



Teaching Brass from a Woodwind Perspective



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First things First - breathing and air quality

- SLOW, LOW and RELAXED
- They have to start this relaxed or tone suffers with lip pinching
- In - sip - sip
 - Only used to have them understand the feeling of being truly FULL
- “Zombie” breath (show)
- Go back to relaxed in and out

NO “T” WORDS!!!

- “Tight”
- “Tension”
- These are bad words in the bandroom
- Instead use: “pressure,” “firm”

First Buzz/Mouthpiece Sounds

WOODWINDS

Breathe RELAXED and FULL

Exhale relaxed (no mouthpiece, mult. times)

Again but with firm corners (with mouthpiece)

Again and start speeding up air until pitch starts to rise (F# clarinet, Ab Saxes)

Rinse and repeat until they get over the giggles, tone is pure (no spit), sound is steady and controlled (pitch DOES matter)

BRASS

Breathe RELAXED and FULL

Exhale relaxed (no mouthpiece, mult. times)

Again but with firm corners (with mouthpiece, air only)

Again and start speeding up air until buzzing begins

Rinse and repeat until they get over the giggles, buzz is OPEN, sound is steady (pitch does not matter at this point.... yet)

Buzzing (Part 2)

- Keep working until it's a steady open tone (specific pitch? - not yet..)
 - Lip buzz vs. Air buzz – lip is forced and pinch, air is open – full face vibrates
 - Same for woodwinds
- Pitch starts to slowly matter
 - Over a few days, start introducing different pitches with a drone to match
 - Begin with Bb, C, and D concerts first
- When they're ready
 - Buzz familiar songs (hot cross buns, etc)
 - If mixed classes - ww's play, brass buzzes and fingers

Clarinet - Brass perspective

- FIRM corners (not tight....)
- Firmness comes from the sides
- No biting down, teeth gap
- NO smiling
- Corners DOWN, not back - especially true when working on brass high range

Flute - Brass Perspective

AIR CONTROL

Fast speed for high range, slow speed for low range

Aperture size for air control

Show with flute head joint - visibly see the aperture size change

Similar adjustments happen INSIDE the mouthpiece (no “chewing” the notes)

Saxophone - Brass Perspective

“Tee” - “Tah” - “Toh” on saxophone for high – mid – low ranges

Same syllables for brass

Changes to Oral cavity (inside the mouth)

Changes air speed and volume

A good transition to lip slurs

Lip Slurs - CL/Sax Pitch bends

- Clarinets and sax pitch bend by playing with the corners
 - Knowing what NOT to do is just as important (Dan O'Reilly)
- Same idea for brass when they're ready to do lip slurs
 - Concert F
 - F - E - F (1-2-1) without valves until they get the feel for the bend
 - Make it a competition! "Brass Limbo" of sorts
 - Who can bend the most without losing the partial
- When they lose the partial Ta-daaaaa... LIP SLUR
 - Again, but this time land on the lower partial and hold it
 - Keep minimizing the bend time until it is a partial slur with NO gap in the sound
- With more experience (7th and 8th grades) bends get more complicated but still do them!!

Brass Fingerings

- WW's have numbered fingers
 - Top to bottom = 1 through 6
- Brass have positions
 - Based on chromatic scale
 - First position = open
 - Second = 2
 - Third = 1
 - Fourth = 1-2
 - Fifth = 2-3
 - Sixth = 1-3
 - Seventh = 1-2-3

Fingerings (continued)

- Positions keep uniformity and simplicity
- Some kids don't know finger names
- Easier to identify notes and fingerings
 - I.e = Hot Cross Buns
 - Say/sing note names
 - Say/sing positions
 - They buzz, you play (matching pitch!)
 - Everyone plays
- Horns
 - Positions still apply but don't forget trigger
 - Can play same positions (ish) and notes as trumpet, sounds P4 off and is good ear training
 - Might need their own run

Long Tones - EVERYDAY

- At first, DON'T name the notes
 - Takes too long, and is confusing for beginners
- Start on Concert Bb once it is fairly steady and open
- Remington Long Tone
 - Explain/show in positions
 - 1-2-1, 1-3-1, 1-4-1
 - Expand to 5, 6, and 7 in time as they get better
- Remington on F
 - ONLY when they are ready and are not pinching/straining to get the upper partial
- LONG TONES FOCUS IS TONE QUALITY
 - Leave the note reading for the daily book exercises

Long Tone (Part 2)

- Introduce long tones ascending the chromatic scale
 - Concert Bb up chromatically
 - 1-7-1, 1-6-1, 1-5-1, etc
- Always buzz and match first... then play
 - They might not like it, but you're the teacher...
 - If you can't buzz it, you can't play it

Higher - Louder - Faster

- Brass players in their natural habitat
 - Try to play as high as possible
- Use to discourage it - fear of developing with bad habits
- Now it's a teachable moment
 - If they're doing it correctly... thumbs up! Go for it!
 - If not, then correct what you see and hear, then praise the practice and encourage it
- #HLF