

# Sailing with The Slide: A Guide to Trombone Slide Technique for Band Directors

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## Keeping it "Ship-Shape": Slide Care and Lubrication

- **The 45° Tilt-Test:**

Hold trombone level with left hand. Right hand reaches through slide to hold bell. Begin tilting trombone until slide starts to fall by gravity (slide will fall against right arm). Slide should start to fall by the time trombone reaches a 45° angle.

- **Dents and bowing**

Common sources of denting: (1) slide falls out of the case when opened, (2) bell hits slide when trombone is being assembled (note that many dents are located at bell-level), (3) using a chair as a trombone stand (in the band room, there are only two safe locations: in your hand or in the case).

Common sources of bowing: (1) leaning on slide; (2) setting trombone down too hard

- **Common Slide Lubricants**

- **Slide Oil**

Advantages: Easy to apply.

Disadvantages: Bad smell. Not as slick as other lubricants.

Comment: Usually used by beginners.

- **Liquid Slide Cream**

Advantages: Easy to apply. Doesn't smell bad.

Disadvantages: Doesn't last as long.

Comment: Over time, it can dry on the slide.

- **Slide Cream**

Advantages: Very slick if applied correctly.

Disadvantages: Easy to over-apply. Can dry out and accumulate.

Comment: Very commonly used. Similar to cold cream.

To apply:

(1) place a small amount on the tip of your finger (about the size of pea)

(2) apply this cream to the ends of the inner slide tube (around the stockings of the slide)

(3) spray a generous amount of water on the slide.

Two common brands are "Super Slick" and "Trombotine". Important: When using slide cream, keep the slide wet. A student using slide cream needs to own a slide sprayer and spray the slide frequently. Remember this saying:

**"A wet slide is a happy slide."**

Most students make two mistakes with slide cream: (1) applying too much slide cream (the slide will have a whitish appearance) and (2) allowing the slide to go dry (you can scrape old, dried slide cream off the inner slide with your fingernail).

- **Silicone**

Advantages: Easy to apply.

Disadvantages: Doesn't work too well by itself.

Comment: Usually used in combination with slide cream. Often sold along with it.

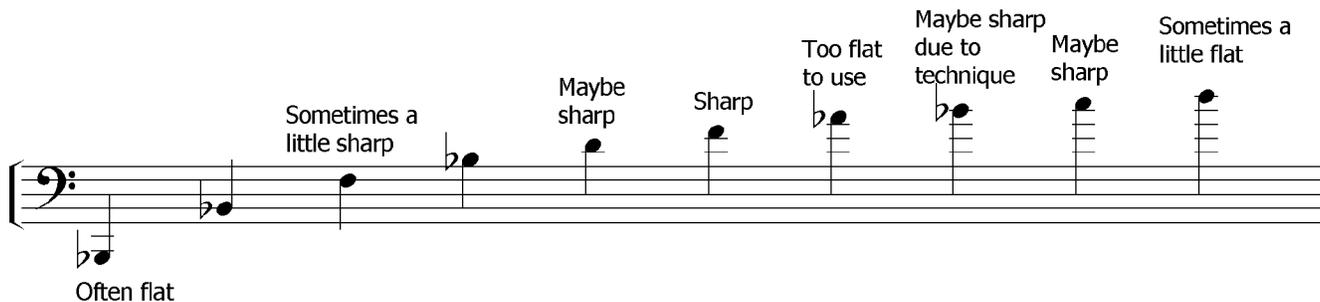
- **"Slide-O-Mix"**  
 Advantages: Very slick if applied correctly.  
 Disadvantages: More expensive. Tends to build up over time. Slide will need to be cleaned regularly.  
 Comment: Product comes in two bottles. Don't mix with slide cream.
- **"Slide-O-Mix Rapid Comfort"**  
 Advantages: Very slick for many slides. Easy to apply.  
 Disadvantages: May not be as effective for slides in poor condition.  
 Comment: This essentially combines the two bottles of the "Slide-o-mix" system.

### Staying Well-Anchored: Good slide grip

- Thumb and two fingers. "Like holding your car keys" (Joseph Alessi)
- "A firm slide grip improves the connection between hand and brain" (Joseph Alessi)
- Hand angle: should be comfortable and natural. Bring hand up naturally from the side.

### Sailing Through the Slide Positions

- **1st position - The "Home Port" (Not as safe as you think!)**  
 Intonation and the overtone series...



- **2nd and 3rd positions - The "Inner Harbor" (One size doesn't fit all)**  
 Three keys commonly encountered by younger players present a mixture of 2nd and 3rd positions.



