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# **TRUMPET INSTRUMENT/BODY RATIO** **AND HAND POSITION**

## **Instrument/Body Ratio**

- Assuming that the student is either standing or sitting with correct posture, instruct them to pick up the body of the trumpet with both hands and simply lift it by using their elbows. Move the instrument up and down, side to side, higher than usual and lower than usual. As students are doing this, have them notice how it affects the balance of the body. Eventually, the body should feel as balanced with or without the instrument in hand.

## **Hand Position**

- The most natural shape of everyone's hands forms a flat "C".
- All hands will fall in from the wrist. The body of the hand must never fall behind the wrist.
- There should be no bends or wrinkles in either arm when holding the trumpet.
- The inside of the arm must never touch the outside of the chest cavity when holding the trumpet correctly. No body part touches another body part!
- Elbows must hang naturally so the natural slope of the shoulders will not be hampered.
- Place both the left and the right hand in their correct position. Remember the left hand does not "grip" the instrument. No tension should be felt in this hand when holding the instrument.
- The right thumb is placed in its natural position, which is between the first and second valve casing. The thumb must never bend in any direction! The index, middle and ring fingers are curved and the fleshy part of the fingertips are placed on the pearls of the valve caps and should never lose contact with the caps. The pinky finger is slightly curved and placed on TOP of the "ring." This finger should never be placed INSIDE the "ring", as this will cause students to "pull" the instrument into their embouchure and cause major problems.
- Though not a part of the hand, the elbows must never feel as though they are pulling the instrument toward the student's face. Instruct students to keep their elbows soft while playing the trumpet.
- The palms of both hands should feel soft. The palm of the right hand should never touch the instrument. The teacher should be able to clearly see a "circular" opening between the right hand and the instrument.
- The student should understand that finger movement is aided by the soft tissue of the palm of the hand, rather than the bony texture of the top of the hand.

# TRUMPET FACE/EMBOUCHURE

- Each student should use their own “safe/unbreakable” mirror—both in the classroom and at home.
- Using the mirror, have each student notice how natural their face looks. They will have to later remember and memorize how it looks and feels.
- The head must be balanced on the shoulders in a comfortable position—not too far forward and not too far backward.
- The eyes should be soft and natural, and the “sight line” should be exactly level. The distance between eyebrows should not change as air goes in and out of the body.
- Look for natural creases in the face, and allow any that are naturally present to exist while playing. No other creases are allowed.
- The corners should move in toward the canine/eye teeth. The corners should never look or feel pulled back.
- The corners can move down from the natural position as the student progresses but they can never move up.
- The texture of both the upper and lower lip should be very soft and relaxed.
- There should be natural space between the inside of the lips and the gums and teeth. This space should not change or feel different when the lips vibrate inside the cup of the mouthpiece.
- The back teeth are slightly apart and should feel the same as when the student is reading, watching television, etc. The teeth should not be pressed into each other when doing these other activities.
- Brass instrument embouchures are formed with a natural overbite. A student with an underbite should be steered away from brass instrument.
- The thickness of a student’s lips should correspond to the size of the cup of the mouthpiece for the chosen instrument. Students with a very full top or bottom lip should be steered towards low brass instruments rather than trumpet.
- The bottom of the front of the tongue should lie in the soft tissue area which is located in the front of the mouth just behind the ridge of the bottom gum.
- **Remember that when playing the trumpet, cheeks will only “puff out” if the air is not freely going into the instrument.**
- Assuming that the above has been achieved, the embouchure will be formed with special attention to the following:
  1. The mouthpiece must be placed in the middle of the mouth—up and down as well as side to side.
  2. The corners are in their natural position and should be set against the canine/eye teeth.
  3. The lips must be allowed to freely vibrate in response to the airstream rather than made to “buzz” in front of the airstream.
  4. The lips must feel natural so that air can freely move past them—they must not be pulled back against the teeth or blown away from the teeth and gums.

