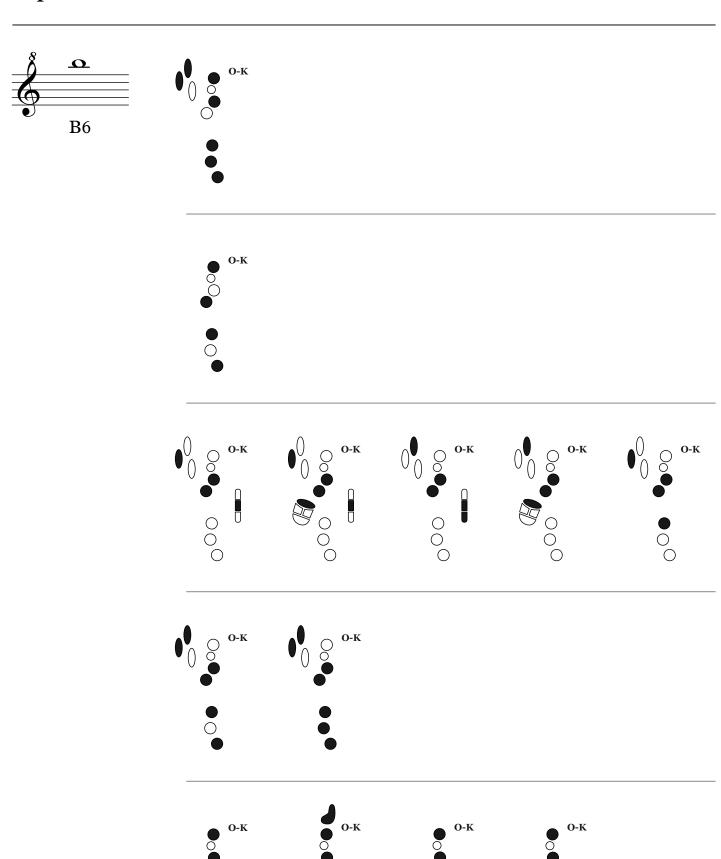


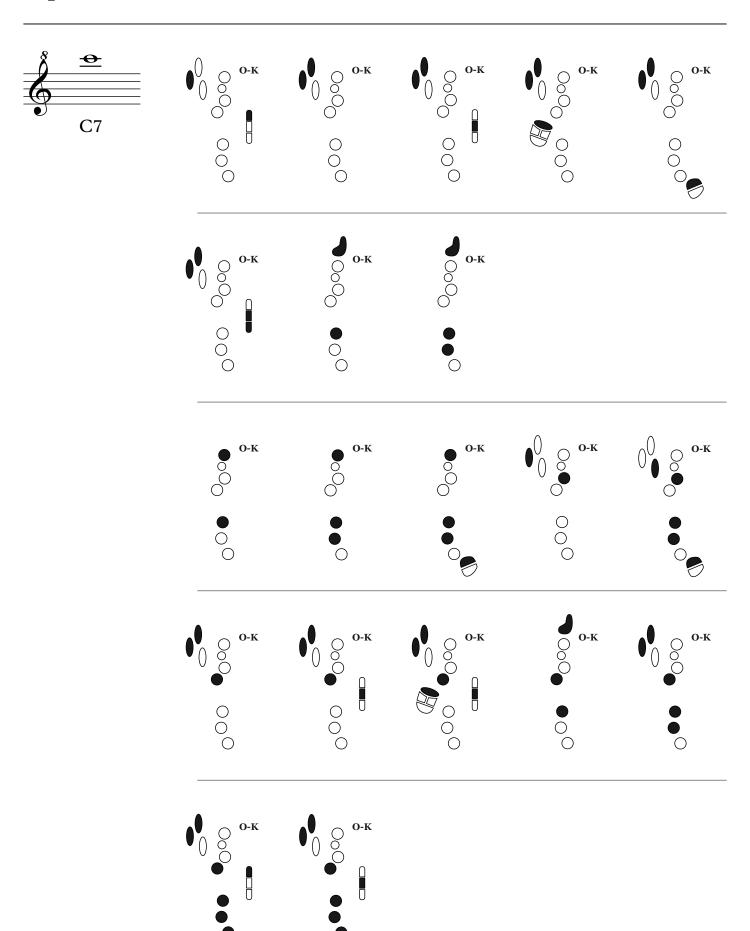




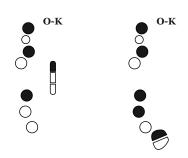


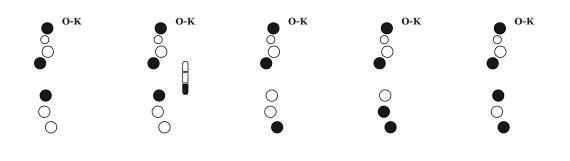


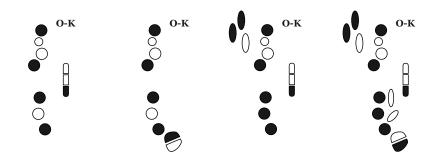


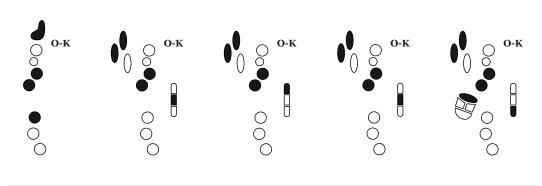


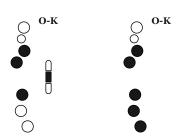




