

Trombone First day of Class

Assembling the Instrument

- 1) Have students take instrument cases to another area of the room and set their cases flat on a table. If no table is available, students should put cases flat on the floor and kneel beside his/her instruments.
- 2) At this time remind students that they must follow instructions step by step. Do not allow students to proceed on their own.
- 3) The cases should be opened with the handle *below* the opening. The cases are laid flat.
- 4) After checking to make sure each slide is locked, have students take out their slides and rest them on the floor using the rubber stop at the end of the slide.
- 5) While holding the slide by both braces in the right hand, students should remove the bell from the case and attach it to the left of the slide forming a 90 degree angle. (Approximately two fingers should fit between the slide and the bell.) The lock nut is then tightened. Students need to be careful not to bump the slide with the edge of the bell while assembling the instrument. The slide is extremely delicate and the slightest dent can cause the slide to "stick."
- 6) Students should then insert the mouthpiece into the receiver by giving it a slight twist to the right in order to make it secure.
- 7) The students are now ready to carry their instruments to their seats. Do not allow students to "dangle" the trombone off to the side. They should be carried perpendicular in front of the students' body to avoid damaging the instruments.
- 8) Remind the students to be patient and **not** to play. They will be very excited at this point and it is easy for them to lose control.

Producing a Sound on the Mouthpiece

- 1) Students should remove their mouthpieces (twisting to the left) and rest their trombones on the left side of their chairs with the horn perpendicular to the floor, balancing the instrument with their left hand.
- 2) Students should slide out to the edge of the chair, sit up tall, and put their feet flat on the floor. Shoulders are relaxed, heads is straight.
- 3) Have students put their lips together in a normal relaxed position.

- 4) Next, **individually** place the mouthpiece in the center of the lips of each student. In most cases, because of the size of the mouthpiece, the entire top lip to the nose will be covered. Instruct the student to "buzz" into the mouthpiece. Do not allow students to puff out cheeks. Lips should not roll in or push out. Keep students from pushing their head and lips against the mouthpiece.
- 5) Remind students to always breathe through their mouths.
- 6) Once the students can produce a buzz, try having each student (individually) hold the buzz for four counts.
- 7) If a student has difficulty getting a sound, have the students try
 - a) buzzing without the mouthpiece
 - b) blowing air faster
 - c) pulling the teeth apart
 - d) think about their tongue placement to make sure the tongue is not up and blocking the flow of air.

Holding the Instrument

- 1) Students should now reassemble their instruments and sit with the correct posture.
- 2) Instruct the students to bring their instrument to his/her lips placing the left thumb around the brace of the bell section nearest the mouthpiece and the lower three fingers around the top brace of the slide. The left index finger rests on the shank just behind the mouthpiece.
- 3) The entire weight of the horn is supported with the left arm and hand (not on the shoulder). The wrist is straight. (This will be difficult at first and must be monitored carefully or students will quickly develop incorrect posture and playing position.)
- 4) The right hand grasps the slide brace lightly between the thumb and first two fingers with the thumb and middle finger closer to the lower part of the slide. The wrist and arm are relaxed.
- 5) The trombone is held almost parallel to the ground with **only a slight** angle to the floor. Elbows are away from the body.

Producing a Sound on the Instrument

- 1) As the student holds the trombone, individually guide the mouthpiece to the center of each student's lip, adjusting the playing position and posture at the same time. Have each student play into the horn, trying to produce a Concert F.
- 2) Many students will produce the concert F automatically. However, some students will not have the strength to produce this pitch. If a concert Bb is the only pitch a student can play, (both tones are first position) do not force the higher pitch. With time and practice all students will develop the strength to get the F. Forcing high notes too soon will only promote poor playing habits.
- 3) Once each student is able to get a sound, have each student go through the same procedure without help.
- 9) After each student has completed this procedure, have the entire group sustain the pitch for 4 counts. Be sure to take time to help those students who are having difficulty. **Maintain a steady pulse for the students at all times.**
- 10) **Constant** and **consistent** reinforcement of these fundamentals at each class session will be necessary if students are to develop proper playing fundamentals.

Disassembling the Instrument

- 1) When the class has ended ask the students to return quietly to their instrument cases. (Always remind young trombone players to check to make sure their slide is locked before picking up the horn.)
- 2) Demonstrate to the students how to empty the "spit" (actually it's mostly just condensation but don't try to explain that to young students at the first lesson) from their horns by wrapping their lips around the mouthpiece and silently blowing air while simultaneously opening the spit valve.
- 3) Next, have students remove their mouthpieces and put them back into the cases.
- 4) The students should then carefully remove the slide from the bell and put the slide in the case making sure it is securely in place. The bell is then gently placed in the case and carefully secured.
- 5) The cases can now be closed and latched. Do not allow students to put music or books in the case as anything extra in the case will damage the instrument.