

Tips on Breathing, Phrasing, and Articulation for a Balanced Daily Routine

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The key to improvement, success, and incredible musical enjoyment on the trumpet is to practice a balanced, effective daily routine that covers all the main areas of technique. Daily routines only work if the player continues to do them over a long period of time; there are no short cuts on trumpet! Technique is the means to an end. The end result is to be able to express your musical ideas and emotions and experience musical interaction in ensembles without being limited by your technique on the instrument. Try doing the Dan Miller components with these three additional components every day for **three weeks**, and see if you start to notice improvements in your playing.

After three weeks, you will have settled into a practice routine, so now try to keep going with your daily routine for **three months**, and you will find you are beginning to sound like a completely different player. You will notice that things that used to be difficult to play are now well within your strength and endurance, and things that you didn't used to be able to play are starting to become possible.

After three months, you will probably be hooked on your daily routine. Once you start sounding better and better, and being able to do more and more on the instrument, the desire to keep improving starts to snowball. Now you are ready to commit to doing the routine daily (with occasional days off) for **three years**. If you keep up the daily routine for three years, you will be one of the strongest trumpet players in your district, if not the strongest.

I: Breathing

Breath is the fuel that drives everything we do on the trumpet. Working on technique without a free-flowing, vigorous air stream is like trying to drive a car with no gas in the engine. You can have the highest performing sports car and the most skilled driver in the world, but if there's no gas in the engine, you're not going anywhere (unless it's an electric car!). Similarly, you can have a perfect embouchure, tongue placement, and musical concept in your mind, but if you're not moving the air, you're not going anywhere.

I recommend spending 1-2 minutes at the beginning of every practice session and rehearsal re-training your body to take a full capacity breath and to blow freely and vigorously. Three possible ways of doing this are:

1) In a forward bend or standing, take three slow, deep breaths. First breath into the lower back. Then into the side ribs (intercostal muscles). And finally, on the third breath, feel the expansion in all directions around the torso, perhaps so much that you have to come up out of the forward bend a bit due to the expansion in the abdominal region.

2) Using a sheet of paper, form a breathing tube with a 1 – 1 ½ inch diameter (or use a piece of PVC or an actual breathing tube). Insert it into your mouth and take three deep breaths, in and out. Notice the open, hollow sensation in the throat. This is exactly how the throat should be when playing.

3) Using a piece of paper, stand six inches from a wall. Take a full, deep breath, and try to suspend the piece of paper against the wall for as long as you can using only the breath. If you can suspend it for several seconds, try taking a small step back and suspending the paper from further away. The goal is to use the visual stimulus of the paper to experience a vigorous, fast-moving air stream like the one you will use on trumpet.

Other breathing resources for teachers and students:

- Pat Sheridan/Sam Pilafian Breathing Gym Videos
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_U5ms4DKTPE
- Ravi Best Inhale and Exhale videos with Lincoln Center Jazz Academy
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Jby01iDKhVI>
- “How to” – open, hollow inhalation, fast, focused exhalation
- Where to buy breathing devices: <https://www.windsongpress.com/shop/>

II. Lyrical Playing

Sometimes trumpet players think the word “technique” means being able to play higher, faster, and louder. Those are just three components of technique. Being able to produce a beautiful tone, fluid slurs, and elegantly shaped phrases is also an essential component of good technique, and one that often gets overlooked. Just like triple tonguing or lip slurs, if you want to be good at lyrical playing, you have to make it part of your daily routine! Here are several ways to incorporate lyrical playing into your daily routine. Choose any one of these approaches each day:

- Choose a favorite ballad from jazz or popular music and play it by ear, alone or along with a recording. Use recordings by great singers as well as instrumentalists to guide your approach to phrasing. Three of my favorites are “Sophisticated Lady,” “Foggy Day in London Town,” and a Russian folk song called “Ah, This Night” (“Oy, da ne vecher”).
- Play one song from “The Art of Phrasing” section in Arban’s *Complete Conservatory Method*

- Play one etude from Concone's *Lyrical Studies for the Trumpet or Horn* each day. These are bel canto vocal studies, transcribed for the trumpet, and they are incredibly health for your playing.
- Play one etude from Bordogni's *Vocalises* each day. This is another book of bel canto vocal studies. There are many fine editions available, but I like the one edited by Mark Tezak best.
- Need a break from etudes? Play a lyrical excerpt from a favorite work for solo trumpet or ensemble. Three of my favorites are Rachmaninov's *Vocalise*, the off-stage solo from Respighi's *Pines of Rome* and the post-horn solo from Mahler's *Symphony No. 3*.