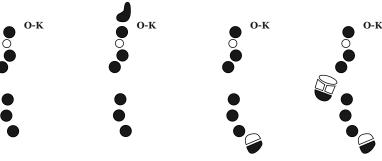


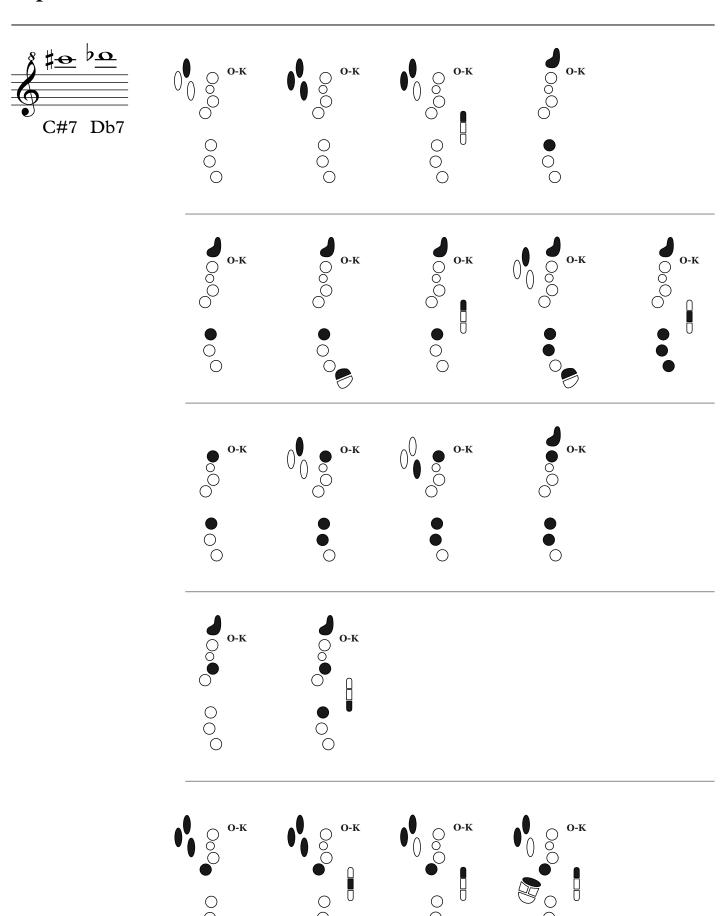




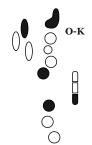


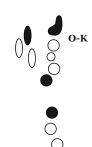


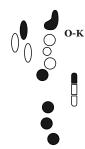


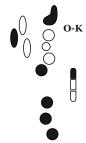


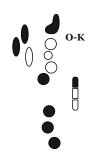


