Notre Dame College Marching Band
Brass Technique Book

Low Brass
TROMBONE/BARITONE EDITION
This book is designed to give you basic fundamentals to be successful musicians during this season. It is not the end all to brass musicianship but is a starting point and will guide you in your fundamental development.

FAQ

AIR
Air is one of the most important elements of brass playing. QUALITY, QUANTITY and SPEED are the three components of air that we will focus on. “Good” air equals good sound and ease of play.

NO TENSION! Strive for the most natural breath possible, good posture will be key in achieving this.

Never stop the air! Breathing in and holding the breath (this is called capping) before release causes tension and loss of air pressure. Keep the breaths moving in a circle; in and out, in and out. Get rid of old, stale air when ever possible and take a new full breath.

Stagger breathing is achieved by sneaking in and out of the music at a different time than your neighbor. We will work on this and assign specific points in the music.

Singing
We will sing everything we play. Singing helps to hear the correct pitches and greatly improves intonation. We will sing the same way we play, beginning with a good breath, and starting each new articulated note with (TAH). We may occasionally change the vowel sound depending on range of note but the important thing is that we are all singing the same way and that the vowel does not change over the duration of the note. Changing vowel sound/shape of mouth during a long tone causes poor tone and poor intonation.

We will frequently sing during visual oriented rehearsals. Correct pitches are very important!

Buzzing
The next step for hearing correct pitches and reproducing them is mouthpiece buzzing. Hold the mouthpiece in the left hand (two fingers and thumb) at the very end of the mouthpiece. Do not use excessive pressure! We approach buzzing the same way as playing, good posture and good breath with a TAH attack.

Timing
FEET! We will occasionally have you stand still to focus on playing but 90% of the time you will mark time. The feet must be in time with the Dr. Beat or Drum Major, and your playing should line up with your feet. We will also take step-outs at the
beginning of each exercise. Everything will have an 8 count start; mark time begins on count 5. We will define the mark time and step outs in the Visual Technique Book.

**Articulation and Releases**
We use the syllable (TAH) for all attacks. The length and strength of the attack is defined by the air behind it. Release with the air and NEVER the TONGUE. We will define the count of the release but a rule of thumb is “to the foot” start the sound on the foot and release on the foot. (Ex A whole note beginning on beat 1 (sound begins on the left foot and ends on the left foot (ct 5))

**Tuning**
LISTEN, your ears are your greatest ally! Hear the pitch before you play it. We will sing a lot to solidify our tonal center. When in doubt use a tuner. Get to know the pitch tendencies of your instrument. We will discuss this further as the season progresses but certain intervals will have different tunings, certain notes on your instrument may need adjusting. This is all in addition to the general tuning of your instrument.

**Rehearsal Etiquette**
Rehearsals will start exactly on time so that we can release you exactly on time. If rehearsal begins at 600pm, you are expected to be setting up in block at 555pm. You are expected to have everything you need in every rehearsal. The basics are Instrument, Music, Dot Book, pencil, water bottle, and proper footwear (tennis shoes or marching shoes). You are expected to follow the school dress code in every rehearsal, whether on school property or not. We ask that you stand at standby unless you are told to relax. Standby is a position of readiness where we can give instruction without you needing to be set.
This will be discussed further in the Visual Technique Book

**Physical Fitness**
This is an extremely important part to marching and playing! You will reach the same physical stress level as an athlete during parts of the show and it is important to think of yourself as an athlete. You must prepare as such, don't wait until August! We will help guide you in the conditioning process and will discuss this in more detail in the Visual Technique Book.
I. Breathing

Relaxed breathing is the key! Tension in the breath equals tension in the sound.

We will go through many exercises together to learn how to breathe without tension and how to build capacity and control volume of air.

Breathe from the bottom, no sound on the inhale and try to be James Earl Jones. On the exhale get rid of every last but of air and crescendo to the releases.

In 8 Out 8 repeat
In 6 Out 6 repeat
In 4 Out 4 repeat
In 2 Out 2 repeat
In 2 Out 4 repeat
In 2 Out 6 repeat
In 2 Out 8 repeat
II. Tone Development (On Mouthpiece and Horn)

A. We will use various hand signs with our long tones, to indicate steady tone, bend the pitch up or down, a change of partial or a change of note. It is important to blow straight through the horn and focus on your tone and blend with those around you.
This exercise can also be played straight through, no fermatas, slurring between notes.

**B.** These exercises will help in getting around the horn in many keys, accurately playing pedal tones, relaxing the embouchure and hearing/ tuning pitches.
III. Flexibility- Lip Slurs (on Mouthpiece and Horn)
Go all the way down the valve series and back up.
Valved Inst. 0 2 1 12 23 13 123
Trombone  1  2  3  4  5  6  7
Strive for even tone, keep the air moving through the notes and keep the vowel shape consistent. Remember the higher the note the faster the air, a change in vowel shape and tongue position can aid in ease of slur, think oh-ee (slur up) ee-oh (slur down).

IV. Articulation and Technique
We use the syllable (TAH) for all attacks. The length and strength of the attack is defined by the air behind it. Keep the time in your feet; keep the time in your finger. You should be able to play this with fingers only and hear the time. Strive for an even tone throughout the range and challenge yourself to the more difficult keys.

Quick guide to length of notes.
Tenuto (\(-\)) 100%  Staccato (\(\cdot\)) 50%  Tenuto and Staccato (\(\cdot-\)) 75%
Accent (\(\rangle\)) 75%  Accent and Tenuto (\(\geq\)) 100%  Marcato (\(^\)) 50%  (AIR ACCENTS NOT TONGUE!)

HAL FLEX

Technique #1
V. Intonation

LISTEN, LISTEN, LISTEN! Sing, Buzz and play this exercise focus on the intervals and your position in the chord. We will play this at ppp and fff and learn to control the pitch at every dynamic. Loud doesn’t mean flat. Loud doesn’t mean crass or bad tone.