



**Texas Bandmasters Association  
Convention/Clinic July 21-23, 2022**

**Slide Into Teaching Beginner Trombone**

**CLINICIANS:**

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**HENRY B. GONZALEZ CONVENTION CENTER - SAN ANTONIO, TEXAS**

**SLIDE INTO TEACHING BEGINNER TROMBONE**  
**MICHELLE HANEGAN, JOHN MIRELES, AARON SANCHEZ**

Texas Bandmasters Association Clinic 2022: Saturday, July 23rd 2:00-3:00 PM: CC 217CD

**\*\*A trombone lesson will be part of the clinic to provide an example of practical application.\*\***

**Placing Students on Trombone**

Instrument Fitting- Try to conduct individual interviews, give a mini lesson on embouchure and making a sound on the mouthpiece. It is easier to convince students to pick the correct instrument when they feel immediate success. Show them great videos of trombone professionals performing... Joe Alessi, Mark Lawrence, Trombone Shorty

Aural Skills- Selmer Test, can have students match and identify high/low pitches to piano, voice, Tonal Energy

Lip Size and Mouth Shape- potential for braces, even lip shape top/bottom, medium to full lip size, potential for lips to vibrate the width of the mouthpiece, NO underbite

Body Size- look at arm length, hand size, foot size, potential for growth (look at parents); with all this being said intermediate trombones with an f-attachment can alleviate arm length issues as a beginner

Grades- a wide variety, some trombone personalities are between very intelligent and very creative or BOTH!

Personality- Is the student okay with playing a unique instrument... is there a trombone personality?

**Class Structure/Scheduling the Beginning Trombone Class**

Homogeneous trombone classes are best. If necessary, trombone can be taught with euphonium and tuba as well. Class length drives your lesson plan and how much time you will spend on each activity. John and Aaron teach 40 minute classes and Michelle teaches 27 minute classes. We all teach the same concepts utilizing variances in length of daily activities. Seating is preferential to you and your teaching style. Usual set ups are chairs in rows of windows or chairs in one arc. Chairs should have plenty of room side to side and front to back for students to be able to place their instruments while still in the case to the side of their chair, have room for proper student posture and room for you to be able to teach/ adjust a student one on one. A rolling chair without arms is good to use so that you can see the students at their level and be able to quickly move around to work from student to student.

**Equipment**

Instruments- The quality of instrument correlates to retention. There are many brands of instruments available to recommend to your students. Intermediate level Bach, Jupiter, and Yamaha with F-Attachments are great beginner instruments.

Mouthpieces- Bach 61/2AL, Bach 5G or Schilke 51

Instrument Assembly- The angle created when the bell and slide are connected will be a "V" shaped size determined by the hand/thumb size of the player. The trombone should comfortably fit in the student's hand without causing any extraneous tension. The arms of the player holding the trombone will form an upside down "V" (Triangle), creating an "X" with the correct combination of the body position and bell/slide angle.

## Teaching

First Day of Class- Expectations for the year are introduced on Day 1. The students' instruments are already at the school. Lockers/Cubbies are assigned and students label their supplies all together. Students open their cases on the floor and name their instruments. Once things are labeled and instruments are named, instruments go back in lockers/cubbies and work on music theory, embouchure training with a mirror, and producing first sounds on the mouthpiece begins. Teaching beginners is very much a "need to know" rather than a lot of verbal information all at once. Pedagogical information given is kept in a short delivery, allowing students the time and opportunity to grasp the concepts before building and introducing more.

Posture/Hand Position- Students should sit towards the front of their chair with their back off of the chair, spine straight, shoulders down and relaxed, head floating above the spine, feet flat on the floor, the trombone is brought to the player with the left arm, the left arm/hand holds the weight of the trombone. When the student brings the trombone up to their face, the instrument rotates ever so slightly to the left with the left hand so that they don't hit their face with the instrument. This will allow the student to keep their upper body/face still. The body of the trombone is held completely in the left hand and supported by the palm, fingers, and thumb (T- Brace). Equal energy from all parts of the hand ensures the trombone is balanced to the player. The right hand moves the slide, which is held on the crossbar at the bottom.. The thumb nail will face the body of the student and the students should be able to see the palm of their hand as they move their slide away from their body. Students should not grip or squeeze the slide, allowing for the fingers to engage in a throwing and catching motion once the slide starts to move. By utilizing the hinges on their right arm/hand (fingers, wrist, elbow, and shoulder), students will start to develop a slide technique that is fast and efficient, allowing them to find the positions of the slide through muscle memory of the angle of the elbow. This muscle memory is continually defined through aural training and using the fingers and wrist to allow for fine tune adjustments.

Embouchure- While always using a mirror, students should notice how natural their face looks. Their corners should not look or feel pulled back or move up, having them move in towards the canine teeth to develop the appropriate muscles. The top and bottom lips should both remain soft and relaxed. The top lip stays soft and fleshy and the bottom lip stays tall and flat. The back teeth should remain naturally apart. The mouthpiece placement should be based on what creates the most resonant tone quality, with it differing based on the student's need. The lips should feel natural so that air can freely move past them, vibrating in response to the airstream. Students should not place more energy on the upper lip than the lower lip with their mouthpiece, letting the instrument angle down to help alleviate top lip pressure and also taking in consideration of students possible overbites.

Breathing- Air is unobstructed on both the inhalation and the exhalation. Air should move in and out continuously, like a swing in motion. Young students sometimes hold their air in and then blow it all out at once. The air should always be focused and moving forward across the room. There are a variety of breathing exercises that can be used to build efficient use of air, like supermans, ghosts, the use of PVC pipes, and ripping exercises.

First Sounds- Work with one student at a time focusing on correct mouthpiece placement and how it feels to the student. Reinforce how it looks and feels to the students by asking the class to describe what they are hearing and how they can fix what they think is incorrect. "What does it look like, feel like, sound like?" This is important to making sure the students can self assess and be able to practice correctly at home. Once the students grasp the concept of correct mouthpiece placement, move to full instrument playing. Do not spend too much time on just the mouthpiece alone but when adding the instrument make sure your students keep everything about their embouchure and mouthpiece placement the same. As students are able to make a steady sound, practice whole notes/ whole rests to relate concepts to reading music. This is a good time to introduce one and two count breathing and model good sounds using "echo playing" building concepts towards next steps of learning the trombone, like lip flexibilities, range extension and articulation. This is a process, be patient and not result driven. Be VERY encouraging!

### Beginner Teaching Reference Materials

*"On Teaching Band"* Notes from Eddie Green, edited by Mary Ellen Cavitt

*"The Band Director's Companion"* by James Middleton, Harry Haines, and Gary Garner