

# A Practice Handbook for Trumpet Students

## Guidelines and a suggested warm-up

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Read this page first!



This packet is designed to help you design *your own* practice routine. Every brass player is a little different, and so your warm-up, daily routine, and goals will differ from mine, your classmates', Doc Severinsen's, and everyone else's. That doesn't mean you can squeak by with 20 minutes of practice per day! But it does mean you might choose to use your time differently.

With that said, I have included some exercises in this packet for you to use as a starting place. Most of them are well known and have been used by many trumpet players. You can play everything in this packet straight through, and that would be a fine routine in itself. You will probably notice, however, that you have strengths and weaknesses, and some areas could use more development than others. Check out the Additional Materials section of each exercise to find more things to work on to advance that aspect of your playing. These are not exhaustive lists, so you can always ask me, another faculty member, a buddy, a textbook, and so on to find more resources.

I've included some helpful tips along the way to help you get the most out of your playing time.

## Establishing a Practice Routine

“... we are what we repeatedly do. Excellence, then, is not an act, but a habit.”

- Will Durant in summary of Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*

Let's be real for a second. There will be days that you don't want to practice. This happens to everyone. Your daily willpower is not unlimited, and sometimes your willpower will be depleted, because college is difficult. I understand. Your class schedule gets in the way sometimes. Homework, eating, shopping, and random things that come up all get in the way sometimes. I have been there! But if you treat practice like a low priority, it will be the first thing to go.

The best way to make sure you get into that practice room is to do it consistently. **I highly recommend you schedule your practice at regular times.** That means around the same times (more than one!) every day. Make it part of your day so you don't even consider not practicing – you simply go practice because it's what you do at that time. Keep a calendar. Write your practice times in your calendar and hold yourself to them. If you fail to meet your own goals, and we all do sometimes, pick yourself back up and try again later that day, or the next day, without self-judgment.

If you are really struggling to practice or get your work done on a regular basis, you can always *ask me, another faculty member or a friend.* **We're here to help you!**

## Practice Guidelines

**ALWAYS HAVE A GOAL IN MIND!** Never practice mindlessly. We practice mindfully so one day we can perform effortlessly. Blowing through something because you think you have to will not accomplish anything. Your warm-up should be targeted to getting ready to practice or perform, and your practice should be targeted to advancing your skills on a regular basis. Always be working on a specific thing.

Always have a pencil and use it often. **Mark your music** – circle instructions or key changes you missed, circle passages to work on (then work on them), even jot notes above your music to help you think about how to play it – “lightly,” “strong,” “fast valves,” “listen to flutes,” etc.

**Keep a journal!** I require every student to have a journal to write down their weekly assignments. I also highly recommend you use this journal to take notes about your practicing as you see fit – your reflections, your milestones, what you're proud of, what didn't go so well.

**Rest** as much as you need to, and not more. Let your mind wander – don't just check your phone.

There is a time for working on a piece, and a time for running through the piece. I call this Practice Mode and Performance Mode. If you are in Practice Mode, **don't let mistakes slip by** – take the time to go back and do it well. If you are in Performance Mode, don't stop for anything and act like you're on stage. The skill of *ignoring* your mistakes will come in handy when it is time.

Remember – you're playing the trumpet! You are in a fortunate position that your work is to make music. Have an **attitude of gratitude**, remember why you are doing this, and always enjoy.

# Suggested Day Plan

This plan is a suggested, ideal three-session plan for all music majors whose instrument is the trumpet. Once again – you will almost definitely **adjust your own warm-up and practice sessions** to suit your needs. If you don't know where to start, start with this! If you don't have time for all three sessions, try super hard to get in two! Take what you can get and don't give up.

The warm-up is probably the time of day for which you want to be the most regimented and habitual. In other words, your warm-up should be fairly similar day-to-day, and most of the fundamentals as well, although it doesn't have to be exact (and shouldn't be). However, particularly for the second and third sessions, I don't expect you to do absolutely everything listed every day, even though they are all important aspects of trumpet playing. **It is expected that you will work on these items in somewhat of a rotation.** Be sure you do not neglect any one area for long.

