

# Wind Pedagogy from Day 1

## Trumpet/French Horn

By Lynne Jackson



### What Kind of Student Are We Looking For?

#### Trumpet

The Face: Teeth are relatively even and lips easily come together to make a straight lined “M”, while the corners stay in a natural position.



#### French Horn

The Face: The same as trumpet but with a bit more “forgiveness”. If the overbite is a little larger it matters not as much due to the angle of the horn.

The Brain: We are looking for a smart kid who is reliable, detail oriented, patient, diligent and responsible; one who will take care of the instrument, practice and stay committed to band.

The Parent: Must be on board with lessons and understand the value of music for their child. It is part of the teacher’s responsibility to educate the parent.

### Getting Started: It’s All About Respect

We start with how we enter the room. This is how we begin the process respectfully. Next we begin to learn about form and function.

#### Posture

Correct posture is the gateway to correct breathing. Teach correct posture first by having the students stand. Feet are flat, shoulder width apart and well balanced.

Spine is straight. Rib cage is lifted. Chest is open and shoulders are sloped.

The head is perfectly balanced and the neck is a “swan neck”.

Be sure that students are not pushing the head back toward the spine.

#### Introducing the Instrument

Teach your students respect for the instrument on Day 1.

There is form and function for carrying the instrument in its case. There is form and function in laying the case in front of you.

There is form and function in opening the case.

There is form and function in taking the instrument out of the case. (I think you get it by now!!)



Once the case is open, I like to identify the parts of the instrument for several reasons: the most important reason being that I am able to use correct language (terminology) from the start. I want my students to learn to identify the bell, the lead pipe, water key, thumb saddle, ring, third valve slide etc... At this point I also take the opportunity to show the student that each valve has a valve slide attached. Those slides vary in length.

The second valve slide is the shortest and the third, the longest. Here I am “planting a seed” for the time that I teach how the instrument works.



## How Do Your Students Look?

I consider this question to be the most important question that you ask yourself on a moment-to-moment basis.

### Rest Position: Trumpet

The trumpet is lying across the lap with the bell facing right and the leadpipe facing up to the ceiling. Both hands help support the instrument. Students demonstrate correct posture.

### Ready position: Trumpet

The left hand is placed correctly on the instrument and the trumpet rests upright on the left leg.

*“Relax and sit back in your chair.”* Students may relax their posture but must still have the instrument in the rest position.

### Rest Position: French Horn

The horn is upright across the lap with bell to the right. The left hand is placed on the valves while the right hand supports the bell. Students demonstrate correct posture.

### Ready position: French Horn

Same as rest position.

***Always be specific as to how you want your students to look...and look at them!!!!***

## Trumpet Playing Position

### Left Hand Position

The trumpet balances on the side of the first finger.

There is a space between the palm of the hand and the valve casings. No pinky under the trumpet

Relaxed, soft and natural – no death grip!

### Right Hand Position

The trumpet balances on the “magic spot” of the right thumb

Fingers are natural and curved and placed directly over the valve stems. The big knuckles of the right hand should be nearly as high as the valve caps  
Pinky “floats”

## French Horn Playing Position

I believe that in the beginning it is best to start on a single “F” horn if possible. This is primarily for reasons of size and comfort. It is also best to start with the horn off the leg in order to initiate the correct horn and head angle for each student.

### Left Hand Position

Fingers must be curved near the tips of the valves  
Right Hand Position:

At the start I have students cup the rim of the bell into the right hand. Later, we move the right hand to the correct position: slightly cupped, fingers touching, placed between 12 o'clock and 3 o'clock and inserted up to the big knuckles.

During the period that the hand is out of the bell, it is imperative that you pull the tuning slides so that

pitch remains accurate. Use a tuner: listen to be sure that the student is centering the note, then check the pitch and adjust tube length accordingly.

## Tone Production

There are four things that I want to be in place before we play our first sound on the trumpet or French horn:

**C**ORNERS – are in their natural place

**H**EAD – is natural. Students are made aware of their “swan neck” Check to be sure that the head is not pushed back toward the spine.

**A**NGLE of the instrument is such that the mouthpiece is making full contact with the lips, at least 50/50 for trumpet and at least 66/33 for horn. The mouthpiece rests a little more heavily on the bottom lip than the top lip. *Individual angles are dependant upon overbites.*

**T**ONGUE - is down, forward and out of the way.

- Students begin with moist lips touching.
- The air opens the lips and provides a small aperture.
- I have the student place the mouthpiece and I listen for the “G” air. I demonstrate the sound of “G” air and have them try to match it. We then take the trumpet and play “G” air through the trumpet.
- I continue to reinforce “slow air” and “soft center” throughout this process.
- Finally, I tell them that if you let your lips slowly and softly come to one another as you blow the air, your lips will naturally begin to vibrate.

*“When air overcomes resistance, vibration will occur.” Matthew McInturf*

*“The air must be unobstructed.” Claire Johnson*



This is a slow and gentle process that takes time, relentless reinforcement, and constant repetition. You must be a “watch dog” for the brass embouchure.

One weekend of incorrect practicing on a student’s part can undo that which you so painfully and perfectly set up the week before. Patiently, start again.

Also, remember that for trumpet, you are looking for “the face”. Students who find it very difficult to make the straight lined “Mmmm” with the lips will struggle and present a greater challenge. Therefore, I feel that during recruitment the quest for “the face” is one of your very highest priorities.