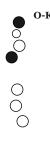


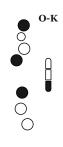


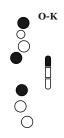


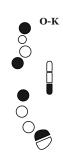


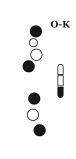


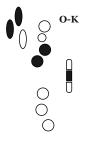


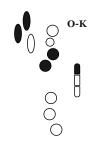


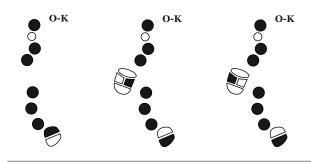


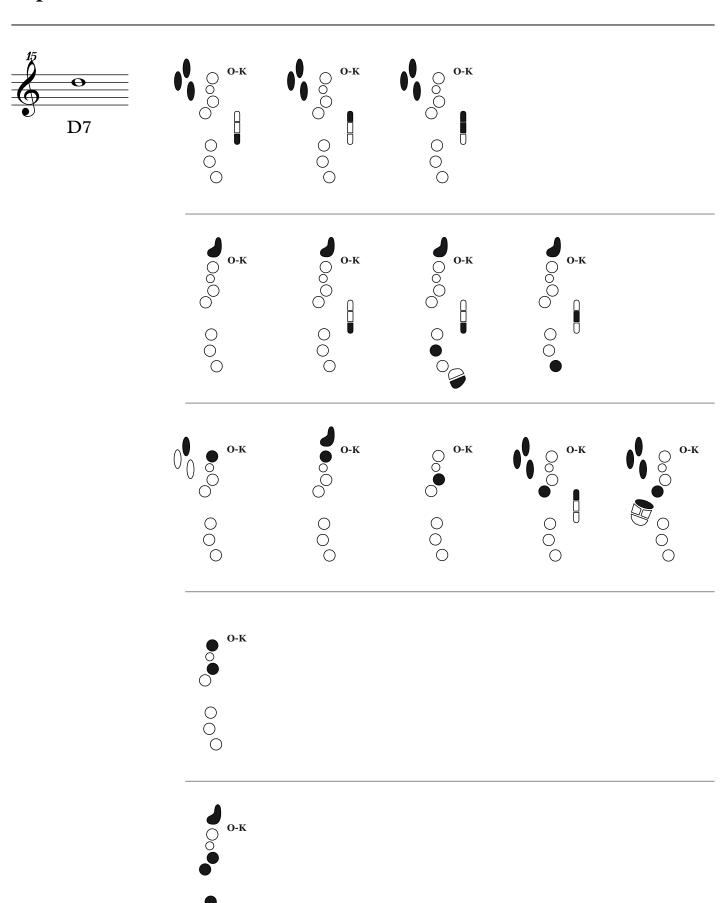




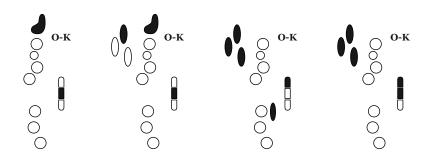


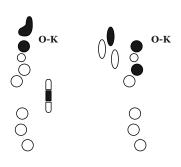


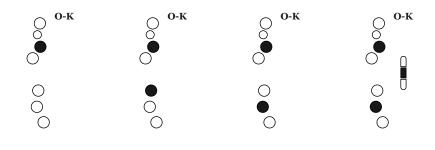


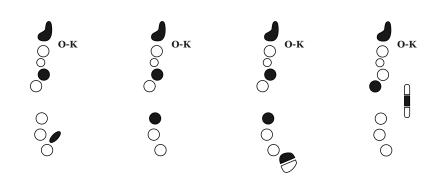




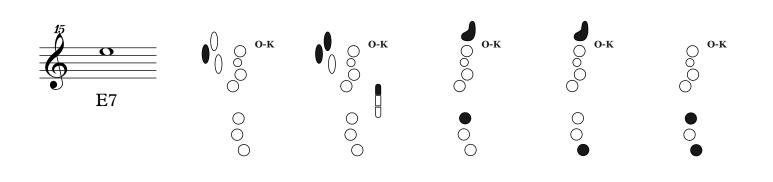


