



**Texas Bandmasters Association
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Beginning Tuba and Euphonium

CLINICIANS:

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Beginning Tuba and Euphonium

The First Six Weeks

Who can play the Tuba and Euphonium?

Both the Tuba and Euphonium are larger instruments that create challenges in carrying the horn, and also maneuvering with it. However, the size of a student should not be the determining factor on deciding whether or not a student should be placed on either instrument. There are many ways that the height of the instrument can be adjusted so that students can play them in a more natural fashion.

- Tuba's can be difficult to transport to and from school everyday, especially if the student rides the bus. If possible, try and provide an instrument for the student at school as well as one that they can keep at home.

The First Two Weeks

In most middle school settings, the first two weeks of the school year can be quite chaotic. Especially when it comes to homogenous beginning band classes, and making sure that students are in the correct class. Until your classes are settled in, and your students are all in the correct classes, you get a chance to take care of procedures that can be done without the instrument.

- Procedures for entering and exiting the band hall
- Discussing classroom rules and expectations (It's a good idea to have the rules and expectations in a position where the students can see them everyday)
- Procedures on how/when to turn in information
- Correct seating posture
- This can be **instrument specific**, but there are basics that should be uniform across the band.
- Introduction of the staff and the components that go along with it
 - If you are teaching in a homogeneous class you can teach clef specific for euphonium and tuba (all low brass together). If you teach in a heterogenous classroom setting, or everyone together, it's okay to make the students learn both clefs.
 - Bar Lines
 - Measures
- Note Names (lines and spaces)
 - Use chants to make learning the notes easier
 - Have students create their own mnemonic device to help them remember the notes
 - Use handouts to reinforce
 - Drawing the staff
 - Drawing the notes
 - Identifying the notes
 - Speed contests

- Activities to help build pulse
 - Using a metronome (80-90 bpm) use different games to help the students build their understanding of pulse
 - Tapping just the foot to beat
 - Slowly add in counting while tapping
 - Tap both hands on their laps to the beat
 - One they have a good grasp of this combine foot tap, hand taps, and counting
 - Clapping to the beat
 - Combine all aspects together
 - Musical Alphabet game
 - Forwards and backwards
 - Combine with the other pulse activities the students have already done
 - Come up with pulse building games where the students perform a simple skill on a beat
 - Stomp on 1, clap on 2, finger snap on 3, etc.....
- Introduction to rhythm
 - Teach them about the different note values
 - Have students build a note and rest rhythm tree so they see how all the different values fit together
 - Clearly define what you want students to do on rest while counting rhythms
 - Hands out, palms up
- Start having chair tests with the skills that students have learned so far

Weeks 3 and 4

By this point all students should be in the correct class period, and also should have purchased any equipment needs. If the students have not taken care of those needs, a plan of action needs to be in place. Students should know what part of the band hall their instruments are located, and know where they go. Cases and instruments lockers/cubbies should be labeled so there is no confusion. This is the point when you start to introduce the instrument and its parts. How to take the instrument out of the case. Proper breathing techniques, forming the embouchure, and making initial sounds on the mouthpiece.

Breathing

Before making sounds on the mouthpiece, it is very important that the students know how to properly use their air. Tuba and Euphonium are two instruments that require high wind volume, but low wind speed. Using too much wind speed and not enough wind volume can lead to the students sounding pinched and thin. The breath should be relaxed, and students should be taking in enough air to make the lungs fully expand and collapse. This will make it easier for them to make their lips vibrate without having to use extra tension.

Breathing form is very important when starting to teach how to correctly breathe

1. Posture

- a. Feet flat on the floor
- b. Sitting up relaxed and tall
 - i. I like using the word tall instead of straight. To me telling a beginner to sit up straight can lead to them added tension
2. Mouth shape on the inhale and exhale
 - a. Utilize an “oh” or “woah” shape. This will ensure that the throat is relaxed, and the tongue is relaxed at the bottom of the mouth
 - b. There should be no sound on the inhale
3. Make sure the air is even and constant
 - a. If you are having the students breathe for 4 counts, make sure they take all 4 counts to breathe.
4. Smooth change of direction

Using a monitor while breathing is a great tool for the students to use so they can measure if their air is consistent on the inhale and the exhale. If your students can master proper breathing technique, it makes it easier for them to make a more relaxed and resonant sound on the mouthpiece and the instrument.

