

**Vicki Coffman**  
**Saxophone and Clarinet Lessons**  
**Music Theory and Improvisation**

### **About me**

I am certified in secondary music (as well as math, computer science, business, English, speech, and theater), and have been a teacher of one sort or another since 1981, a public school teacher since 1992, and a clarinet/saxophone teacher since 2000. I've played clarinet since 1963 and saxophone since 1988, have 33 undergraduate hours in music, and have studied with top jazz and rock players in San Diego, CA. As of June 2003, my students have earned a total of 26 medals at UIL solo and ensemble competition--4 bronze, 12 silver, and 10 gold.

### **Info on the Web**

My list of selected links is at: <http://www.geocities.com/vncoffman/muslinks.html>

### **Attendance**

Please attend all lessons, as you will make the best possible progress with consistent attendance. (And please remember that I am obligated to be there for you even if you don't show up--so show up!) A lesson may be rescheduled only in case of serious illness or injury, or due to **required** attendance at a school function. (I occasionally may have to attend a school function myself; I will notify you as far in advance as possible. Please do the same for me!)

### **Practice**

Please practice regularly! A half hour each day will be a great deal more beneficial than several hours one day a week. More practice is better, of course, but the key is **daily** practice, including work with an individual method book. If you use me only as a musical tutor (i.e., you regard your lesson as practice time, and you work only on the music required for school), you are unlikely to make as much progress as you are capable of—unless you take five lessons a week! My major function is to tell you what you should be doing at **home**!

Do not practice your mistakes! Practice as slowly as necessary to play perfectly. Increase tempo **gradually**. (Please note that the preceding advice implies that you must use a **metronome**.) Yes, I know you will have to play up to tempo in band, whether you make mistakes or not. Band is **not** practice!

When you play, always **listen** to yourself. Play with a good tone. Get a **tuner** and use it. Play music, not a collection of notes. If at all possible, record yourself—you'll probably learn more that way than you will from me!

Learn all your scales as soon as possible, plus other patterns in all 12 keys. I've found Jamey Aebersold's Volume 24 (Major and Minor) to be a great incentive to practice scales and patterns. It can also be obtained directly from Aebersold: [www.jazzbooks.com](http://www.jazzbooks.com), 1-800-456-1388.

### **Purchase of instrument**

Find advice on clarinet brands and models at <http://www.tishkoff.com/articles/instruments.htm>. For saxophone: [http://www.geocities.com/sax411/sax/buying\\_guide/brands.html](http://www.geocities.com/sax411/sax/buying_guide/brands.html). If at all possible, try a number of instruments in the same time period, so that you can compare them and find the one that suits you best. (This will be possible only if you are buying from a music store.) Take a tuner and another set of ears with you, and allow plenty of time. Ideally, your teacher should test your instrument before you finalize your purchase.

### **Metronome**

I have only three things to say about metronomes: 1. Get one! 2. Get a **loud** one. 3. Use it!

## Tuner

Please get a tuner and use it. Most local music stores carry Seiko and/or Korg; either one of these should be fine. Use it when practicing long tones—if you can keep the indicator still, you are almost certainly playing with a good tone. Also use it to learn the intonation tendencies of your instrument.

If at all possible, get a tuner that also generates tones, and match them--this will improve your intonation more than just centering the indicator. Another thing that will improve your intonation is play-alongs, provided you **listen** to the accompaniment and whether you are in tune with it.

## Reeds

Please come to your lessons with **several** reeds that you **know** are good, **not** with one single reed that has a chip in it! (Yes, I've seen this—frequently.)

Not all reeds will be good! Resign yourself to the fact that you **will** be throwing some away unused.

Reed selection, care, and adjustment tips: <http://www.markmillermusic.com/Clarinet/clarreeds.html>.

## Care of instrument

You **must** clean your instrument **immediately** after playing, **every single time without exception**. Even if your instrument is plastic (clarinet) or brass (saxophone), not cleaning it will eventually cause moisture damage to the pads. What would happen if your shoes (which are leather, like your pads) were wet all the time? If your instrument is wood, not cleaning it will eventually cause it to crack. What would happen if you spilled water on the dining room table and just left it there?

Do not leave your instrument lying around or (especially!) standing on the bell. Ideally, your instrument should be either in the case or in your hand, and nowhere else. If you simply must put it down outside the case, get a stand!

Regarding cork grease: I'm afraid you're going to have to get your hands dirty. What I've seen most people do with cork grease is smear it directly from the tube, like (lumpy) lipstick, notice the lumps and realize they are not good, and then basically stop using cork grease. Get it on your **fingers**, massage the lumps out, and then put **plenty** on the cork using your **fingers**. Do this as often as necessary, quite possibly every time you put the instrument together. The cork should be slick and the instrument should go together easily.

## Music books

I prefer the Rubank method books. They are available in elementary, intermediate, and advanced levels—please ask me which you should buy. You should be able to find them at virtually any music store. If you prefer the Klose (clarinet) or DeVille (saxophone) method, that is fine with me also—you should definitely get it sooner or later, but you may find the size of it intimidating!

I'm a big fan of play-alongs of any sort, as they tend to make for more practicing!

I highly recommend the Jamey Aebersold play-along books and CDs: <http://www.jazzbooks.com>, 1-800-456-1388. Ask for a catalog, a Jazz Handbook, and a Rapid Reference (all are free). I suggest that students start with Volume 24, Major and Minor, and continue with whatever they find interesting! Aebersold has a suggested progression for beginners on the website.

Hal Leonard has some non-jazz play-alongs, which you can get through The Woodwind: <http://www.wwbw.com>, 1-800-348-5003. Locally, I think Music and Sound, Mars Music, H&H, etc., also carry various play-alongs.