

## WARMING UP – BRASS PLAYERS

What do all high level athletes do before they go out to play a game? What do all great singers do before they go on stage? How about public speakers? What do they do before they give a speech? Actors and actresses? Dancers? They all warm up! Yes, they all know they will perform better, much better, if they prepare themselves mentally and physically.

As instrumental musicians, we also need a good warm up routine if we want to play our best. We'll be much more confident in a performance but we'll also save a lot of frustration when we're practicing if we have everything working well before we start!

Every performer comes up with their own warm up routine. That routine changes a lot over time as their skills improve. The funny thing is, the more skilled they become, usually the more warm up they do! That's because they've seen how much it has helped them to improve at their skill.

Here are some basic ideas for warming up for musicians:

1. Simply producing a good sound comes first. We want what's known as good tone quality. We work on that by starting out with the simplest way we can produce sound on our instrument. Brass players can buzz their mouthpieces. Make sure it's a big, smooth sound. Make sure you feel the air flowing freely from you through the mouth piece. Play around with changing pitch going low to high and back to low. Play some simple songs with just your mouth piece. Then, put your mouth piece in the instrument and play nice, smooth, relaxed long notes. Several seconds long. Take good breaths. Make sure the notes are long, smooth, not sputter or bouncy or changing pitch. Listen for a big, open sound. We call these **Long Tones**.
2. Next, get the tongue working. The tongue is a muscle so it needs exercise to improve and to gain coordination. Tonguing exercises are a great warm up. Don't go faster than you can play cleanly but push yourself to improve the crispness of the tonguing and the speed over time.
3. Practice things to warm up fingers (slide for trombone). Scales, scale patterns and arpeggios are great. Memorize different ones. As you add new scales and arpeggios, your warm up time will increase because, if you don't continue to practice them, you will lose ones you had memorized. Always play these patterns at the speed you can play them well. As you start to learn them, don't go faster that you can actually think of the next note. Otherwise, you'll learn sloppy fingerings which means you'll always play them sloppy! Remember from our **Practice!** Sheet; perfect practice makes perfect performance.
4. Lip Slurs. Lip slurs are great warm ups to improve our lip flexibility so we can move quickly and cleanly between low and high notes. The 1<sup>st</sup> and most basic lip slur is going between the low and high note of our 5 note scale 3 times in a row. Lip slurs are not tongued. Start this out by playing quarter notes at the speed you can do it well. Ex: 1 5 1 5 1 5 1--. The last 1 (low note) is a half note. This starts you in no fingers (or no slide position for trombone). Then, repeat but go down one note in your fingering chart. We call this **descending chromatically**. Keep going down each time until you've played all 7 fingering patterns. We call those 7 notes a **partial** because they all use the same basic air speed. There are literally thousands of different lip slurs. I'll be showing you some of these and more on warming up in upcoming videos.

All this above can be done in 5-7 minutes for a pretty new player. Professionals might spend 1, 2 even 3 hours a day warming up! Keep doing these warmups every time you practice and you'll be amazed at how fast you improve as a player!