Embouchure

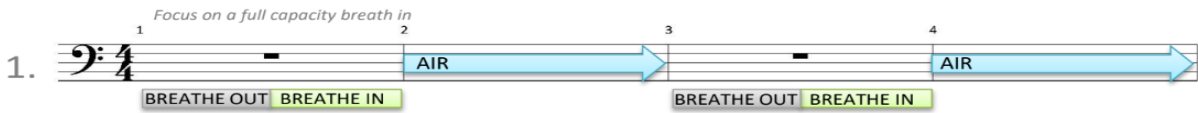
- Placement on both tuba and euphonium is approximately 50/50 upper to lower lip within the mouthpiece, centered on the face. There can be some margin for error with larger mouthpieces as long as extremes are avoided
- The corners of the lips should be firm and in their natural location (“pushpin corners”), and neither puckered in (“duck face”) nor pulled out toward their ears (“smiley”)
- The aperture (the center of the embouchure) needs to be relaxed enough to vibrate and will often occur naturally with the proper balance of firm corners and a relaxed center
- The teeth should remain open across all registers of the instrument.

Common Issues


- Puffy Cheeks
 - Encourage the students to firm up their corners and direct 100% of their air into the mouthpiece
- Air Leaks
 - Both mouthpieces are large for beginner students, so this issue is very common amongst beginners
 - Make sure they keep the mouthpiece is fully sealed around their face
- Smiling/Duck face
 - If a student’s corners are pulled toward their ears (“smile embouchure”) or in toward the mouthpiece (“duck face”), encourage them to relax the center of their embouchure and firm their corners to a frown position

It's recommended that you spend some time everyday working solely on mouthpiece buzzing. There are a lot of exercises you can use to help with sound production on the mouthpiece. The **Musical Mastery for Band** has a great mouthpiece exercise that utilizes both air and sound.

1. *Focus on a full capacity breath in*



2. *Blow steady & smooth air out*

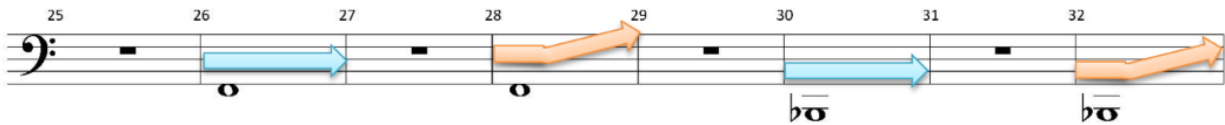


Once the students are comfortable making sounds on the mouthpiece, and are consistent with both the air and sound. You can move on to bending the pitch and “sirens.” Blowing the air “upstream” and “downstream.”

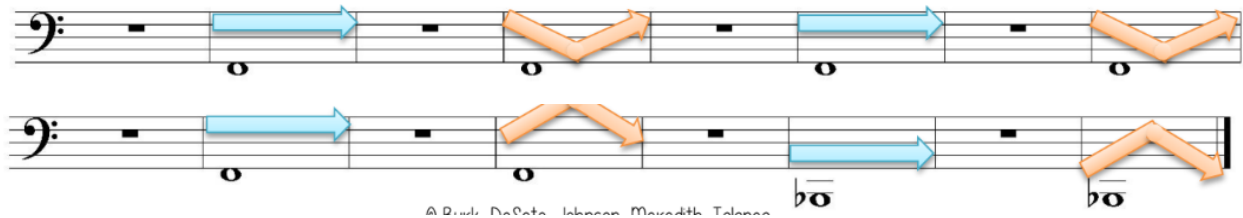
- “Upstream” will make the pitch go down



- “Downstream” will make the pitch rise



- Combining the two will create “sirens.”