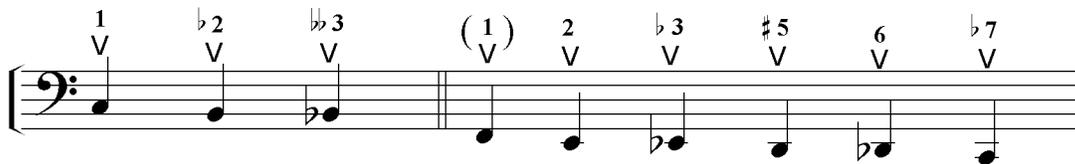
- **4th position - "The Island of Safety" (Don't Ring the Bell)**  
 Reaching out to the bell to find 4th is a persistent habit. Even advanced players slip into it. It isn't accurate. Use the ear instead. "Ringing the bell" happens when a player's finger strikes the bell as he/she moves the slide past 4th position.
- **5th position - "The Bermuda Triangle" (Where notes are lost forever...)**  
 Beyond that island of safety. Usually the least accurate position.
- **6th and 7th position - "Deep Waters"**  
 For younger players, 6th position is as far as can be reached using a normal slide grip. Kids will resort holding the very top of the slide trying to reach 7th.

## "Smooth Sailing": Legato Slide Technique

- The three ingredients of good legato technique: (1) steady air, (2) quick slide, (3) light "dah" tongue
- Common mistake: mushy slide (imitating the style of the music).  
One solution: play without tonguing (quick glisses)
- Common mistake: reflecting the slide movement in the air (the sound "flares" on bigger slide jumps). Remember this saying,  
**Disconnect the "slide bone" from the "air bone" (on the trombone)**  
One solution: move the slide as if playing passage but blow with steady, silent air.
- Six Steps to building legato technique:
  1. Say "dah-dah-dah-dah" with a very light "d" (Like this: "dah-dah-dah-dah")
  2. Blow air against your hand (same syllables).
  3. Buzz your mouthpiece (same syllables).
  4. Play your trombone on a single pitch (same syllables).
  5. Play adjacent positions.
  6. Use longer slide leaps.

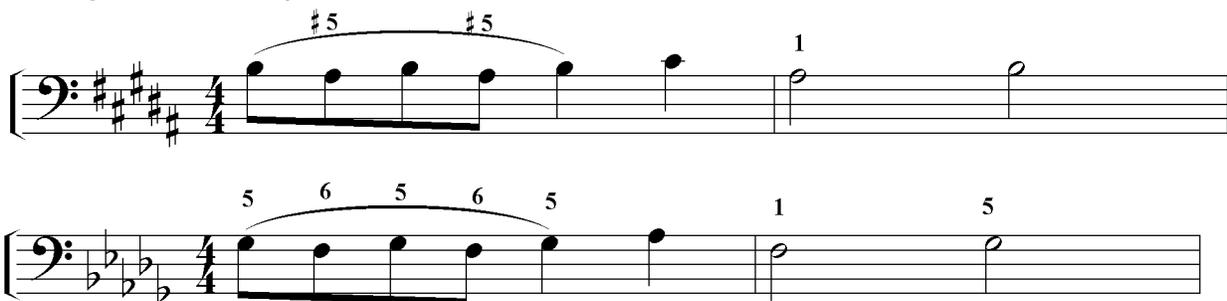
## "Going Deeper": Slide Technique with the F-Attachment

- Remember this: the farther out you go, the farther apart the positions. From 6th to 7th is a bigger leap than 1st to 2nd. When you use the F-attachment, first position is like 6th position so trigger second will be farther out than regular second.
- "Aid-to-Navigation": A common-sense approach to notating F-attachment trigger slide positions. Many notation systems exist, it is easiest for students to relate the new trigger positions to the positions they already know...

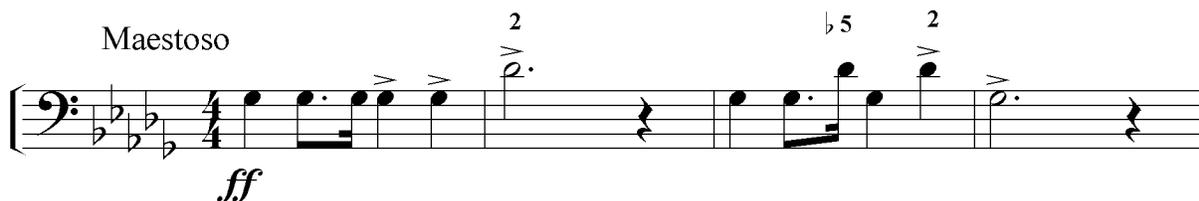


## "Scudding Along" without "Broaching-To": Trade-Offs with Alternate Positions

- Finding the nearest port...



- Any port in a storm? Not always...



- Don't "scrub the deck" (Instead, draw big circles)...