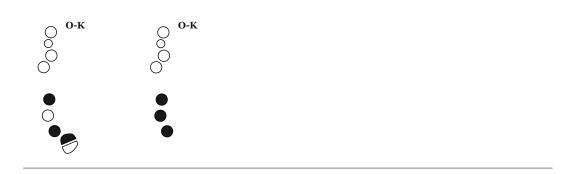




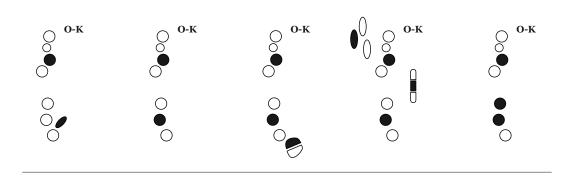


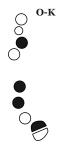


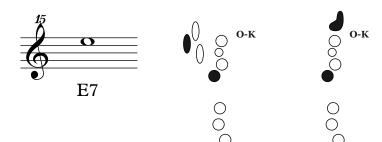


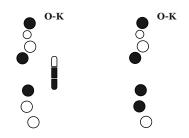


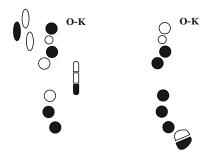


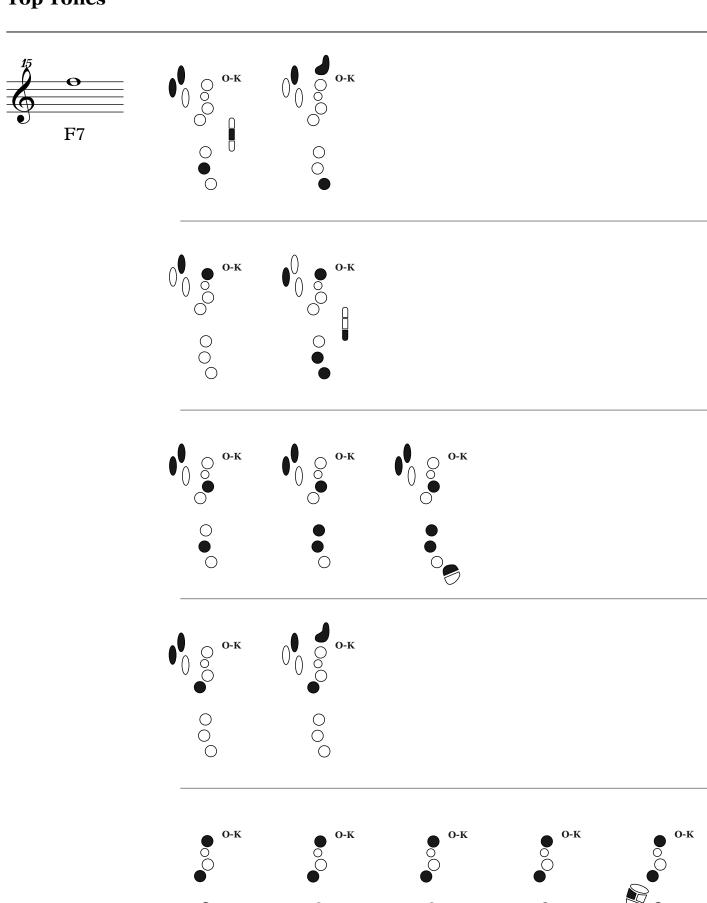


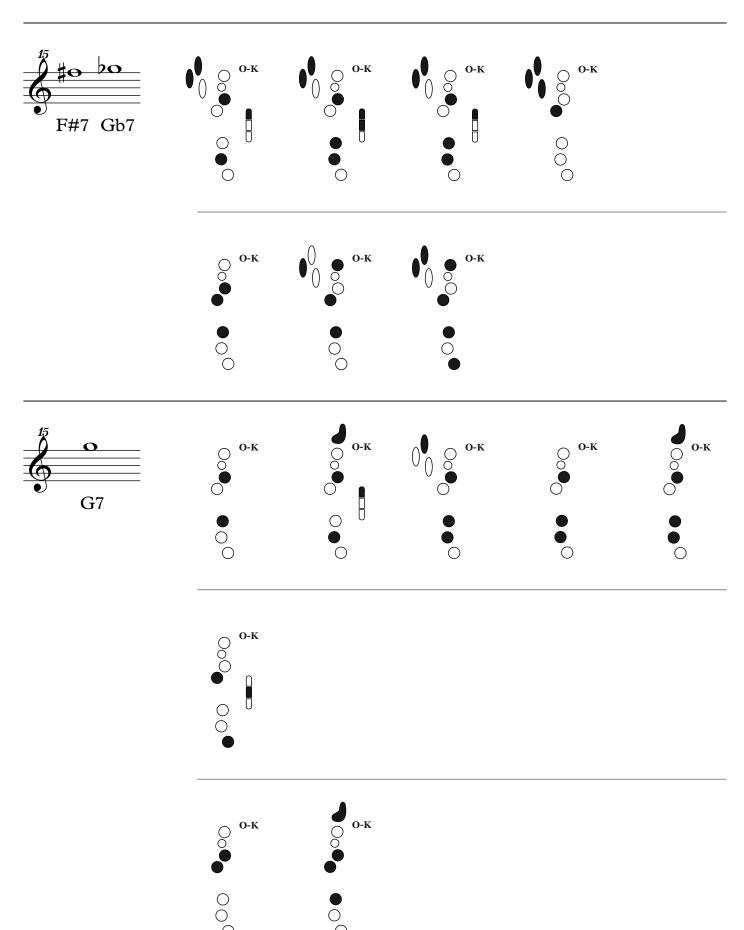








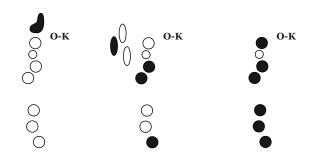




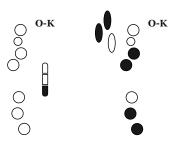




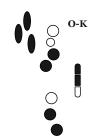


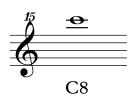


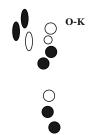




