

Daily Maintenance Routine & Core Practice

A Daily Maintenance Routine is a necessity for any serious trumpet student or brass player. In addition, each Core Practice Session should be approached in a manner of knowing exactly what the student wants and needs to work on. Playing and establishing a Daily Maintenance Routine each and every morning will better attune the student to what fundamentals need attention in their later Core Practice Session.

Each day's practice should be divided into two separate practice sessions. The Daily Maintenance Routine is a 30-40 minute session that starts the day – ideally in the morning, or otherwise as early in the day as possible. The student should leave 2-4 hours of rest between the Daily Maintenance Routine and the Core Practice. The school day typically takes care of this resting period. The Core Practice Session is the meat and potatoes of the day's practice. This is where the student improves upon his or her skills technically and musically

Daily Maintenance Routine

When developing this maintenance routine with your trumpet students, converse openly with them about the weak areas in their playing of which they might or might not be aware. Once these techniques have been pointed out and explained, work with them on establishing a practice time in the morning that works for them and your schedule.

While this session serves as the initial warm-up each day, its primary role is to take the student daily through the fundamentals of trumpet playing technique. Another by-product of the daily routine is that if a student misses the daily Core Practice Session, the Daily Maintenance Routine has served as a good practice session for that particular day. By no means should this be a standard occurrence, but if needed from time to time it can stand by itself as a quality practice session. Performance assets of a Daily Maintenance Routine are: increased endurance, lip flexibility, sound development, intonation, clarity of articulation, rhythm practice and increased self-awareness as a performer. Also, it trains the student to actively listen to him or herself to make improvements from day to day. The Core Practice Session should be adjusted accordingly to what area needs more attention than another. By doing this, it creates a certain daily checkpoint from day-to-day as a way of measuring conditioning and progress. The student should be reminded not to practice bad habits; this session is designed for students to erase all bad habits. Keeping in mind that the Daily Maintenance Routine is a warm-up and not a practice session; the student should only choose to play one-half to two-thirds of the materials suggested below evaluating as they go along their degree of readiness for the practice day. If the student is a young high school student not used to warming up with a thorough routine, cut the Daily Maintenance session to 10 -15 minutes starting by having them add a couple of extra exercises each week to build the endurance and flexibility needed for the Core Practice Session.

While the daily maintenance routine will become easier over time, it still forms an important foundation for the student's advancement. Most students' fundamentals are in a constant state of fluctuation and need to be continually refreshed and polished. The best professionals are the ones who maintain a consistent daily maintenance routine, paying detailed attention even though the material is familiar.

There are a few techniques I would like to share apart from the basics and fundamentals of the Daily Maintenance Routine. They are lip flapping and stretching for better air production.

Lip flapping in the morning is a great technique to get rid of lactic acid build up. As the student sleeps after a long day of practice and rehearsals, the embouchure muscles that have been worked hard all day will build lactic acid in them from that exercise. Lip flapping is a great way to wake up the muscles and get rid of the build up. Before the student gently buzzes the mouthpiece as the first warm-up exercise of the day, have him gently lip flap for about 30 seconds. Next, have the student buzz the mouthpiece for 20-30 seconds and then lip flap again for about 20 seconds. This trade off should take place back-and-forth for 8-10 minutes. The students should ease into their warm-up rather than shocking the embouchure muscles with needed vibrations and flexibly they are not ready to give yet.

Breathing is so often overlooked as a warm-up. Why? For every athlete stretching is a part of every day life and it does not make sense for it not to be routine for musicians. Before the student ever touches their mouthpiece or instrument for the day, they should start with stretching of the upper torso and hands. Stretching the upper torso is important because it houses the most important factor in wind playing, the lungs. Simply have the student stand up straight, feet shoulder width apart and breathe in until they reach their fullest lung capacity. Once this is established have them hold upward their right hand and bend at the torso to the left. After they have reached their most flexible point, have them hold that position for 10 seconds. As they regress back to their prior position, have them slowly release the air through a formed embouchure. Now, have them do the same technique to the right with the left arm extended upward. The student should feel a stretching sensation in their muscles, targeting their obliques and intercostals. This stretching technique stretches these muscles for better, more relaxed breathing. In addition to this stretch, the student will learn to better control air speed and steadiness of the air stream.

Suggested materials for the Daily Maintenance Routine are as follows: Schlossberg: *Daily Drills*, J. B. Arban: *Complete Conservatory Method for Trumpet*, Hebert L. Clarke: *Technical Studies for Trumpet*. The expectation is that the student will cover all of the etudes listed over a 2-3 day period, covering between one quarter and half of the etudes on any given day. In addition to these studies, mouthpiece buzzing is essential to starting off the day. A wonderful book for this would be the Jack Stamp: *Warm-Ups + Studies*. His *Preliminary warm-ups* on the mouthpiece alone, # 2, makes a great daily start to playing for any brass player. Last, but not least, scales. Typically unless scales are assigned to students, they spend very little time practicing or understanding their construction. For best results, a different scale should be practiced each day along with different variations of the chromatic scale with varying articulations. For added difficulty, their daily scales can be practiced in thirds and fourths.