5. The students should remember that the mouthpiece “gathers” the air—not the lips.
6. There must never be more energy placed against the upper lip than the lower lip; hence the instrument will angle slightly downwards.

# TRUMPET ARTICULATION

- The tongue moves in the same manner when articulating a brass instrument as it does when you speak. The tongue moves up and down—not back and forth—both when speaking and when articulation on an instrument.
- The purpose of the tongue is to release the air which causes the lips to vibrate and creates the sound. The tongue's release of the air simply defines the beginning/start of the vibration/sound.
- Articulation is used to define the vibrations necessary to create musical rhythm, style and movement--to contrast the use of slurring (which also creates similar musical entities).
- The students should think that the tongue “articulates” the sound created by the airstream. If the student is taught to create the sound correctly, articulation will be an easy transition.
  - a. sound occurs when the air moves past the naturally vibrating lips
  - b. articulate the sound that is already present
  - c. teach students to articulate at the moment the sound begins
- Without the instrument or mouthpiece, use the following procedure:
  1. Say the word “DOG”.
  2. Sing the syllable “DAH”.
  3. Once these are mastered, have the student use the mouthpiece and instrument and reproduce the “DAH” syllable in their brain to create an articulated sound.
  4. The tongue should feel the same when saying, singing and playing the mouthpiece and instrument.
  5. The tongue should touch the enamel of the upper teeth directly below the gum line—in the same spot with the same strength every time.
  6. Use the syllable “DAH” because it creates smoother and more easily controlled air as opposed to the “TAH” syllable.
  7. After each “articulation”, the tongue must immediately fall down into its natural “at rest” position.
  8. The tongue will be naturally soft at all times, but can touch the teeth with different strengths.
  9. The tongue will be in its “down position” 98% of the time when articulating correctly.
- Have the student start their sound with the air.
- Using the information about the basics of articulation, have the student articulate as fast as they can with no limitations of numbers, worries about evenness of articulation, etc. Simply get them used to articulating!
- Have the student then use the “ta-day” syllable to practice using the tongue in an organized manner.
- Have the student then articulate “on command.” The student will start their sound, and articulate when you snap your fingers to practice gaining more control of the tongue.

- Once the student understands pulse and the foot pat, have the student articulate exactly when the toe of the foot touches the floor.
- Have the student articulate with the down and up position of the foot.
- Proceed to written rhythms as they begin to read music.

**Always practice this entire routine. The student must always go through the entire process, so he will not lose the ability to move his tongue at various speeds and in a structured manner.**

# **TRUMPET FLEXIBILITY AND**

## **RANGE EXTENSION**

- Brass playing is based upon flexibility.
- Students eventually need to be flexible through each of the harmonic series in order to move up and down within the range of the instrument.
- Once the student can reproduce at will a given pitch, the teacher must decide whether flexibility up or down is needed first.
- Flexibility is controlled by air direction and the isometrics created by the corners and canine/eye teeth. The head must always stay in its natural, balanced position at all times. The angle of the instrument must not change at any time.
- Students must learn to angle the air in the cup of the mouthpiece without changing the position of the lips and/or the relationship of the upper and lower teeth.
- Flexibility is also enhanced by vowel sounds used in various registers. These sounds can be “ah” for the middle register....”ee” for the upper register....and “oh” for the lower register. Have students practice saying these vowel sounds with vocalization on appropriate lower, middle and higher sounds.
- Bring to the students’ attention that the shape of the tongue changes dramatically from vowel sound to vowel sound. All students should be aware that vowel sounds are the middles of words that they speak every day. Practice saying words that use the required vowel sounds. (i.e. bow, ball, beep)
- Range is developed through flexibility. It is more important to create a resonant sound while practicing flexibility than to create wider intervals. The student can enhance their range by making more resonant sounds in the middle register before trying to extend higher or lower.
- Make sure students understand the texture of the lips have nothing to do with range. For example, students should never be told to “tighten” their lips in order to play in the higher register.