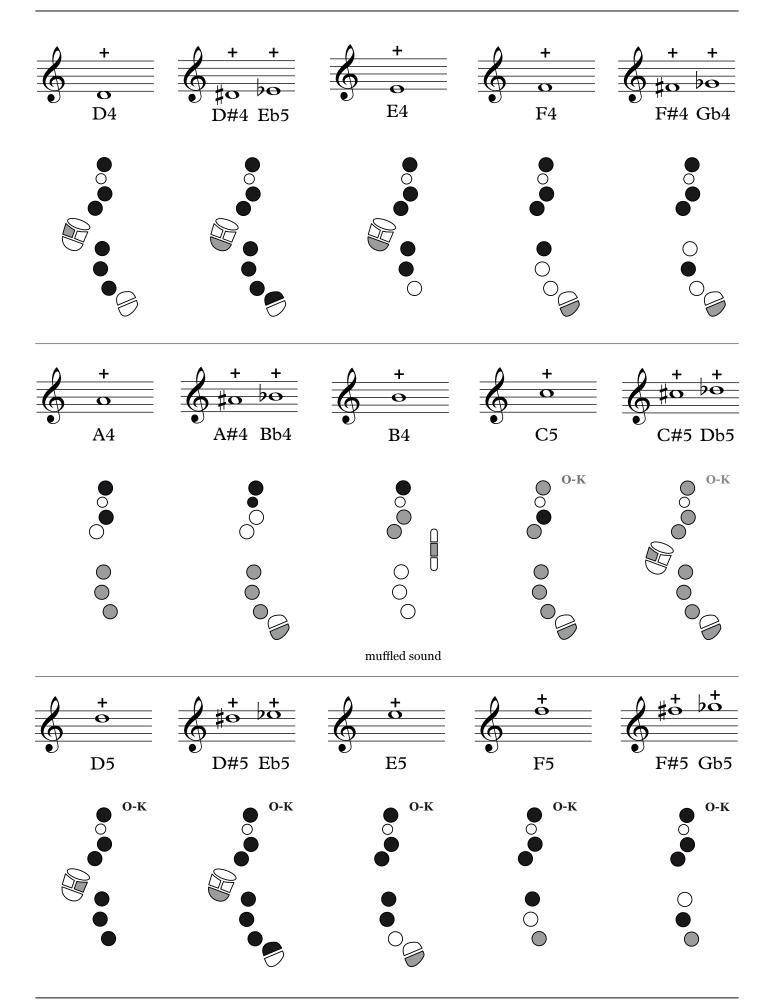




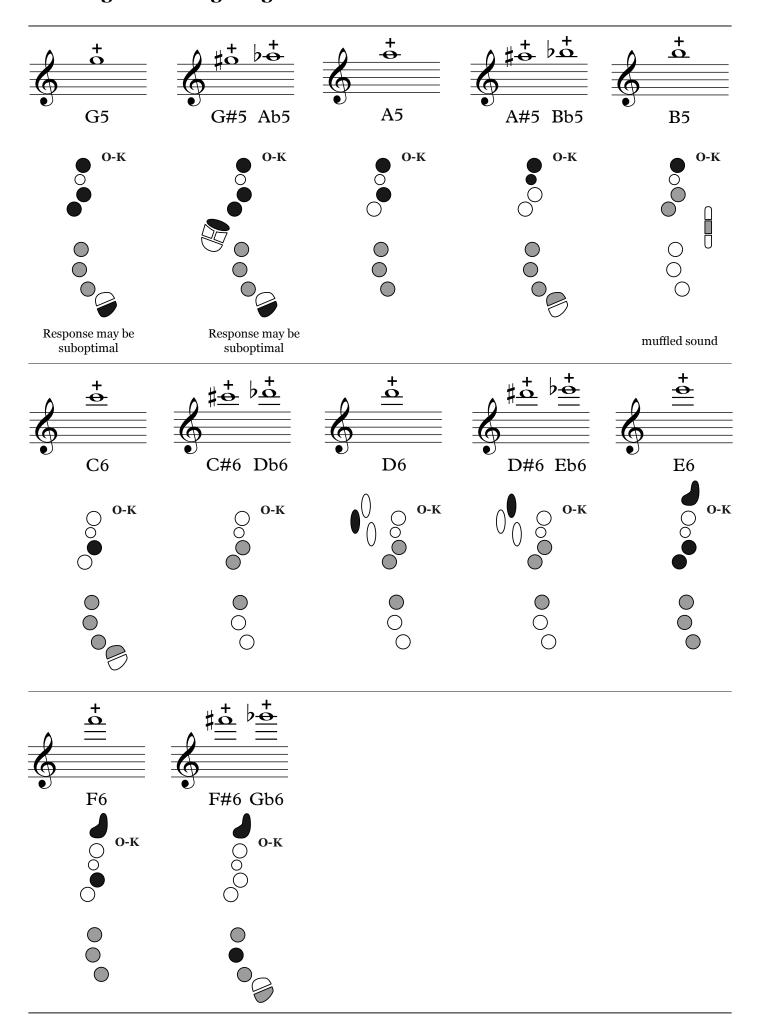




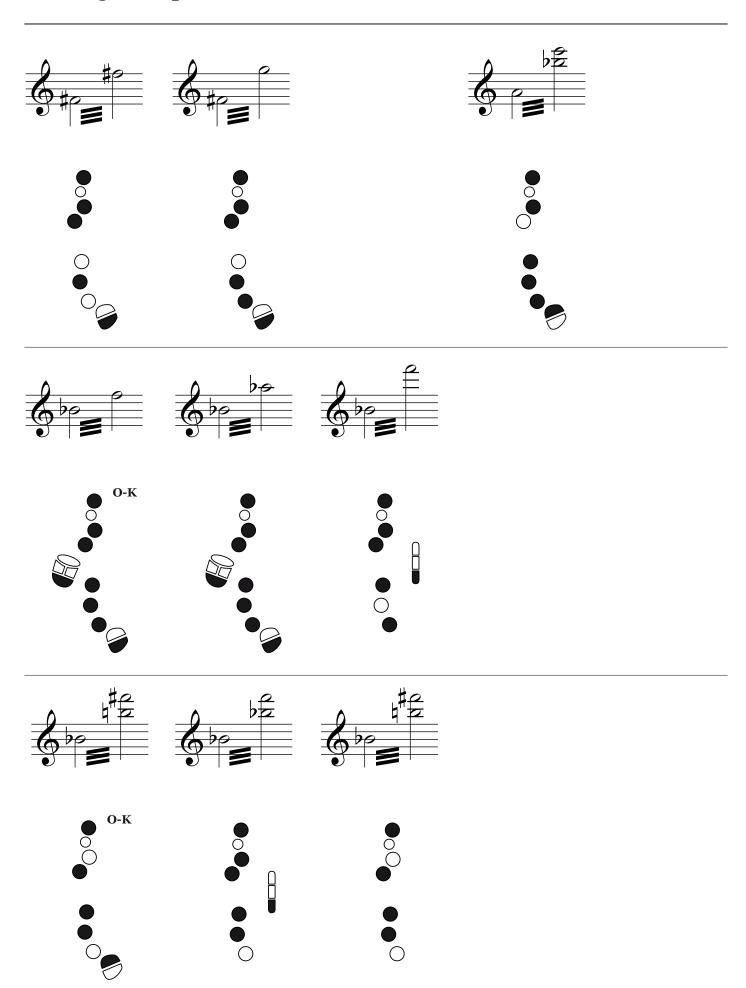
Honking: False Fingerings



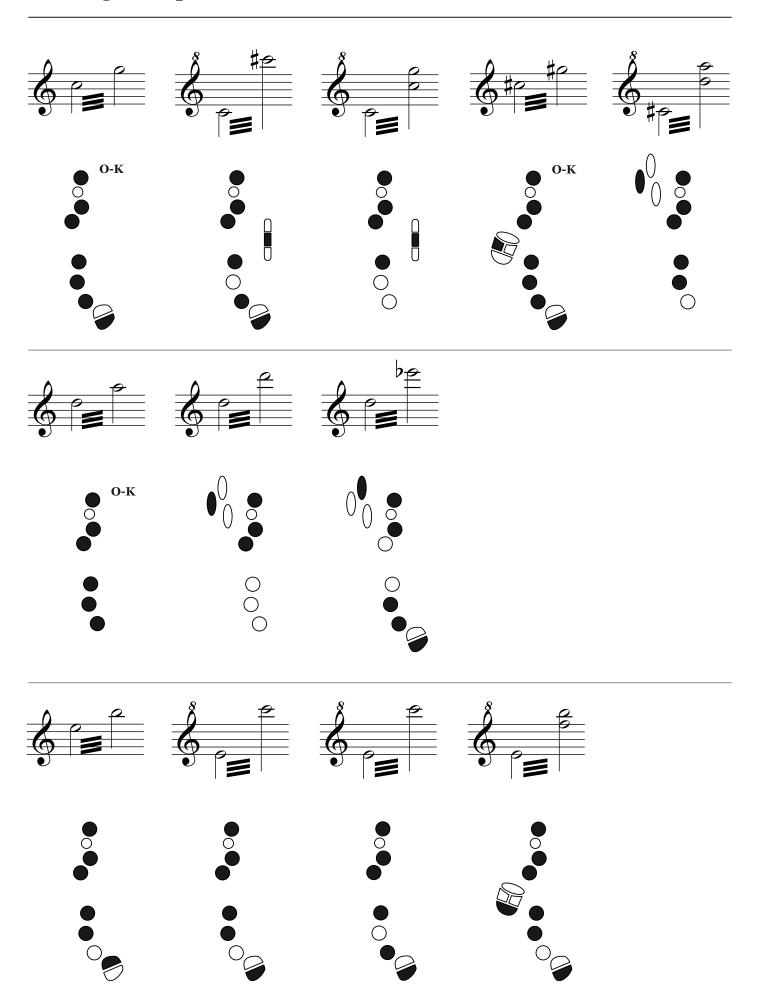
Honking: False Fingerings



Honking: Multiphonics



Honking: Multiphonics



Honking: Multiphonics