III. Tonguing

Rafael Mendez: "The tongue might be likened to the violinist's bow in that we use it to start our notes and ... to express different moods in the music."

A rapid, clear single tongued syllable is one of the most important basic techniques in trumpet playing, and there are many ways to develop and maintain it. Relatively simple exercises with lots of repeated notes work best, because they allow you to isolate the variables and focus in on the clarity of the beginnings of notes; the "t." Here are some of my favorites:

- Arban's book - I. First Studies – Music Studies – Rhythmic Figure eighth, two sixteenths (page 28 in the Goldman/Gordon edition). Think short eighths, long sixteenths. Insist upon a "ping" at the beginning of each note. Not too fast at first, so you can really hear the quality of your articulation.
- Arban's book – III. Scales – Major Scales (page 59 in the Goldman/Gordon edition). Play each pattern on a single, repeated pitch, then on the printed pitches. Choose a different key each day or each week. Pencil in your metronome markings. Not too fast at first, but increase the tempo gradually in tiny increments (1 bpm, for example), so that you never lose the clarity and the "ping."
- Bousquet – Thirty-Six Celebrated Studies. These are for the advanced student. They are quite challenging, but present many opportunities to develop crisp, clear, rapid tonguing.
- 60 seconds of tonguing. Set your stopwatch on one minute, and your metronome on 60 bpm to start with. Tongue steady, clear sixteenth notes, stopping only to breath, for 60 seconds. Gradually increase the tempo over time, in tiny increments such as 1 bpm. This is harder than you think!

5 ways to stay motivated and to improve during the pandemic:

1. Social media challenges: challenge a group of friends and colleagues to a 20-day, 50-day, or 100-day practice challenge, then post your progress and give each other encouragement every day. Another good practice challenge to do with friends is to play every exercises in the first 100 pages of the Arban's book over a period of weeks or months.

2. Choose one recording per week or per month to listen to every day while you learn to play the piece. This works for learning a transcription of a jazz solo, orchestral excerpts, or solo works. This is focused, active, deep listening, and most of us don't do enough of it. Each time you listen, try to pick up something new about the articulation, style, tone, or other details.

3. Keep a practice journal. Write down very **specific goals**, timelines, and then **track your progress**. Don't switch goals until you've accomplished what you set out to do. For example, your goal might be to be able to play your scales in fourths in all twelve keys in eighth notes at 76 bpm for the quarter note. Or your goal could be to do Caruso's Six Notes every day for 21 days (3 weeks).

4. Take a virtual lesson with someone somewhere else in the country or the world! One of the advantages of online instruction is that geography is no obstacle. Is there a trumpet player you've always dreamed of taking a lesson with, or someone your band director repeatedly points to as a great trumpet teacher? Why not just reach out to them and ask for a virtual lesson?!

5. Reward yourself at the end of each practice session with a few minutes playing something purely for fun. You've eaten your vegetables, so have a little desert! The goal here is not technique development, although sometimes your technique may improve as a bi-product. The goal for these last few minutes of practice is to leave a good taste in your mouth; to make you want to get the horn out of the case the next day and keep practicing.

24. 

tu tu tu tu tu tu tu tu tu

The musical score consists of five staves of music. The first staff is a vocal line in 2/4 time, starting with a treble clef and a key signature of two flats (B-flat and E-flat). The melody is composed of eighth and quarter notes, with lyrics 'tu tu tu tu tu tu tu tu tu' written below. The second staff continues the vocal line with similar rhythmic patterns. The third staff is a piano accompaniment, featuring a bass clef and a key signature of two flats, with a variety of rhythmic figures including eighth and sixteenth notes. The fourth and fifth staves continue the piano accompaniment, ending with a double bar line. The overall piece is a rhythmic exercise or short composition.