The student should typically rest 15-20 seconds or more between exercises in the Daily Maintenance Routine including plenty of lip flapping. However, **strength training** sessions may be done a few times each week, in which students play each etude without releasing their corners. By releasing the corners to breathe, the muscles in the corners of the embouchure are allowed to slightly recover. This is called *breaking the embouchure*. Typically, this is how brass musicians play. But to gain greater endurance we keep our corners firm and breathe through the nose so as to not break the embouchure through several etudes until the corners of the embouchure begin to burn and tire. The longer the student can go without breaking the embouchure the greater strength they have in their corners. At that point the student should rest, then continue in the same vein for two more spurts. This strength-training practice should occur only a few times a week; daily strength training tends to decrease endurance because the muscles are unable to recover. The strength of any great brass player can be found in the embouchure corners.

Daily Maintenance Routine

Stamp, J. Warm-Ups & Studies. Editions BIM, 1978

James Stamp developed these groups of exercise to remedy the weekly fatigue and injury his students were experiencing from heavy playing

Schlossberg, M. Daily Drill and Technical Studies. Baron, 1941

Exercise # 2	Long tones, with a focus on sound, breathing, and clean initial attack, expand from the middle outwardly, listen for steadiness in the sound
Exercise # 16	Maintain a consistent sound and intonation over all three octaves
Exercise # 17, 20	Accented notes should have a clean, clear articulation and full sound
Exercise # 59, 60, 61	Lip slurs for added endurance, flexibility, high range, strength, agility
Exercise # 97, 98, 99	Maintain clear, consistent articulation throughout the entire range.
Exercise # 118, 119	Execute a two-octave chromatic scale quickly and fluently, increased finger dexterity
Exercise# 129, 130	Articulation should be exact; these exercises accustom the eye to responding to many accidentals, increasing sight-reading acuity

Arban, J. B. Complete Conservatory Method. Colin, 1981

The first several pages of the Arban book are useful for basic articulation, slurring, and rhythm. Pages 13 #11 through page 37 cover various key signatures, rhythms, and time signatures.

Clarke, Hebert L. Technical Studies. Carl Fisher, 1934

Many educators and players believe that the Clarke book is designed for finger dexterity. While it is true that finger dexterity is a by-product of the book's design, its actual intent is to build breathing and aperture flexibility and embouchure strength. When combined with finger dexterity, the result is a student with increased endurance, range, breath control, flexibility, and finger speed in all keys.

Core Practice Session

A Core Practice Session is the center practice session of each day. The Core Practice Session, in turn, is considered to be the meat and potatoes of the student's daily practice. Students must always **Practice with Purpose**. It is this session that covers lesson materials, audition music, and solos. In addition, core sessions should address the student's weaknesses, improving on them from day to day and week to week. Students should also plan to set short term and long term goals in their Core Practice Sessions.

The Core Practice Session serves the purpose to address different kinds of technique that were found in the Daily Maintenance Routine. For example, a student's multiple tonguing may have seemed rough earlier in the Daily Maintenance Routine; the Core Practice Session is there for the student to practice their multiple tonguing more specifically to continue to improve individual strides towards mastery. Any basic or advanced fundamental, if weak, is intended to be practiced during this session. Also, students should practice what needs the most attention first in their fundamentals practice. If they wait until later in the session when they may be fatigued, the work will be less effective. The students need to be fresh so they can physically and mentally improve those techniques.

The idea of setting short term and long term goals in practice is a wonderful way for students to measure their progress. Anything from getting better at lip trills to preparing a solo for contest can be characterized as goals. Ask your students what they want to accomplish and hold them to it, checking in with them ever so often so see if they are holding themselves to that standard and goal. As the student inches closer to the long term goals by progressing through the stated short term goals, confidence is built in the belief that whatever goals have been set can be reached.

Practice sessions can be created a variety of ways. However, most of the time we never give our students a solid practice model and basically leave it up to them to “fit it in and figure it out.” The Core Practice Sessions that I have outlined in the *weekly breakdown* are divided into seven days with each day’s practice material being practiced in a different order. This idea adds variety to the student’s practice session keeping it from getting stale as well as keeping the embouchure from getting used to doing any set of practicing in a certain order. In other words, it keeps the player’s chops always guessing, “What’s coming next?”--just like the real world.

We need to always remind our students that it is ok to fail in the practice room. If they always sound good on everything they are practicing, then chances are they are not working out things they cannot do yet. They need to know that it is ok to make mistakes as long as they know and understand how to hear their mistakes and begin a path to fix them. They need this mental room to grow as musicians and people.

The materials in these practice sessions will vary from student to student, but the overall idea of what to practice should stay the same. For example, a student should never have a practice session without playing a lyrical etude or reading a solo work. Even though the student’s etudes will vary, the sessions should always contain these themes along with all the others if possible.

The description of re-warm-up is referred to so the student can take a few minutes at the beginning of their practice session to buzz a few notes or lip flap to get their embouchure ready to play. A fully extended warm-up is not necessary because they will most likely have done the Daily Maintenance Routine earlier in the day and have played in their ensembles during school hours. If none of this has taken place then a fully efficient warm-up is needed before the student starts the Core Practice Session. The warm-up should last anywhere from **20-25 minutes** covering the ideas of lip vibrations, air flow, flexibility, sound development, articulation and intonation. After this extended warm-up, a resting session needs to take place anywhere from **30-60 minutes** to allow the embouchure to recover from the warm-up and be fresh to practice through all the materials in the Core Practice Session.

Finally, various people have suggested the pedagogical idea of “rest as much as you play” at one time or another in the past. The idea of practicing in two sessions, Daily Maintenance and Core Practice, is a logical way to achieve maximum benefit from that dictum.