Scrubbing: Big Circles:

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- 'Compressing' for secure leaps (closest isn't always best)

- Grouping notes logically

### Some real world examples for alternate positions

- Morton Gould, "American Salute" (2nd trombone part)  
By alternating 1st and 6th, one draws big circles instead of scrubbing the deck

1 6 6 1 1 6 6 1 1 6 6 1

- Henry Fillmore, "Rolling Thunder"  
A. Drawing big circles instead of scrubbing. B. Grouping notes logically

A. 6 7 6

B. #5

7 6 6 6 6 7 6

- Alexandre Guilmant, "Morceau Symphonique"
  - A. Maybe use 5th to compress for a secure leap. Of course, starting on B-flat in 5th is more hazardous.
  - B, C. Finding the nearest port and grouping
  - D. Grouping notes logically
  - E. Any port in a storm? Not always...(Since this isn't legato, you might choose first position for B-flat and F since they are more secure)
  - F, H Because it is longer, the B-flat should be played in 1st (Any port in a storm? Not always...)
  - G. Finding the nearest port, and grouping
  - I. Finding the nearest port and not scrubbing the deck
  - J. First is farther but more secure. (Any port in a storm? Not always...)

The image shows three staves of musical notation in bass clef, 4/4 time, with a key signature of three flats (B-flat, E-flat, A-flat). The notation illustrates various fingering and portamento techniques for a specific melodic line. Labels A through J are placed above the notes to indicate specific performance choices:

- A:** A slur over a sequence of notes with a fingering of (#5) above the first note.
- B:** A slur over notes with a fingering of #4 above the first note.
- C:** A slur over notes with a fingering of #4 above the first note.
- D:** A slur over notes with a fingering of #5 above the first note.
- E:** A slur over notes with a fingering of 1 above the first note and a #4 above the second note.
- F:** A slur over notes with a fingering of 1 above the first note.
- G:** A slur over notes with a fingering of #5 above the first note.
- H:** A slur over notes with a fingering of #5 above the first note and a (1) above the second note.
- I:** A slur over notes with a fingering of 6 above the first note and a b2 V above the second note.
- J:** A slur over notes with a fingering of 1 above the first note.

## When to Use Alternate Slide Positions?

This table gives you an idea of when to use alternates and when to avoid them.

	Use Alternates	Avoid Alternates
Articulation	<i>legato</i>	<i>marcato, accented</i>
Speed	<i>fast passages</i>	<i>slow passages</i>
Note Length	<i>short notes</i>	<i>long notes</i>
Dynamics	<i>softer</i>	<i>louder</i>

## "Missing the Mark": Common Mistakes with Slide Technique

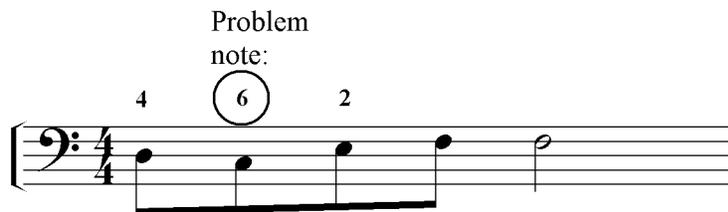
- "Going Adrift" on the Chromatic Scale.

Solution: Rather than memorize number sequences, know where the downbeats are. This pattern emphasizes the downbeats.



- Turning too early

Students will move in the direction of the target position but never arrive.



Solution: substitute other notes as a practice technique. Get the student to hear the differences:

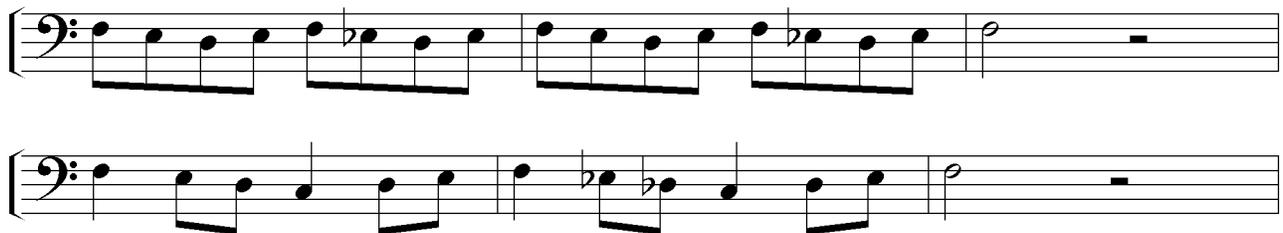


- Averaging the positions

Students will tend to place the middle note halfway between two endpoints.



Solution: Here are two good little exercise to develop accurate slide placement:



- Mini-Glisses

Students will begin to move the slide too early, causing mini glissandos. This is especially common when leaping out from 1st position.

Solution: Have a student play the passage all glissando (no tongue) and move the slide in such a way that the notes are clear.