## Session One (Morning) – 30 min – 1 hr

### Warm-up (15-30 min)

Stretching, breathing/airflow exercises, lip flapping  
Buzzing  
Long tones/flow studies  
Articulation (optional double and triple tongue)  
Lip slurs (optional high lip trills)

[Short break – 5-10 min]

### Fundamentals (at least 20 minutes)

Scales and arpeggios with varied articulations  
Technical exercises  
Soft and loud playing  
Lip bends  
Expanding range exercises  
Lyrical/sustained playing  
Musicality  
Intonation work  
Accuracy (“target practice”)  
Musical playing – lyrical studies, songs

### Warm-down (5 min)

## Session Two (Afternoon) – 45 min. – 1 hr 15 min.

### Abridged re-warm-up (5-10 min or as needed)

Choice of  
Fundamentals  
Etudes

Solo repertoire  
Ensemble or gig repertoire  
Band or orchestral excerpts  
Sight-reading  
Listening and score study  
Transposition studies  
Jazz etudes and/or improvisation  
Style studies – march, orchestral, Renaissance, etc.  
Ornaments – valve and lip trills, turns, mordents

Warm-down (5 min)

Session Three (Evening) – 45 min – 1 hr 15 min.

Abridged re-warm-up (5-10 min or as needed)

Choice of  
Fundamentals  
Etudes  
Solo repertoire  
Ensemble or gig repertoire  
Other trumpets – C, Eb, piccolo, flugelhorn, cornet, Baroque trumpets  
Muted playing  
Ear training exercises  
Finger flexibilities/speed studies  
Anything else as assigned by your teacher – or yourself!

Warm-down (5 min)

# Suggested Warm-up Routine

## Some thoughts on the warm-up

Like the rest of your routine, I encourage you to customize your warm-up to suit your needs, in both content and duration. However, you will probably find the most success with starting very basic and working your way up. I think of it like building a house – you’re not going to put the roof on before you have the ground layer. Likewise, if you’ve ever tried to play lots of loud and high notes without warming up, you probably know what I’m getting at!

Almost everyone begins with some loosening up, stretching, and breathing, often some buzzing or leadpipe playing, and then long tones from the middle register and expanding higher and lower. From there, one by one, you can add the rest of the layers to your house: articulations, faster playing, lower and higher playing, and so on, until you are ready to combine them all at once by working on etudes, repertoire, and everything else.

Be patient – resist the temptation to rush through the warm-up. **Only move from one step to the next when you are truly ready.** You might be tempted some days to skip warming up. We have all had to do it here and there, but it is *not* ideal, and is not something you want to get in the habit of. You will have a much better time playing your instrument, and be more productive, if you are physically well prepared.

## Stretching

Try out the following stretches before you start to play – your body will thank you for it.

1. Trunk Twists (upper body twisting right and left)
2. Flop Overs (bending forward at the waist)
3. Two-Way Stretches (upper body and arms reaching as high as possible while the legs push downward)
4. Wrist Grabs (clasping wrists together behind the back and leaning to each side as far as possible)
5. Elbow Grabs (one hand on opposite elbow and leaning to left and right)
6. Whole Body Stretches (fingers clasped behind back while breathing deeply and flopping the upper body forward at the waist)

From David Hickman – *Trumpet Pedagogy*, p. 153

## Breathing exercises

Why breathe? You already know how to do it! But breathing to get ready to play an instrument is a little different. We do it to **model the kind of air we want to use when we play**, to “open up” the lungs and stretch out the muscles of respiration, and to put ourselves in a **calm and focused state of mind**.

Try the following in order:

1. Inhale for a slow count of 4, then exhale for 4; then, 8 and 8, 12 and 12, 16 and 16
2. Now shorten the exhalation: in for 4, out for 4, then 4 and 3; 4 and 2, 4 and 1
3. Now shorten the inhalation: 4 and 4, 3 and 4, 2 and 4, 1 and 4
4. Shorten both – 4 and 4, 3 and 3, 2 and 2, 1 and 1 (stop if lightheaded!)
5. Three full, strong breaths in and out
6. Breathe, at your own pace, in through your nose and out through your mouth for one minute.

