**Chapter Two—Jazz Articulation**

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**Phrase starts on the beat, Tongue Tongue Slur**

Clarinet in B♭

**Phrase Starts Off The Beat, Tongue Slur**

**Slur Over The Triplet**

**Last Note Short**

**Slur Through the sixteenths**

Articulation with respect to clarinet (and saxophone) refers to the use of the tongue, where it is placed with respect to the beat, and how the articulation is used to execute phrases. Clarinetists coming from a classical background invariably have difficulty learning jazz phrasing, and the secret is in the articulation. While learning solo’s off recordings and imitating closely what you hear masters such as Buddy DeFranco and Eddie Daniels do specifically is the best way to develop both an understanding of and feel for jazz phrasing and articulation, a few rules can be followed that will allow you to move forward successfully with this aspect of the jazz language.

Generally speaking, a smooth, legato stroke with the tongue is desirable, particularly when playing the standard swing eighth notes in succession. Many educators teach the swing eighths are an eighth note triplet with the first two eighths tied together, followed by the remaining leg of the triplet. A “two to one” ratio is then achieved with respect to the swing eighths, if you get what I mean. I think this is a good description of the feel of the eighth note line, but it can be achieved rather easily without conscious thought by doing the following...

Generally speaking, Jazz eighths are articulated “On the Up” or “And” part of a beat and slurred to the “Down” part of the beat. Therefore, if the phrase starts on the beat, the phrase should start with two articulated notes, the second which is slurred into, and then proceed to alternate tongue-slur, tongue slur etc... see the first line my example. When a phrase starts off the beat, simply proceed tongue-slur etc. Always slur over a triplet, and make the final note of a phrase a “fat” but stopped note. Finally, sixteenths should always be slurred over.....

If you follow these simple guidelines you will be on your way to playing nice sounding jazz phrases, and then give yourself some time to study some classic solos and you will glean the rest of the feel and style through imitation and assimilation.