

Breathing

One of the most important, and most discussed, aspects of playing trombone is proper breathing. Relaxation is the key to good tone production and proper breathing is a great way to start. No matter if it is a quick or long breath the body position should remain the same.

Exercise:

To find out what muscles you use to breath I suggest you lay on the floor with your feet straight out and your arms comfortably positioned beside you. Relax, close your eyes, and just breath. Don't try to breath in a different manner than usual just think about what muscles you use to breath. Take a few moments perhaps a minute or two to truly find what muscles you use. I think that you will be surprised by how little energy it takes to breath. After all, we do it all the time! This same relaxed breathing should be carefully transferred to your trombone playing.

Tension:

Tension is the enemy of trombone playing. By staying relaxed in our breathing patterns we can allow ourselves more control over the horn. Remember, that tension in one part of the body, say the arms, can quickly transfer itself to tension in another part of the body. Relax, have a "Zen" moment and enjoy playing. I know many musicians who practice yoga to release tension in their bodies.

Mindset also plays an important aspect in how your practice session will proceed. Clearing your mind and focusing on the task ahead will allow you to relax and truly absorb yourself in your musical playing. Be sure to take time before you play to mentally and physically prepare yourself for the session.

Exercise

Before you place the horn to your mouth take a moment to prepare your body for proper breathing. Sometimes we all need a reminder of how to do things correctly.

Set your metronome to 50 beats per minute. Place your right arm perpendicular to your body. Count off 4 beats and inhale so that the palm of your hand reaches your mouth on the final beat. Exhale on the next four beats. Think In-2-3-4, Out -2-3-4

The goal for this exercise is to relax your body and remind yourself what a large breath feels like. Practice this in-out breathing for up to 1 minute.