

BASICS OF TROMBONE TECHNIQUE

Posture

When standing, stand up straight, look straight ahead of you. Breathe normally, relax your shoulders.

When you sit and play, sit upright, as if you were standing. Stand from the waist up, sit from the waist down, with feet flat on the floor in front of you. Your posture from the waist up should be the same as when standing. Your goal is to stand or sit strong, proud, yet relaxed.

Use a mirror to check your posture. Look at your face, neck, shoulders, and waist. Take a full deep breath and let it out slowly.

Holding the Instrument

Hold the instrument's weight entirely in the left hand and move the slide with the right hand. The slide hand does not hold the instrument, but only moves the slide. Holding the instrument up with the slide hand can harm the instrument, and makes it harder to move the slide freely.

Breathing and Blowing

Breathe full, relaxed breaths through the mouth. If you breathe through your nose you are limiting your air capacity, and therefore your tone production. Inhale as if you were yawning – an open throated, full breath.

Blow with the throat open and relaxed. Blow, don't squeeze, force, or bear down. Blow more like a sigh – fast air movement, not high pressure. Once you attack a note, let your air go immediately – don't hold it in. Blow a steady air stream.

Mouthpiece Buzzing

Buzz specific notes on your mouthpiece a few minutes or more each day. Listen for a good buzz, one that is clear, not airy, and take care to keep your embouchure corners firm and your throat relaxed as you blow.

Buzz melodies on the mouthpiece. This is good ear training and helps to build embouchure sensitivity and breath control. Plus, it's fun.

Buzz any note. While buzzing, slowly pull the mouthpiece away from your lips until you feel the connection end. Your goal is to learn how much mouthpiece pressure is enough for good sound without applying too much pressure. This will help with many things, including tone production and high range.

Tonguing

Use “tip of the tongue” articulation. When you say, “tip”, you can feel where the tongue should be placed for clear, crisp tonguing.

Tongue action should be quick, whether playing whole notes or 16th notes – be careful not to “hammer” the attack.

For legato, be sure to keep the tongue action quick and light – somewhere between “dah” and “lah”, and generally with a placement higher in the mouth.

Keep your air stream constantly flowing while articulating. Drop the tongue to the bottom of the mouth immediately after the articulation. Feel your steady air stream cause the tip of the tongue to fall out of the way.

Slide Technique

Hold the slide properly. Grasp the slide brace firmly, but not too tightly, between the thumb and fingers of your right hand. Make sure to use wrist motion and arm motion when moving the slide – this will help make the movement quick and smooth.

Moving the slide while playing should be a quick, precise action. Always move the slide in rhythm. Do not “slide through” the positions – STOP the slide at each note you wish to play. Trace a straight line when moving the slide – don’t allow the bell to move with the slide.

Coordinate the tongue perfectly with the slide movement. In other words, when you articulate a note, your slide must be in exactly the right position at exactly the same time.

Recommended Method Books

Arban: Complete Method for the Trombone/Baritone

Kopprasch: 60 Selected Studies for Trombone, Book 1

Fink: Studies In Legato; or Rochut: Melodious Etudes, Book 1 (more advanced)

Remington: Warm-Up Exercises

Kleinhammer: The Art of Trombone Playing

Study privately with a good teacher!

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**Thanks to George Krem, Edward Kleinhammer, Arnold Jacobs, and Max Perkoff for ideas and inspiration.