

5-Minute Drill for Brass

(Trumpet, Trombone, Euphonium, and Tuba)

This packet is designed to give you (brass players) the tools you need to improve skills essential to brass-playing on your own in just 5 minutes every day: range, dynamics, and flexibility. Before we jump into the exercises, let's briefly discuss some of the important aspects of brass playing to keep in mind.

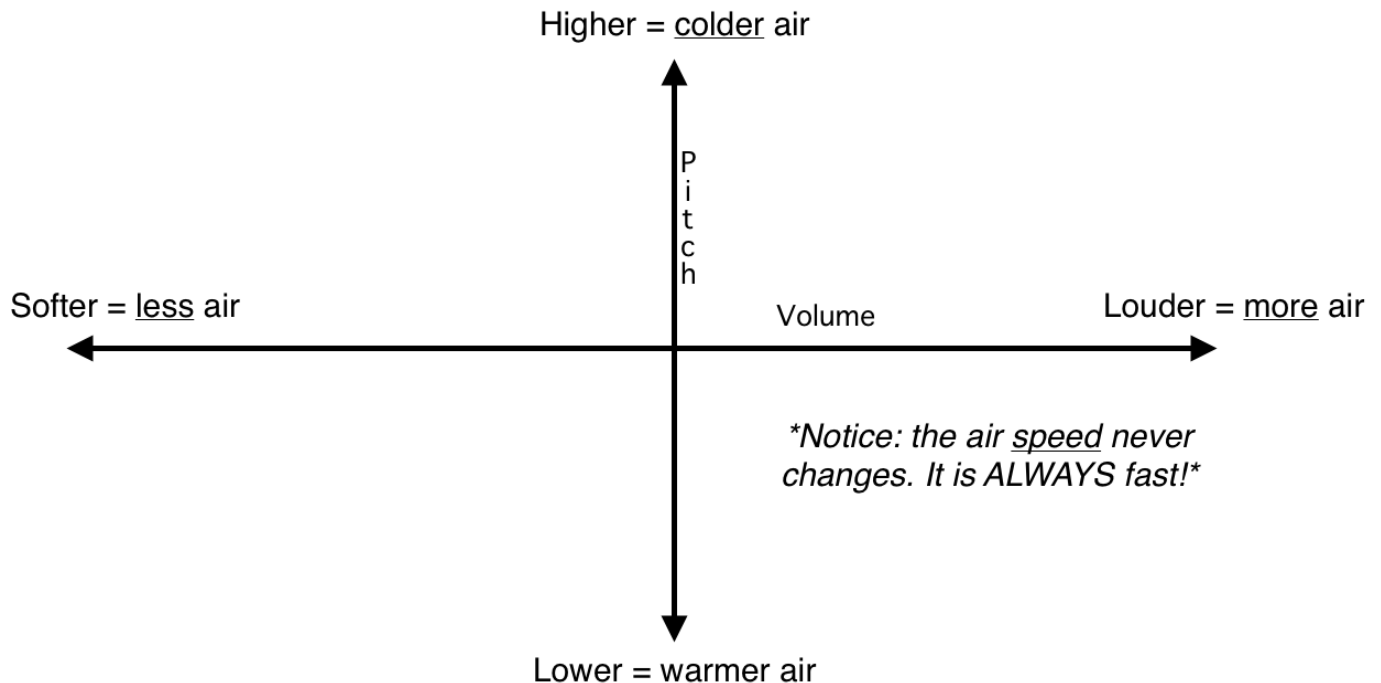
Aperture - the hole the air goes through



Embouchure - your whole set-up (lips, corners, and aperture)

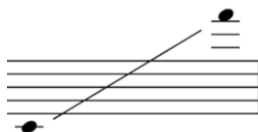
- 1) Your lips do not “create” the buzz, airflow does. Your aperture should always be fleshy and wet to allow the air to create the buzz for you.
- 2) Your oral cavity (the shape of the inside of your mouth and your tongue position) is the most important effector of pitch, tone, and flexibility. If you want to change any of those things, change your oral cavity FIRST.
- 3) Your embouchure should hardly ever shift or change. It only SLIGHTLY changes to accommodate the amount of and type of air you are using. When changing pitch or dynamics, it should change LAST (after you check out your oral cavity first).

Above all else, the air must always be moving fast before any oral cavity or embouchure changes will make any difference!



Increasing Range (0:00-1:00)

The biggest mistakes young players make when playing in the high range are 1) slowing down the air and 2) making the aperture so tight that the buzz stops. The best way to fix this is to do ASCENDING MOUTHPIECE BUZZES.



Focus on keeping the aperture fleshy while changing your vowel shape and air temperature. Only firm up your embouchure if air starts leaking out of your corners. Use a mirror or video yourself to make sure that you are adjusting as little as possible. Siren from low to high (“elevators”), and go as high as you can until the sound stops or feels tight.

Increasing Flexibility (1:00-3:00)

Your ability to slur well directly correlates to your ability to play higher pitches. The best way to increase your flexibility is to do MOUTHPIECE SIRENS between the pitches you are aiming for, then put the mouthpiece on the horn and do 2-, 3-, or 4-note LIP SLURS.

On your mouthpiece, make the slurs as “smeary” as possible - don’t “slot” the notes. Again, focus on moving your embouchure as little as possible. When you put the mouthpiece to the horn, it should feel exactly the same EXCEPT you wait until right before each note change to “smear” to the next note.

Increasing Dynamic Range (3:00-5:00)

The toughest skills to learn when it comes to dynamics are starting notes softly and loudly, and staying in tune while you get louder or softer. So to work on these:

- 1) pick a note in the middle of your range and attack the note 10 times loudly and 10 times softly. Remember that the air must always be fast and that dynamics do not affect how you tongue a note (louder doesn’t mean harder).
- 2) pick various notes and (while hooked up to your tuner) practice getting louder then softer. Look back at the air flow chart: remember that louder means using MORE air and softer means using LESS air, but in both cases, the air is still fast. To stay in tune, you will need to adjust your embouchure smaller and bigger to accommodate the volume of air you are using. If you go sharp as you get louder, your embouchure needs to get larger. If you go flat as you get softer, your embouchure needs to get smaller.