Additional materials: Patrick Sheridan and Sam Pilafian – *The Breathing Gym*

## Buzzing

Buzzing is an important tool for warm-up, aiding you in developing an efficient and strong embouchure, consistent mouthpiece placement, clean articulation, good connection between notes, and a keen ear for pitch. Even after your warm-up, **buzzing is a fine tool to use anytime during practice** to ensure you’re playing in the most resonant and relaxed way possible and not fighting the instrument.

The following exercises are adapted from Jim Thompson – *Buzzing Book*, an excellent resource. Focus on smooth airflow and **let your air lead the change of pitch** – don’t add firmness to the lips before you speed up the air, and never pinch the lips together.

No. 3

The musical notation for exercise No. 3 is written in treble clef, 4/4 time. It consists of three staves. The first staff begins with a glissando (gliss.) from a whole note G4 to a whole note A4, with dynamics *p* and *mf* indicated. The second staff continues with a glissando from a whole note B4 to a whole note C5, marked *simile*. The third staff continues with a glissando from a whole note D5 to a whole note E5, also marked *simile*. The piece concludes with a double bar line.

No. 4

Three staves of musical notation in treble clef. The first staff begins with a piano (*p*) dynamic, followed by a crescendo to mezzo-forte (*mf*). A glissando (*gliss.*) is indicated over the first few notes. The word *simile* is written below the staff. The second staff continues the melodic line with various accidentals and dynamics. The third staff concludes the piece with a final cadence.

No. 5

Three staves of musical notation in treble clef. The first staff begins with a piano (*p*) dynamic, followed by a crescendo to mezzo-forte (*mf*). A glissando (*gliss.*) is indicated over the first few notes. The word *simile* is written below the staff. The second staff continues the melodic line with various accidentals and dynamics. The third staff concludes the piece with a final cadence.

No. 9

Three staves of musical notation in treble clef. The first staff begins with a piano (*p*) dynamic, followed by a crescendo to mezzo-forte (*mf*). The word *simile* is written below the staff. The second staff continues the melodic line with various accidentals and dynamics. The third staff concludes the piece with a final cadence.

## Additional materials

James Thompson – *Buzzing Book*

Adrian Griffin – *Buzz to Brilliance*

Lynn Asper – *A Mouthpiece Buzzing Routine for Trumpet*

You can also buzz scales or simple, lyrical tunes (folk songs, classical melodies, your favorite pop tunes, etc.), as long as you maintain the right approach of a **relaxed and resonant buzz that's driven by your air.**



## Long tones & flow studies

There are many ways to approach your first notes of the day. Here are some ideas. See which one suits you well. No matter your approach, focus on producing the **best sound you can with the least effort**, holding the pitch and dynamic steady, and smoothly releasing and supporting the airflow. Then, change pitch, **keeping the sound and ease of playing absolutely consistent**, and don't crimp the airstream.

Think of long tones like the foundation of the house you're building – everything else you will add on top of it depends on the concepts you are developing through long tones. Flow studies are like long tones in motion – the floor on top of the foundation of your house.

Slowly

Adapted from Max Schlossberg – *Daily Drills and Technical Studies*

When you're happy with your sound, add dynamic swells – soft to loud, and the reverse.

Slowly

Adapted from Emory Remington – *The Remington Warm-up Studies* (ed. Hunsberger)

Try slurring each line, then articulating. If an easy, relaxed attack is not possible yet, **try starting the note with only the breath**.

mf

Etc.

Adapted from the Bill Adam routine as written in *A Tribute to William Adam: Teachings and Routines* (ed. Charley Davis)

Continue as far as is comfortable and productive into the lower and upper registers. **Don't force it!**

$\text{♩} = \text{c. } 56$

Vincent Cichowicz – *Long Tone Studies* (compiled by Mark Dulin and Michael Cichowicz)

$\text{♩} = \text{c. } 56$

Vincent Cichowicz – *Long Tone Studies* cont'd

Play each line slurred, then articulate each half note, then try other rhythms: turn all half notes into four 8<sup>th</sup> notes, turn all half notes into staccato quarter notes, and so on. Come up with your own ideas! These are meant to be transposed – try playing them in keys you are less comfortable in.

