

Brass Practice Packet

Orange Grove Middle School

Mr. Dustin Chilson, Director

2015-2016

How to Practice - Brass Edition

1. Be Ready: 1 minute
 - a. Have everything you need for the session in front of you so you do not have to get up during your practice time. Make sure you have your instrument, binder, music, pencil with eraser, tuner, metronome, cleaning cloths, etc.
2. Posture: 20 seconds
 - a. Make sure you have a seat that you can sit up straight in and have your feet firmly on the floor. Sit on the front half of the seat. Stand if you would like.
 - b. Your back should not be stick straight, but you should feel tall and comfortable. Feet should be firmly planted on the floor in front of the chair. Do not cross your legs or ankles.
3. Breath: 3-5 minutes
 - a. How to Breathe:
 - i. Make sure you stay completely relaxed.
 - ii. When breathing in, do not allow your shoulders to become tense.
 - iii. On the inhalation, use an “oh” syllable. Do not breathe in through your nose, and don’t take tense, noisy breaths. Pretend that you’re yawning. You should feel that relaxed. The flow of air should be even and constant on both the inhalation and exhalation.
 - iv. Your lungs are like a glass of water. You should feel them filling from the bottom up.
 - b. Exercises:
 - i. Basic Practice: Place your hand on your stomach and practice the inhalation. You should feel your stomach expand a bit with the air, but you must make sure not to tense your stomach muscles. You can also place your hand on your lower back to feel expansion there.
 - ii. To practice air control and get used to using lots of air, begin with the Paper on the Wall exercise. Stand next to a wall, about one to two feet away. Hold up a sheet of paper, and see how long you can pin it to the wall using only your air. Repeat this 4 or 5 times, and try and pin it longer each day.
 - iii. Next, turn on the metronome at 60 bpm. Practice breathing in and out, 4 beats in and 4 beats out. Fill completely up on the way in, and get all the air out on the way out. Then do it 6 in, 6 out. Next, 8 in, 8 out. For superhero status, go 16 in and 16 out. Use a mirror to make sure your shoulders aren’t coming up.
 - iv. Do the same exercise. This time, however, raise your arms up as you breathe in, and lower them as you breathe out. It should look like a slow motion bird flap. Your arms should be completely vertical when your lungs are completely full, and down by your sides when you are completely empty.
 - v. Practice taking full breathes in shorter amounts of time. Do the same exercise as in iii., but this time keep the inhalation. Breathe in 4, out 4, then in 4, out 6, then in 4, out 8. Next do 2 – 4, 2 – 6, 2 – 8, and for superduperhero status, in 2 out 16.

- vi. Lastly, to practice inhaling completely, breathe in a full tank of air, as much as you can. Then take one or two small 'sips' of air in on top of that.
4. Warm-up: 8-20 Minutes
- a. Mouthpiece Buzzing: 2-5 minutes
 - i. Find your perfect embouchure on just the mouthpiece. Say 'm' and center the mouthpiece to find it. Practice going from a completely relaxed embouchure and add tension until you get a beautiful sound.
 - ii. Check the mirror – is the mouthpiece centered? Do you have the correct amount of upper and lower lip on the instrument?
 - b. Put it together: 30 seconds
 - i. Insert the mouthpiece and turn gently about 90 degrees.
 - ii. When you start playing, make sure that you aren't pressing the mouthpiece too hard into your face. If you have a red circle on your mouth at the end of practicing then you used too much pressure when playing.
 - c. Long Tones: 3-10 minutes
 - i. This is the most important part of your practice! What you do here will improve every part of your playing.
 - ii. Start with a very comfortable note for yourself. Play that note for at least four slow beats then play either chromatically up or down from that note, or up or down a scale with that note.
 - iii. Always make sure you are breathing full, deep breaths. Concentrate on producing a full, rich tone quality.
 - iv. Add attacks and articulations. Use a metronome. Place it at 60 beats per minute (or use the second hand of a clock). Play two notes in a row. Articulate both of them, then take four beats of rest. Try out stronger or lighter articulations as you see fit.
 - d. Technique: 3-5 minutes
 - i. Set aside this time in your practice to work on scales and any technical problems you are encountering in your playing.
5. Repertoire: 5-10 minutes
- a. Isolate the parts in the method book or music that you are least comfortable with. Please do not just play through music – that is not practicing.
 - b. Try these practicing techniques:
 - i. Play these passages at a slow tempo first. Slowly speed up the tempo to get it up to speed.
 - ii. Try playing each note like a long tone until you can play all of them together well.
 - iii. Change the rhythm! Make up your own rhythm for the notes and play that. Once you are comfortable with that, play the rhythm on the page.
 - iv. Can you play it backwards? Sometimes this can really help mental blocks in practice sessions.
 - v. Play it with different articulations. Try it all slurred, then all staccato. Make it fun!