

Purchasing a Saxophone

Types of Saxophones

There are four members of the saxophone family: soprano, alto, tenor and baritone saxophone. At ALCS we start beginners on the **Alto** or the Eb Alto. (E flat alto) When students progress, we move some to school instruments such as the tenor and baritone. The main factor for beginners on the Eb Alto Saxophone is that it is smaller. This allows beginners who tend to have smaller hands to practice with ease.

Brand Names

There are a number of things to keep in mind when purchasing a Alto Saxophone. First and most important is the **quality**. The brand name of the instrument is important today, as there are a number of newer companies out there that are producing cheaper Saxophones. These Saxophones look great and play ok by themselves! The key word is by *themselves*! Often when these instruments are mixed in the band setting, the students find themselves sounding “out of tune”. In an effort to cut costs, companies like these are less precise in manufacturing the instrument along with the materials of the instrument. In many cases, the kids often find themselves playing the right fingerings but having almost an entire note difference in sound. That is to say they are playing the right note but the wrong note is sounding! Not only is this discouraging to the individual student, but also to the others in Band, as it equally makes them sound bad. Students learn from the first year the importance of tuning – the **quality of the instrument** is *very* important.

Below are a few brand name makers of quality Alto Saxophones. With modern day computers I am sure you can find more – please feel free to contact any music teacher at ALCS if the one you find does not appear below for more input before purchasing.

Bundy, Conn, Jupiter, Selmer, Yamaha, Yanagisawa,

Mouthpiece

Often when purchasing an Alto Sax, the buyer may be able to barter, to close the deal, for a specific mouthpiece instead of the standard one they put in the case. Next to the quality (student line vs professional line) the mouthpiece is the greatest factor in tone production. It is recommended to try and get a Selmer C* (* stands for star). This is the standard mouthpiece others try to copy so the dealer may tell you it is equivalent.