## Additional materials

Vincent Cichowicz – *Long Tone Studies* and *Flow Studies*  
 Charley Davis - *A Tribute to William Adam: Teachings and Routines*  
 J.B. Arban – *Complete Conservatory Method* (pp. 11 – 13)  
 Max Schlossberg – *Daily Drills and Technical Studies*  
 James Stamp – *Warm-ups and Studies for Trumpet*  
 Michael Sachs – *Daily Fundamentals for the Trumpet* (pp. 4-6)  
 Anthony Plog – *Method for Trumpet*, book 1

## Articulation

Once you've established a good sound and you can change pitch easily, you can start working out the tongue. Make sure every note, no matter the duration, has the **same beautiful sound as a long tone**, and keep your release and support of air the very same as well. The tongue should never stop the air entirely.

Your goal is for each note to begin clearly and solidly, and to produce your best sound right away. Connect each note to the next – even staccato notes should have a sense of direction and momentum.

Note: Many brass players prefer to work on the next section, lip slurs, before articulation. That's fine too. I recommend working on them both separately before you combine them in something like scales or technical exercises.

No. 1 – a basic articulation warm-up

Moderately



**Change the rhythm as you see fit.** You can combine rhythms, add syncopation, start with a long note, play a rhythm from a piece you're working on, and so forth.

No. 2 – for tonguing across a wide range

Moderately





No. 6

The image displays a musical score for a piece titled "No. 6". It consists of eight staves of music, each in a different key signature, ascending from C major to C# major. The first staff is in C major (no sharps or flats). The second staff is in G major (one sharp). The third staff is in D major (two sharps). The fourth staff is in A major (three sharps). The fifth staff is in E major (four sharps). The sixth staff is in B major (five sharps). The seventh staff is in F# major (six sharps). The eighth staff is in C# major (seven sharps). Each staff contains a sequence of eighth notes, with the first four notes of each staff beamed together. The notes are: Staff 1: C4, D4, E4, F4, G4, A4, B4, C5. Staff 2: G4, A4, B4, C5, D5, E5, F5, G5. Staff 3: A4, B4, C5, D5, E5, F5, G5, A5. Staff 4: B4, C5, D5, E5, F5, G5, A5, B5. Staff 5: C5, D5, E5, F5, G5, A5, B5, C6. Staff 6: D5, E5, F5, G5, A5, B5, C6, D6. Staff 7: E5, F5, G5, A5, B5, C6, D6, E6. Staff 8: F5, G5, A5, B5, C6, D6, E6, F6. Each staff concludes with a whole note on the final note of the sequence.

Adapted from Chris Gekker - *Articulation Studies*, no. 1

Now, play in all the flat keys! **Add patterns and dynamics**, like slur-two-tongue-two, slur-three, everything staccato, everything tenuto, staccato and piano, marcato and forte, and so on.

Anything you practice on single-tongue can be **modified to a double or even triple-tongue exercise**. Consider playing each note with the K consonant, or tonguing T-K for every T of the original exercise. As always, get creative and forge your own path to progress.

## Additional materials

J.B. Arban – *Complete Conservatory Method* (pp. 17 – 36)

Chris Gekker – *Articulation Studies*

Herbert L. Clarke – *Technical Studies for Cornet*

Allen Vizzutti - *Trumpet Method*, book 1 (pp. 78 – 119)

Edwin F. Goldman – *Practical Studies*, etudes no. 1-14, 29-36

## Lip slurs/flexibilities

At this point, we are ready to give our chops a workout. It's usually best if this section comes after articulation, because lip slurs are taxing on the chops, and you may want to take a break after this part of your first session. I also advocate for some articulations to follow each lip slur exercise to ensure your chops have not been thrown out of whack by the exercise – if you can still articulate cleanly after each slur, that means you're **keeping your embouchure balanced and steady** as you go.

