



Beginning Trombone – A First Lesson

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The First Lesson for a Beginner Trombonist
(Try to have the first lesson be an hour lesson.)

Breathing In:

1. Lay down / bed / back
2. Very relaxed
3. Hands
4. 1" tube
5. D. V. (stands for Darth Vader)
6. Movement
7. Stand up / mirror
8. 1, 2, 3
9. Shoulders

Blowing Out:

1. Fast, powerful, STEADY

Embouchure:

1. FC & V (Flat Chin & Valley)

Mouthpiece:

1. Position it on face
 - a. 2/3 & 1/3
 - b. Centered
 - c. Right up under their nose
2. Have student take it while in place
3. Have student take it away & put it back several times, always in the same place
4. DO EVERYTHING YOU'VE TALKED ABOUT UP TO THIS POINT
 - a. You demonstrate
 1. Breathe through corners
 2. Hold body steady
 - b. Student does it
 - c. Repeat several times

Getting Instrument Out of the Case:

1. Big end to the left
2. Lay flat on the floor
3. Show how to get the bell section out of the case (around brace in middle of bell section)
4. Show parts of the bell section
 - a. Bell flare
 - b. Braces
 - c. Counter weight
 - d. Lock screw
 - e. Tuning slide
5. Show how to get slide out of the case (by slide lock)
6. Show parts of the slide
 - a. Inner & outer slides (very tender)
 - b. Stockings
 - c. Braces
 - d. Slide lock
 - e. Water key
7. Have student take the instrument out several times

Putting the instrument together:

1. Bell section in left hand
2. Slide section in right hand
3. Place slide on end right in front of you with receiver (taller part) in the middle
4. Slowly place bell section on slide receiver
5. Push down & pull up
6. Make a V
7. Do lock screw
8. Take it apart, put it back in the case, have the student put it together several times
9. Put in mouthpiece

Hands:

1. Left hand
 - a. Gun
 - b. Thumb
 - c. First finger
 - d. Other three fingers on barrel
 - e. No hole
 - f. Straight line
 - g. Purpose of the left hand
2. Right hand
 - a. Thumb & two fingers
 - b. Other two fingers
 - c. Thumb perpendicular to the slide braces
 - d. Yes hole
 - e. Straight line
 - f. Purpose of the right hand

Weight lifting:

1. Left hand only
2. Three sets of ten
3. Daily
4. Must make the left hand & arm strong enough

Play the first note:

1. Check position of the mouthpiece
2. Check hand position
3. Breathe through corners
4. BLOW
5. Go back and talk about not puffing cheeks
6. Go back and talk about FC & V
7. Go back and talk about breathing
8. Go back and talk about fast, powerful, STEADY
9. Play another note
10. Not interested in what note comes out
11. Play another note
12. Check all things we have done to this point
13. Play another note
14. Talk about higher & lower sounds
15. Play another note
16. Repeat a lot more times
17. Try to get out several different notes
18. Always demonstrate what you want
19. Arnold Schwarzenegger versus Pee Wee Herman
20. Repeat some more

Putting instrument back in the case:

1. Watch them do it
2. Reverse of what they did to put it together

Be very upbeat and positive the whole time. Always demonstrate what you want the student to do. Demonstrate with the best sound you can make. Laugh a lot. Use a mirror if one is available. Make sure the student doesn't do anything unless he is still and ready. You don't want to have him get in a hurry and do something incorrectly.

Write all this down for the student to take home to use in his practice. Practice should be two or three 10-minute sessions a day.

The tongue is not discussed at this time. You should use your tongue to start notes, but don't mention anything about the student using their tongue. The student will generally make good air starts.

Position your chairs so that you are sitting to the right of the student. Place your chair facing the student. You need to be able to see straight at him at all times. I sit with this chair arrangement most all the time that first year.

The second lesson is very important as well. Start out by watching them take the instrument out of the case and put it together. If they do something different than what you told them at the first lesson, stop them and have them do it over. Next, check the left arm & hand (3 sets of 10). Next, position the mouthpiece, take a breath, and blow. Listen and watch carefully. Make any corrections you need to make. Repeat playing a note a lot more times.

Now you can start to introduce a method book. I like to use the Trombone Student by Fred Weber. Even if the student has had some kind of music before, go over staff (5 lines and 4 spaces from bottom to top), bass clef, bar line, measure, double bar, whole note, whole rest, time signature (top number only). Now you are ready to play specific notes. If earlier they were playing repeated Fs, then start with F. Or if you need to, start with low Bb. I don't recommend starting with Bb just above the staff. Then add Eb, D, and C by either working your way from F down to low Bb or work your way from low Bb up to F. Give them something with which to remember the sight of the position – 3rd is with the brace just inside the bell, 4th (depending on the brand of instrument is some relation to the bell, and 6th is all they can reach. In each position have them move the slide back and forth to 1st. Do the movement several times looking. Have them do the movement with their eyes closed. Adjust the slide after they open their eyes. They need to get the feel of each position in their arm and hand. Have them move between different positions as well. Play each note several times making sure that they do everything you have told them. Make sure that they are never in a hurry. You make corrections to what they are doing as needed. Always be positive. Laugh a lot, but never at them. Assign them lines that they should have ready for their next lesson.

After the student knows F down to low Bb well, I introduce my packet to them. The packet is mostly made up of Remington things. In addition, I have the Overtone Series, All-in-One Study, three different octaves of the 12 major scales, chromatic scales, and minor scales. I will start the student with the Remington whole note line that starts on F. At this time, I introduce 2nd and 5th positions. I don't do 7th position until their arm is long enough. With all of students, including the beginners, I have them do the whole note lines doing three whole notes per breath. I want to make sure that breathing is an important part of their practice from the very beginning. I will introduce new Remington lines and exercises when I think that the student is ready for them.