



TRUMPET PEDAGOGY FROM DAY ONE

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SELECTING STUDENTS FOR TRUMPET

Remarks: Finding students that have a “trumpet face” is always a high priority when placing students on an instrument. However, with careful attention and sequencing, students of virtually all physical characteristics can become successful trumpet players.

- The best faces for trumpet include even teeth and lips. Lips that come together where the teeth meet are the very best for trumpet.
- Lips that create a smooth, even line are best.
- Students whose lips are “wavy” often find difficulty initially in creating an effective vibration.
- The fullness of the lips are not necessarily a factor if the afore mentioned characteristics are in place.

BEFORE THE FIRST SOUNDS ARE MADE

Remarks: Kids are typically excited and eager, which should be encouraged! Be careful not to allow their enthusiasm cause you to skip steps. Meticulous attention to detail is paramount to ensuring an unhindered future on the instrument.

THE INSTRUMENT ITSELF

- Trumpet students should learn the correct terminology for each part of the trumpet. This helps elevate their respect for the instrument.
- Have the student place the case on the floor in front of his chair, not on his lap. The student should grasp the instrument with both hands initially and remove it from the case carefully.
- The mouthpiece should be placed on the trumpet with a slight, gentle turn.
- Teach students to give a gentle, warm water bath to their trumpets during the first semester of study.
- Each student should have valve oil, slide cream (Vaseline), a mouthpiece brush, and a cleaning “snake.”

BODY POSITION/BALANCE/POSTURE

- Teach “body balance” as opposed to “posture.” Posture tends to imply a “fixed” position whereas body balance suggests that a musician may move any part of the body comfortably and freely while playing.
- The feet are flat and shoulder width apart, the spine is neutral, the rib cage is lifted, and the shoulders sloped.

- The head must be balanced above the torso and feel “weightless” and free. The placement of the head is the very most important aspect of body balance. Use the concept of the “focal point” to keep the head in the correct position: the eyes are raised and focused upon a distinct point just above the horizon.

HAND POSITION

- LEFT HAND
 - The trumpet rests on the left hand along the side of the index finger. The thumb rests in the saddle near the first joint. The index, middle, and ring fingers wrap around the valve casing lightly so that the ring finger falls naturally into the third valve slide ring. The pinky will lie horizontally along the third valve slide.
 - Be sure that the student does not pinch or grip too tightly with the left hand. The trumpet should be “balanced” in the left hand, not held.
- RIGHT HAND
 - The right hand should be the shape of a backwards “C”.
 - The right thumb balances the right side of the trumpet. The thumb should rest under and up against the lead pipe between the 1st and 2nd valve casings.
 - The thumbnail of the right thumb should be facing the player, not turned downward.
 - Use the “fingerprints” to depress the valves and be sure to press directly over the stems of the valves.
 - Fingers should stay curved and the backwards “C” shape maintained during playing.
- Be sure the hand position remains light so that the trumpet does not push against the embouchure.

PRODUCING THE FIRST SOUNDS

Remarks: The first sounds produced do not necessarily have to be “bad” sounds. It is less important WHAT note the student produces initially than the QUALITY of the sound he produces. Loud is often the enemy of quality in the beginning stages.

This teacher starts her beginning trumpet students on the instrument rather than on just the mouthpiece. If you choose to begin with the mouthpiece alone (sometimes a more desirable approach when starting a large group of beginners) do not allow the student to force or pinch. The face should appear natural and relaxed. Monitor the angle of the mouthpiece shank, as that will determine the angle of the leadpipe when playing the instrument.

EMBOUCHURE

- Use the small coffee straw (cocktail straw) for two purposes:
 - To show how the air will come out of the body;
 - To develop the embouchure muscles that surround the air.
- The straw should be placed over the tongue and held with the center of the lips.
- Have the student blow air through the straw and be sure that the teeth do not touch the straw.