For each exercise, **start open and proceed down by half step to all seven valve combinations**. You can also start with valves 1, 2, 3 and go in reverse, ending with the open series.

No. 1



No. 2



No. 3



Speed up the tempo at will. **Land squarely on each note** and hold the pitch and sound steady, more like a staircase than a ramp. Let the air and tongue level guide the pitch of each note; make sure you are not squeezing for higher notes, or letting your embouchure collapse in the low register. Insist on a good sound.

Continue to the following advanced exercises **only when you feel ready**.

No. 4 – Irons, group 7



No. 5 – Irons, group 9

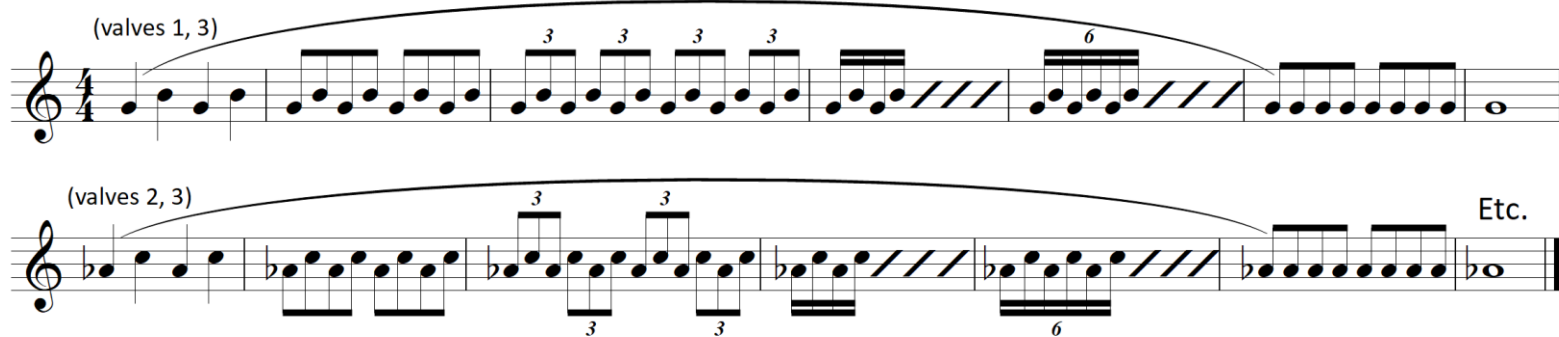


Nos. 4 and 5 adapted from Earl Irons – *27 Groups of Exercises*

No. 6 – two octave slurs



No. 7 – Lip trill training



Arban – *Complete Conservatory Method* page 44, no. 22

Try starting this exercise on a higher partial and working through each valve combination - for example, start on D for the series on valves 1 and 3 and trill to the very flat F on the next partial up. These high slurs work amazingly well to improve response and ease in the upper register – if you **insist on doing it right!**



## Additional materials

Arban – *Complete Conservatory Method* (p. 39 – 56)

Earl Irons – *27 Groups of Exercises*

Claude Gordon – *Tongue Level Exercises*

Charles Colin – *Advanced Lip Flexibilities*

Walter Smith – *Lip Flexibilities*

Bai Lin – *Lip Flexibilities*

Scott Belck – *Modern Lip Flexibilities*

## Conclusion – for now!

Good work – you will be well warmed up by this point. You may find that you don't need to do every single exercise to feel ready to play. That's good. The job of the warm-up is to get you ready for whatever's next, and the more efficient it is at doing that, the better. Continue to refine, but keep an open mind to exploring new ways.

Take a break then resume with whatever your next practice goal is. Most of the cited method and exercise books can and should be used in your fundamentals practice as well, depending of course on your needs.

One more reminder – **consistency of the daily sessions is key!** Get yourself in the practice room for those two or three sessions every day, set goals, pursue those goals, and you *will* continue to improve.