

It's STILL All About the Bass: Set Up Your Beginner Tubas for Success

The tuba section has been, and remains, the solid foundation of any strong concert band. It is essential that our young tuba players build good habits from day one. This session will provide guidance on starting tuba players properly, including recommended equipment, breathing and buzzing exercises, etude and method books, and troubleshooting common problems in young tubists.

- **Introduction**
 - Overview of the tuba
 - Role of the instrument in the ensemble
 - What should our students be able to do?
 - Self correct - often just one or two tubists in the ensemble
 - Replicate a characteristic sound based on a model
 - How should they sound?
 - MODEL and LISTEN
 - Characteristic sound audio/video example
- **Euphonium vs. Tuba: Where to Start?**
 - Availability of instruments in inventory
 - School vs. home instruments
 - Rationale for euphonium start vs. tuba start
 - Tuba: 3/4 vs. 4/4 start
- **Day 1 - Posture, Playing Position, Breathing, Buzzing**
 - Posture
 - Neck angle
 - Playing Position
 - Piston vs. rotor, front vs. top
 - Left hand position
 - Rest Position
 - Where is the tuba while the teacher speaks, etc.
 - Give students time to pick up instrument, teach them how to pick up instrument properly
 - Breathing
 - Proper technique
 - 8 in 8 out, 4/4, etc.
 - Quick breathing - 1 in/12 out, etc.
 - Slow, "foggy" air
 - Buzzing
 - Proper octave
 - Add resistance with pinky
 - Equipment: Tuba Stand, Berp/Paperclip, Mouthpieces, Tubas
 - Tuba Stand: [Baltimore Brass](#)
 - (Other stands' screws tend to strip quickly)
 - Improves posture and playing position
 - Ensure tuba is perpendicular to the floor/not angled towards or away from student
 - Have student sit on phone book, etc. if too short to sit properly with tuba stand
 - Is the student practicing with a stand at home?
 - Berp/Paperclip

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- Adding resistance to the buzz
- Students should practice buzzing away from the horn, but also buzzing into a berp or with paperclip set between mouthpiece and leadpipe
- Resistance helps students center notes
 - Tuba playing still requires focused, energized air - just much more of it!
- Mouthpieces
 - Beginner - Conn Helleberg
 - Intermediate - Schilke Helleberg
 - Advanced - Mr. P Signature Mouthpiece 8.8 or 5.0
- Tubas
 - Beginner - Yamaha YBB105
 - Intermediate - Jupiter JTU1110
 - Advanced - Miraphone 186 (Bb), PT 6 (C)
 - Bb vs. C
- Tuba Storage
 - Tuba “parking lot”
 - Walk through process of storage with students
 - Enforce care for instruments
- **Etude and Method Books**
 - Beginner - Getchell, *First and Second Book of Practical Studies*
 - Homogeneous vs. heterogeneous setting
 - Considerations for beginners in method book vs. private study
 - Intermediate - Bordogni, *Bel Canto Studies*
 - Advanced - Arban, Blazhevich, Tyrell
- **Common Problems in Young Tubists**
 - Air Usage
 - Not enough air
 - Balloons, Breathing Gym, incentive spirometer
 - Air is too fast
 - Avoid terms like “relax” - replace with “loose”
 - Focus on getting the student to move the air at the desired speed naturally: “Sigh into the horn”
 - Breathe through the throat of the mouthpiece
 - Posture
 - Make sure student plays with a tuba stand
 - Bring the horn to the student, not the other way around
 - Neck angle
 - Oral Cavity Shape/Articulation
 - Oral cavity too small/avoid “ee” vowel
 - Use “dah” rather than “tah”
 - Tongue interrupts airstream
 - Air never stops
 - Practice with wind patterns
 - Practice with slurs/half valves

Questions? Contact Dr. James Land, Assistant Professor of Tuba, at jw-land@wiu.edu.

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