

Alternate Fingerings

Whether you are trying to increase your range or find a better fingering for tuning, alternate fingerings are a part of every woodwind player's life. Memorizing alternate fingerings is tedious work, but once you know them, you are not likely to forget them. So here is a way to make them a little less tedious.

- Print out a fingering chart if you don't have one already. The easier you make it to look up a fingering, the more likely you are to actually do it. Make sure it is a detailed one that goes to the highest and lowest of your instrument's range. I recommend www.wfg.woodwind.org/fing.html for free detailed fingering charts.
- Every time you sit down to practice, pick one new note to learn. Try using this process.
 - First, write out the fingering.
 - Then, finger it on the instrument. Notice its similarities to notes that are near it. How many fingers have to change from the note directly above or below it?
 - Play the new note with a tuner to make sure it's correct.
 - Then finger the note above or below and *watch* your fingers switch from that note to the new note. It is important to look at your fingers while doing this; you want to see and feel the correct fingering as your fingers move.
 - Then slowly play these two notes, alternating back and forth until you can switch with no finger flubs.
 - Finally, choose a scale pattern that uses the new note, and slowly work your way up or down to the new note and back.
- Before you go to learn a new fingering, make sure to review ones that you still struggle with or don't use very often. This is easier to do when you incorporate them into scales to provide some context.

Learning a few new notes per day will make sight reading and practicing difficult musical passages in the future much easier. Take 5 minutes a day now, and you will thank yourself later. Happy practicing!

-Ms. Singletary