

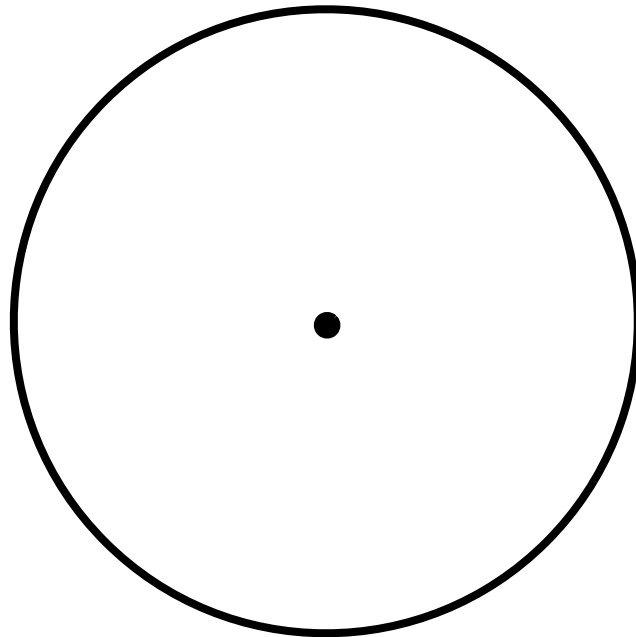
THE BREATH (Production)

The two most important elements of playing a brass instrument are AIR and BUZZ. Your air moving and buzz create your sound.

AIR MOVING → BUZZ → SOUND

These three elements are one with another. They always are in this order yet they happen simultaneously. Before beginning your routine, make sure you have spent some time exercising your breathing.

As I noted above, I try to keep everything as simple as possible. When I breath, I focus on creating the shape “HO” in my throat. If you simply think about this syllable when inhaling, the body does the correct thing – the breath is deep, open, and relaxed, like a yawn.



THE FOCAL POINT

There are two ways to view this image:

First, you can look at it abstractly. You can picture the outer circle as your sound and the inner circle as your focused air stream. You can expand from the inner circle towards the outer circle and expand exponentially beyond the outer circle to achieve maximum tone production at any volume, as well as achieve maximum projection at any volume. Blowing an air stream larger than the inner circle causes

you to surround the outer circle while pressing in towards the inner circle. This limits the amount of projection and tone that you can produce. Looking at the outer circle as your sound also reminds you to be exactly in the middle of the pitch...not sharp...not flat.

Secondly, you can look at it as a top view of your mouthpiece. The outer circle is your rim and the inner circle is the throat of the mouthpiece. Take your mouthpiece and look through it from the back-bore. Do you see the size of the throat? No matter how much quantity of air you move through the horn, it enters the instrument through this hole. Playing with an air column that is larger than this throat creates unnecessary backpressure and you lose efficiency.

As you play, constantly focus your thoughts on this image. Imprint this image in your brain. Think about “shooting the middle.” So much of instrument mastery is mental. This change in mental focus can by itself, increase your range, dynamic contrast, control, accuracy, response, projection, and endurance.

The 3 C's?

- 1) Control
- 2) Clarity
- 3) Consistency

How do we maintain versatility? How do we develop virtuosity? I try to keep everything as simple as possible. With my practice and performance, I apply the 3 C's in order to continue challenging myself to develop a higher level of efficiency and a higher level of virtuosity.

The 3 C's are purposefully ordered this way and are a very important part of my playing.

- 1) Control: This always comes first. Control refers to rhythmic integrity, pitch accuracy, tone and dynamic control, etc... Always strive to deliberately play your best, as opposed to accidentally doing better than you expected.
- 2) Clarity: This refers (again) to the purity of your tone, the clarity of your articulation, the accuracy of your intonation. A good question to ask yourself is, “Does the audience hear every detail coming out of my bell?”
- 3) Consistency: Doing these 3 C's EVERY TIME! This also refers (yet again) to the consistency of your tone in all registers, the consistency of your intonation, and most importantly, the consistency of producing this high level of musicianship.

A note about pressure:

There are two “pressures” when playing the trumpet, the air pressure and the “hand” pressure. The air pressure is the amount of air that you are releasing into the trumpet. The hand pressure is the amount of pressure that you are pressing or pulling against your lips. If the two pressures are equal, the player’s lips essentially feel no pressure. You are in fact playing with pressure, but the right amount of pressure. As your air pressure increases for louder dynamics or faster air speeds, your hand pressure can appropriately increase equally. I can guarantee that every person is capable of creating far greater hand pressure than air pressure. That being said, you have to reduce your hand pressure in order to find this equilibrium. If the hand pressure is too great, the lip tends to swell and get tired quickly. If the air pressure is too great, the sound is flat, soft dynamics and response become a problem, and range is limited.