- Emphasis is placed upon the development of the center muscles. These muscles surround the air in a circular fashion similar to holding the straw.
- When using the straw, be sure the angle of the straw and the position of the head is as it will be when adding the trumpet.
- Transition to the instrument itself and have the student gently blow air as if blowing through the straw. Start with the lips closed (not tight) and let the air open the lips. Slowly bring the top lip down to find “where the sound lives.”

AIR

- Beginning students are encouraged to find the vibration with a minimum amount of air. As the center muscles are developed more volume of air is added. Caution is advised when speaking of air – volume of air and speed of air are two different things.
- Students are taught to use the size of the aperture to create the appropriate speed of air necessary for higher notes and discouraged to find higher notes by simply blowing harder.
- Usually by mid-year students are able to play an octave and their embouchures are ready to start adding a **greater** volume of air to their tones. Begin to emphasize breathing and blowing. Learning to play with correct embouchure and tone production will elicit the **desired** volume easily. Poor embouchures constrict and restrict vibration, resonance, and volume.

FIRST NOTES

- G is a preferable first note. The next best is E. If a student finds the low C (which many do) begin soon to establish the smaller aperture and move up to the G as soon as possible.
- Develop the fifth from C to G. Spend a good amount of time on this.
- Introduce tonguing/articulation (see below) **ONLY AFTER** establishing a good sound and fluent movement from note to note. Introduce songs and play many, many songs.
- Once A is attained, moving to the octave should soon follow.

ARTICULATION

- It is best to introduce articulation **only after** the center muscles of the embouchure are established and a characteristic sound is achieved.
- Ensure that the tongue is forward and down and the air is unobstructed and flowing freely over the tongue.
- “Too” is a preferred syllable to introduce articulation as opposed to “tee” in that the corners of the mouth tend to be more natural, placed inward toward the center of the embouchure.
- “Too” allows the tongue to rest in the bottom of the mouth whereas “tee” causes the tongue to arch.
- Be sure that only the tip of the tongue moves and, most importantly, that the air does not stop while articulating. If the student’s initial experience with articulation is to tongue too heavily or with a marcato or staccato style, it may be difficult to achieve a smooth legato. Moving between notes without stopping the air is very important to the future of young students.

RECOMMENDED METHOD BOOKS AND PRINT MATERIALS FOR BEGINNERS

Remarks: *Essential Elements*, *Standard of Excellence*, and *Accent on Achievement* are all examples of good beginning band method books.

- Just as one size does not fit all, a method book does not necessarily meet all of the needs of every student. Create your own materials for your students. These materials should be influenced by class instrumentation, size, frequency of meeting, and the individual needs of students that arise during daily classes.
- Consider creating a beginner band binder that includes a friendly fingering chart, a diagram of a piano keyboard, musical terms, rhythm sheets, songs, exercises and other music/materials that will be used throughout the year.
- Include a pencil pouch and a “band pencil.” Kids love this!

RECOMMENDED EQUIPMENT FOR BEGINNERS

Remarks: We must educate new band parents about the importance of acquiring a quality instrument; otherwise the student will soon become frustrated with the limitations of the equipment. Ask parents to consult with you before purchasing an instrument. Stress to the parent that repairs and maintenance are to be expected. Advise them that that low-priced, off-brand instruments often cannot be repaired and have little or no resale value. Stress that an instrument purchase should be regarded as a financial investment as well as an investment in the child’s future.

Some teachers prefer to start their beginners on cornet rather than trumpet because it can be easier for small hands to balance and because the conical bore is less resistant. This is sound logic, but if moving to a trumpet is the eventual goal, this means the student will have to acquire a different instrument.

- Bach TR300H2
- King 601
- Yamaha YTR-2330
- 7C or 5C Bach Mouthpiece

OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

Remarks: When teaching a group, whether in a homogeneous or heterogeneous instrument class, whether daily or weekly, it is absolutely critical to hear individuals at every meeting. We must never teach just “the band.” We must teach the *individual* in the group setting.