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### Five Ways to Improve Your Tone Quality

Tone quality is one of the key ingredients in becoming a better musician. What you sound like is the main thing others will notice about your playing. Listed below are five ways to improve this aspect of your playing. If you do these five things on a regular basis (every day, not just once or twice a week) you will see results, but remember that improvement does not happen overnight.

#### **1) Have a Daily Routine**

- A consistent daily routine is crucial to achieving good tone quality and increasing your endurance. Doing long tones, lip slurs, and articulation exercises daily will train your embouchure and tongue effectively - you *will* make progress this way. Lip slurs and long tones are boring at times, but you will see results. There is no set time limit for a daily routine, but I highly recommend at least 20-30 minutes daily. Beginners do not need to do that much, but a short 5 minute routine would be beneficial.

-Recommended routines: Emory Remington Warm-ups, Bruce Tychinski Daily Routines, David Vining Daily Routines, Micah Everett Warm-ups

#### **2) Breathing Exercises**

- These exercises will help to increase your overall lung efficiency and will ultimately allow you to have better control of your air. Taking voice lessons or engaging in physical activity will also improve your brass playing. What I highly recommend is the Breath Builder (available at online stores like Hickeys.com – other types of breathing aids are available at SlideBone.com). Make sure you stop the exercise when you are feeling light-headed or dizzy, and start again later. Breathing exercises are only effective when you do them several times a week.

- Recommended exercises: Breath Builder, Breathing Gym DVD, any physical activity (i.e. swimming, bike-riding, weight-lifting, etc.)

#### **3) Mouthpiece Buzzing**

- Implementing mouthpiece buzzing into your daily routine will definitely help your tone quality if used the proper way. The best way to use this is to do a few long tones with just the mouthpiece. Be sure not to buzz on your mouthpiece for more than a few minutes a day (my personal preference is no more than 5 minutes), and try to implement the buzzing during your daily routine. I strongly caution against too much mouthpiece buzzing. A musician needs an instrument to amplify their sound and the mouthpiece will not do that for them, so it is best not to get into the habit of buzzing for extended periods of time on the mouthpiece alone. To be perfectly honest though, mouthpiece buzzing is best done under the guidance of a good teacher.

#### **4) Listen to Good Brass Players**

- This is perhaps one of the most neglected aspects of brass playing. Listening to good musicians will give you an idea of what good tone sounds like. You can not achieve a better tone without a good sound in your head.

- Recommended artists: Joseph Alessi and Megumi Kanda (trombone), Steven Mead and David Werden (euphonium), Pat Sheridan (tuba), Philip Smith (trumpet), Dennis Brain (french horn), Lisa Bontregar (alto horn)

#### **5) Hit the Practice Room**

- Some players have a tendency to rely on equipment to solve their tone issues (i.e. \$150 mouthpiece). Your equipment can aid you in achieving a better tone quality, but it will not do it for you. Best bet here is to hit the practice room; equipment is no substitute for good old-fashioned practice.

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