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Taking the instruments out of the case

Go through the system of how you want the students to get their instruments out of the cases, and be very detailed about it. Ask yourself the following questions when planning this out.

1. Where do the cases go when the students come into the room?
2. After the students open their cases, which hands are they going to use when lifting the instrument out of the case?
3. What part of the instrument do they grab to pull the instrument out of the case?
4. Once the horn is out of the case, how do the students carry the instrument to their chairs?

5. Once seated in their chairs, where does the instrument go when it isn't being used?
 - a. Do you want them to rest on the bell?
 - b. Do you want them to lay them on the ground beside them, or in front of them?
6. What way will the students put the mouthpiece into the instrument?

The next step before making sounds on the instruments is making sure their posture is correct with the instrument, and making sure the instrument is in the correct playing position.

1. The instrument should should always come to the student
 - a. The student plays the instrument, the instrument doesn't play the student
2. If necessary, use additional aids to help the students hold the instruments in the proper positions.
 - a. Hercules Tripod stand
 - b. Rolled towel for Euphonium players
 - c. Student can sit on the stack of book
3. Watch for tension in the students body
4. Bad instrument position can lead to many different issues.
5. Students should always sit still while in a playing position. (This includes counting/clapping, and buzzing as well)
 - a. Use a chair test to see who can sit with the best playing for the longest period of time

Weeks 5 and 6

Now you should be at the moment where students can start making sounds through the instrument. If you haven't done so already, go over starting the sound with the tongue. When adding to the tongue to start the sound, make sure that the students don't change anything that they have done so far with making sounds on the mouthpiece. Young students tend to change minor things, such as trying to use too much air at the start of the note. Find a note that is comfortable for them to start. D is a great note for both Euphonium and Tuba to start on.

- Make sure the students start with the tongue relaxed in the bottom of the mouth
- Tip of the tongue should quickly "strike" where the gums and the teeth meet and then immediately return back to its resting position
 - Don't let them start the sound with the tongue already in place there.
"Anchor-tonguing"
 - The tongue should work in an up and down motion
- Recommended syllable for articulation is "too" or "doh"
 - These syllables will

Watch out for some common problems such as: anchor tonguing, tonguing on the roof of the mouth, tonguing between the teeth, throat tonguing, or "hooing."

Past The First Six Weeks

Sound should **ALWAYS** come first! Being able to play all the major scales and grade 1 or 2 music at the end of year means nothing if the students don't make good sounds on their instruments.

Whenever possible, focusing on product over process will help your beginning brass players play more naturally and avoid "paralysis by analysis" – Arnold Jacobs (1915-1998).

A lot of method books won't provide a lot of the skills that your students need to be successful. Don't just play the lines out of the book everyday, write up/print some exercises that they can use.

- Remington long tone studies
 - Low register remington should be one of your major goals to reach by Christmas time
 - Chichowicz Air Flow studies are a great way to help build tone and consistency of air through all the notes
 - Clarke Studies can be used for articulation reinforcement, as well as slurring

Recommended Equipment

This will vary for each band program and school district. It is most common for beginning euphonium players to often start on a small-shank 3-valve instrument. $\frac{3}{4}$ size piston tubas are ideal for beginners, who will more easily be able to make a full and resonant sound on a smaller instrument before transitioning to a larger model as they grow. These are just suggestions for if you're able to get these instruments. Make use of whatever equipment that you have.

Euphonium

Instrument - Yamaha Yep-201, Yamaha Yep-321, Eastman EEP-321
Mouthpiece - Schilke 51D, Bach 5G

Tuba

Instrument - Yamaha YBB-105
Mouthpiece - Conn Helleberg Standard (not the 7B model)

Beginner Method Books

Essential Elements for Band
The Ed Sueta Band Method
Musical Mastery for Band