

Brent Mead

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Warmup Tips & Tricks

1. Air Only
 - a. Goal: Practice high quality air streams
 - i. Relaxed
 - ii. As little effort as possible
 - b. Remind yourself of the 3 rules of air
 - i. Air moves forward
 - ii. Air is instant
 - iii. Air is steady
 - c. Two ways we change the air
 - i. Speed
 1. Fast = high pitched notes
 2. Slow = low pitched notes
 - ii. Size
 1. Large = Loud
 2. Small = Quiet
 - d. Blow short to medium length bursts of air:
 - i. On vertical finger placed an inch away from your lips
 - ii. Mouthpiece only
 - iii. Mouthpiece + instrument
2. Long Tones
 - a. Comfortably medium – long, relaxed tones
 - b. 1 pitch and note per blow
 - c. No need to ‘press’ the sound or extend the tone longer than comfortable
 - d. Remind yourself of the 3 rules of air
 - e. Choose your vowel shape wisely
 - i. If the sound is pinched, narrow, compact, or strained, use a more open vowel and blow through a bigger aperture in your lips
 - ii. If the sound is fuzzy, unfocused, airy, or diffuse, raise your tongue and blow through a smaller aperture in your lips
 - f. Ask yourself the question: How can I make a more beautiful sound?
3. Lip Slurs
 - a. Drag your beautiful sound from step two across different partials without moving the slide
 - b. Start narrow and only 1 or 2 partials at a time
 - c. Blow steady air and blow through the note change
 - d. Replicate the same shape and sound on all 7 positions
 - e. Once you have success with slurring 1 or 2 notes, you can add difficulty by:
 - i. Adding a wider range (slur 5 notes ascending) or
 - ii. Changing notes faster
4. Tonguing
 - a. On a single note, play any rhythm you choose
 - b. “Blow the tongue out of the airstream”
 - c. Say ‘Tah’ in your mouth
 - d. The tongue submits to the air
5. Slide/Valve Technique
 - a. This is a great time to work on scales or chromatic patterns
 - b. Make sure the slide has stopped moving before you articulate the next note

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Practice

General Thoughts:

- Be sure to have a plan before you begin your practice sessions
- Be patient, thoughtful, and attentive
- Reflect on what is going well, what needs to improve, and how you can improve
- When you're done, write down what you did, how it went, and what wasn't solved
- The best way to progress the fastest is record yourself often. Record a 15 second snapshot of your playing and see if you can identify some problems. After working through some solutions, record yourself again and see if the problems improved.
- Don't overestimate how long you can focus. If you need to take a break, take a break. I find my attention wandering around 25 minutes so I try not to have an intense session longer than 25 minutes. I might answer some emails, get a snack, or do some listening before returning to practice. Set a timer for this break. I can usually stack 3 sessions together before I lose productivity all together.

Overall Goals & Approach:

- Be purposeful in your practice. When you're practicing to improve, your accuracy (for whatever you're trying to measure) should be around 95% or better. If not, then you need to go slower or lower difficulty
- Ask yourself the following questions when you practice:
 - Where is the problem? (e.g. Measure 30, beat 4)
 - What is the problem in the sound? (be specific but don't analyze the approach, analyze the result)
 - Yes:
 - I played a wrong note
 - My slide/valves were incorrect
 - I wasn't loud enough
 - I didn't slur
 - My tone was pinched
 - No:
 - I didn't use enough air
 - My air was lazy
 - My lips were too tight
 - How can I fix the problem? (here is where you offer the solution. It's an important distinction but students need to learn to analyze only the sound, not the approach first. Keep the end goal in mind)
 - After doing the solution proposed above, did I fix the problem?

Organization:

- Any playing after my warmup, I organize my practice in short sessions in two categories
 - Fundamentals
 - I view the warmup as a way to diagnose problems and provide my body with a way to 'stretch' or prepare for the day of playing
 - Practicing fundamentals more after the warmup provides a way for more focused, isolated progress on the essentials of brass playing
 - The longer I've been playing trombone, the each day
 - Repertoire
 - Address and practice any études, band/orchestra pieces, solo repertoire, chamber music, etc. in this session