

What's Next?

Getting Brass Players beyond the beginner level.

Tone

It is essential that you "do no harm" to novice players. Brass playing involves strenuous use of many muscles that can be injured by overuse or misuse. Consult experts if you are finding problems that could be damaging to the student, or that do not respond to your diagnosis and teaching.

The Goal

- Characteristic Brass Tone in all ranges.
- Fully Supported in all Ranges
- Flexibility (ability to go from any note to any other note)

The problems

Poor tone can have several causes. Problems may occur in combination.

- Lack of air support
- Embouchure
- Lips buzzing inefficiently. Thin or non-existent tone on certain notes.
- Equipment problems--beginner horn or problems with repair and maintenance.
- Lack of understanding of the Characteristic Brass Tone

Getting There

Improving and maintaining a good tone is a long-term project. Professionals still work on tone!

Air

- Check Posture and playing position.
- Work daily on long tones. Start in mid range and go up and down. Rest between sets.
- Listen for a "supported" full tone.
- Practice Long tones with crescendos and decrescendos

Embouchure

- Check Horizontal and Vertical Placement. Each instrument's ideal or starting placement is slightly different.
- Avoid too much pressure

Buzzing

- Mouthpiece alone is the best remedy. Start with a tone that is clear and work up and down.
- Avoid too much pressure

Lip Slurs (also effective for range)

- Work on slurring up and down throughout the harmonic series.
- Begin with 2-note slurs, and then extend over time
- Rest after each set of slurs.

Equipment

- A beginner horn will hold students back. Suggest upgrade after 2-4 years.
- Symptoms include "overblowing", lack of a characteristic sound, lack of advanced technique (example: F Attachment on Trombone), repair problems, etc.
- Music dealers will cooperate with trying out instruments.

Understanding Characteristic Sound

- Listen to players on that instrument
- Listen to recordings

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Articulation

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The Goal

- Clear, precise, and dependable articulation at all tempos
- Multiple Tonguing
- Characteristic Legato
- Slurring

The problems

Poor articulation can have several causes. Problems may in occur in combination.

- Lack of air support
- Embouchure
- Improper movement of tongue--too much or too heavy movement.
- Coordination between tongue and fingers or slide
- Trombone legato problems

Getting There

Improving and maintaining a good articulation is a long-term project. Professionals still work on articulation!

Air

- Insist on full and sustained air column
- Proper air is the foundation of good articulation

Embouchure

- There must be a good, basic embouchure in place.
- Think "tah" for low notes, "too" for mid-range, and "tee" for high range.

Tongue

- Placement of the tongue must be behind the teeth
- Use exercises that gradually build speed. A light, quick tongue is the goal. Use minimal movement and start in mid-range at a medium volume.
- A note has a beginning, middle and end. Listen for problems such as "explosive" attack, "thu" attack, or notes that swell. A note should have a slight taper at the end, and space after. Avoid a "clipped" sound--stopping the note with the tongue--sometimes a problem in staccato.

Legato

- All instruments can play legato with a "dah" or "doo" tongue
- Breath must be constant.
- Trombone must also have quick, relaxed slide movement between notes.

Multiple Tonguing

- Start when other basics are in place. Teach multiple tonguing before it is needed in music.
- Work on Ka by itself first
- Double Tongue Ta-Ka
- Triple Tongue Ta-Ta-Ka

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Range

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The Goal

- Ability to play throughout the range of the horn
- Flexibility (ability to go from any note to any other note)
- Characteristic tone quality

The problems

Poor range can have several causes. Problems may in occur in combination.

- Lack of air support
- Embouchure. Placement, weakness, pressure, etc.
- Lips buzzing inefficiently. Thin or non-existent tone on certain notes.
- Equipment problems--beginner horn or problems with repair and maintenance.
- Lack of understanding of the Characteristic Brass Tone

Getting There

Improving and maintaining range is a long-term project. Professionals still work on range!

Air

- Check Posture and playing position.
- Work daily on long tones. Start in mid range and go up and down. Rest between sets.
- Listen for a "supported" full tone.
- Practice Long Tones with crescendos and decrescendos

Embouchure

- Check Horizontal and Vertical Placement. Each instrument's ideal or starting placement is slightly different.
- Avoid too much pressure

Long Tones

- Start on an easy, mid-range note
- Move up and back down diatonically in 2, 3, 5, and 5 note sets. Can also be done chromatically.
- Also do down and back up.
- Gradually (weeks, months) move starting pitch up and down.

Buzzing

- Mouthpiece alone is the best remedy. Start with a tone that is clear and work up and down.
- Avoid too much pressure

Lip Slurs

- Work on slurring up and down throughout the harmonic series.
- Begin with 2-note slurs, and then extend over time
- Rest after each set of slurs.

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The Goal

Physical facility of finger or slide movement

Transferring facility to reading music

The problems

Poor technique can have several causes. Problems may occur in combination.

- Lack of air support improper embouchure
- Equipment problems--beginner horn or problems with repair and maintenance.(sluggish valves or dented slide)
- Posture and playing position--usually resulting in too much tension.

Getting There

Improving and maintaining good technique is a long-term project. Professionals still work on technique!

Air and embouchure

- These must be in place.

Equipment

- Equipment must be appropriate for the level of the student.

Posture and Playing Position

- Strive for a relaxed but "in control" feeling.
- Trying for speed can result in tension. Check for tension starting in the moving parts of the body--fingers and up the arm and shoulder.

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Developing speed and facility

- All major and minor scales and arpeggios. Also various exercises with thirds, fourths, etc.
- Etudes and exercises to address technique
- Start slowly and build speed--work with a metronome
- Long term commitment is key. Daily Practice!
- Work with various articulations--tongue, slur and combinations.
- Valved instruments--ends of fingers push valves
- Slide--Relaxed with continuous motion is the goal

Getting There

- As the teacher, you must pay attention to the instruments your students use.
- Good equipment supports good music-making.
- Poor equipment can handicap your students.
- Make sure your beginners start on reputable brands.
- Insist that "attic horns" be playable.
- Work with a dealer to upgrade instruments and mouthpieces.
- Keep track of reputable brass brands (Examples: Conn, King, Yamaha, Bach, Getzen, and others.)
- Generally an advanced instrument will have better and more metal, bigger bore, bigger bell, and more options such as F attachment or compensating valves.

Mouthpieces

- A larger cup and bore will generally make a bigger sound
- Rim size and shape also has an effect on sound and comfort.
- There are several mouthpiece numbering systems. Visit with dealers and consult web pages.

Recommended Mouthpieces

- See your textbook