

Beginning Trombone **“First Things First”**

a clinic presentation for the

Texas Bandmasters' Association Convention

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3:45 p.m.

Room 214 CD

Henry B. Gonzalez Convention Center
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Andy Russell, Band Director
Del Mar College

Sponsored in part by C. G. Conn

I. BASIC POSTURE CONCEPTS

- A. **BE TALL** whether sitting or standing
 - 1. keep the head up
 - 2. resting in the back of the chair is counterproductive
 - 3. keep the spine perpendicular to the floor
 - 4. **BRING THE INSTRUMENT UP TO PERFORMER**, not the performer down to the instrument
 - 5. **KEEP BOTH FEET ON THE FLOOR**, as when standing
- B. **SUPPORT THE INSTRUMENT WELL**
- C. Left-hand grip: responsible for support of the instrument's weight and control of all pivot movement
 - 1. modified pistol grip
 - 2. thumb on the bell brace or the “f” attachment lever
 - 3. first finger on the mouthpiece shank or on the slide brace
 - 4. **PIVOT** will vary according to the range being performed
 - a. middle range: trombone nearly parallel to the floor
 - b. lower range: bell and end of trombone slide pivot upward very slightly
 - c. upper range: bell and end of trombone slide pivot downward very slightly
 - d. all pivot movement **should be MINIMIZED**
 - e. 5th-7th position pitches in lower register (D-flat, C-natural, B-natural, and G-flat, F-natural, E-natural) must not cause a downward pivot

- D. Right-hand non-grip: responsible for movement and control of the trombone slide, not for support of the instrument's weight
 - 1. modified **PENCIL NON-GRIP**
 - 2. OK SIGN with fingers 2-4 curled into the palm of the hand
 - 3. thumb-nail extension
 - 4. eliminate excess tension in the fingers and the hand
 - 5. throw and catch the slide (right-hand non-grip)
 - 6. French bow, not German bow
 - 7. wrist movement and finger extension
 - a. upper one-position shifts (1-2, 2-3, 3-4, 4-5) using wrist movement
 - b. lower one-position shifts (4-5, 5-6, 6-7) using finger extension
 - c. two-position-plus shifts require opening and closing the hand (see I. D. 5. above), and moving the wrist
 - 8. fine tuning and exact slide placement require control in the finger tip area using a tweezing motion

II. BASIC WIND CONCEPTS

- A. Two approaches
 - 1. conversational breath, Emory B. Remington
 - 2. maximum capacity breath, Edward Kleinhammer
- B. **CONSTANT ABDOMINAL MOVEMENT** during the phrase
- C. Two "coughing" muscles
 - 1. in the throat, inactive or passive
 - 2. abdomen, active (fattening or flattening)
- D. Inhaling: **DOWN, OUT, then UP**
 - 1. rhythmic and relaxed
 - 2. **MEASURED** amounts, as required by the musical phrase
 - 3. yawning approach
 - 4. breath tube
 - 5. Arnold Jacobs' exercise
- E. **BLOWING** out
 - 1. constant and calm
 - 2. aim the wind at various targets
 - 3. upper register wind
 - a. distant target (end of slide)
 - b. travels at fast speed
 - c. cool in temperature
 - 4. lower register wind
 - a. nearby target (edge of bell)
 - b. travels at slower speed
 - c. warm in temperature
- F. More "tummy," more tone!

III. BASIC EMBOUCHURE CONCEPTS

- A. Teeth
 - 1. aligned with the lower jaw “out”
 - 2. separated a pencil’s width
 - 3. foundation for the embouchure
- B. Jaw
 - 1. extended (see III. A. 1. above) and motionless
 - 2. chewing motion (natural to performer) eliminated
 - 3. talking motion (natural to performer) eliminated
- C. Middle of lips
 - 1. basically natural
 - 2. shaped like syllables “p” or “m” (mom or pop)
 - 3. lightly touching until the wind passes through
 - 4. kiss the wind
- D. Corners of lips
 - 1. grip inward and downward
 - 2. anchored, coming in contact with the “eye” teeth
 - 3. directed toward center like spokes on a wheel
 - 4. motionless as if carved in stone
 - 5. secure like the clothes line poles for a clothes line
- E. Mouthpiece placement on lips
 - 1. vertical: 50/50, or more on the upper lip
 - 2. horizontal: 50/50, as the dental structure permits
 - 3. flesh tissue of the upper and lower lips not to be visible above or below the rim of the mouthpiece

IV. BASIC ARTICULATION CONCEPTS

- A. **RECOIL** with the tip of the tongue
- B. Tip of the tongue pointed and firm for crisp articulations (tip-toe, take tiny Tim to town)
- C. Tip of the tongue rounded and relaxed for legato articulations (daily news)
- D. Horizontal placement of the tip of the tongue centered
- E. Vertical placement of the tip of the tongue behind upper front teeth
- F. Back of the tongue
 - 1. flattened, still, and relaxed at all times
 - 2. must not obstruct the flow of the wind
 - 3. like hot pizza reaction (see II. D. 4. above)
- G. Minimize the role of the tongue (shape accents with the wind)
- H. Articulate every note

V. BASIC SLIDE CONCEPTS

- A. **FLOW OF WIND must CONTINUE** through slide movement
- B. **MOVEMENT OF SLIDE must be QUICK** (1x, 2x, 3x, etc.)
 - C. Slide and articulation coordination
 - 1. both are governed by the rhythm of the music
 - 2. articulation “hides” the movement of the slide
 - 3. slide movement before or after the articulation will create a glissando
- D. Exact **SLIDE SPEEDS WILL VARY** (see V. B. above)
- E. Exact locations of **SLIDE PLACEMENT WILL VARY**
 - 1. governed by the brass harmonic series
 - 2. effected by the harmony in the music being performed
- F. Alternate positions
 - 1. useful for fine tuning
 - 2. useful for technical facility
 - 3. useful for special effects
 - 4. most common (F-natural in sixth position, B-flat in raised fifth position, D-natural in lowered fourth position)

VI. ADDITIONAL SOURCES OF INFORMATION FOR DIRECTORS

- A. Wick (Oxford) “Trombone Technique”
- B. Remington-Hunsberger (Accura) “Warm Up Studies”
- C. Kleinhammer-Yeo (EMKO) “Mastering the Trombone”
- D. Fink (Accura) “The Trombonist’s Handbook”
- E. Farkas (Brass Publications) “The Art of Brass Playing”
- F. Arban-Alessi and Bowman (Encore) “Complete Method”