



Colt's 2012: High Brass Technique Book

The purpose of this booklet is to provide a guideline of the technique and skills needed for the 2012 Colts brass line. The series of exercises that follow model a specific set of skills that apply to the brass program. You should consider the entire series of exercises as a pyramid that stacks each skill onto the next, starting with the first exercise:

Posture

For every exercise, we have the same approach to our fundamental playing. This starts with the way we stand and hold our instruments. Standing up--heels together and toes apart--you should have a straight line-of-body. This means you shouldn't be slouching, leaning back, leaning forward, etc. The horn should be parallel to the ground for now and you should have your elbows relatively open. The visual staff will define this more for you at audition camp.

The idea behind posture as it relates to playing is that you should alleviate as much tension in your body as possible. You're going to want press the instrument into your face, let your shoulders creep up into your ears, and take shallow, short breaths when you start playing. **RELAX!!!** Pull the instrument away from your face, melt your shoulders down and back, and take nice, slow, relaxing breaths each time you begin a note.

Breathing

This brings us to our first breath. Breathing is such an important function of playing and, often, the most overlooked. A tense breath can ruin a performance just as sure as a poor embouchure. The tension in a breath is often tension in the throat, which affects the air flow and thus the “warmth” of the sound. With EACH and EVERY breath we should focus on opening our throat as if to sing in your lowest possible octave, or like saying “whoa” while inhaling. This breath stays consistent regardless of tempo, dynamics, or difficulty. A *pppp* breath has the same mechanics as a *ffff* breath!

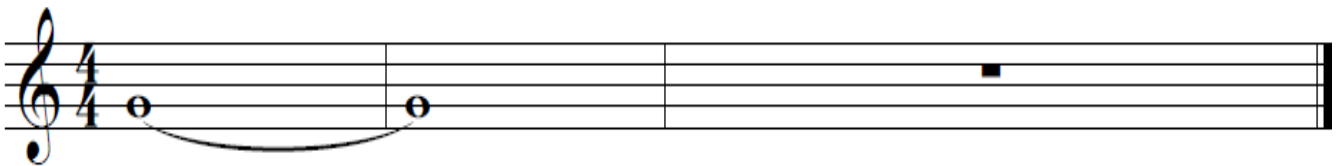
Creating a sound

After you take your first breath, keep that open sensation in your throat and mouth the same. Set your lips together and move air to initiate a buzz. This is called an “Air attack”. Unless otherwise specified, we will always use this form of “articulation” or, rather, lack thereof.

Lets put this into an exercise!

8 count tones

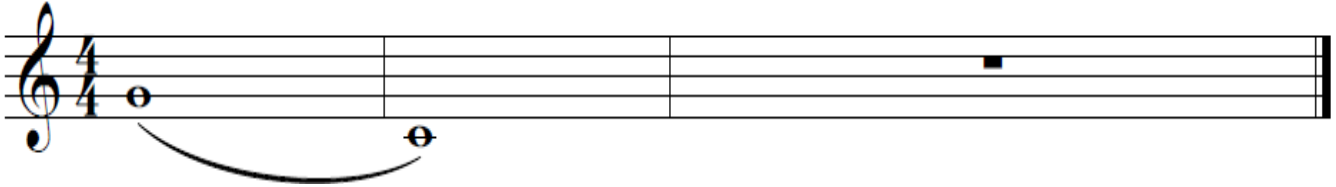
A warm-up standard. Stand up tall. Relax. Pick a tempo. Take a deep breath. Set your embouchure and go! Strive for a steady sound throughout the phrase. Blow air through the note, not AT the note. At the end of each note, end with an inhale to stop the sound rather than stopping the air with your tongue or throat. This will allow the note to ring, as opposed to just falling out of your instrument. This is called a “Breath Release”



This exercise can be done in several partials. The point is to make the best possible sounds at the start of your day. Getting your face to start “waking up”. Like stretching for your face.

Low Slur:

Here, we introduce the slur (still without articulating). The idea is to move from one note to the next as smoothly as possible. This requires a very direct airstream and a changing of the air flow from one speed to another instantly. In this instance, it's going from a higher note (concert F) with faster air, to a lower note (concert Bb) with slower air. Remember, quick air changes and direction in that air!



This exercise can be played in reverse to work on an air change from low speed to higher speed.

Quarters High/Low:

This is a middle range slur working on both slur directions. Keep in mind that the slurs are now getting faster. Strive to make the changes instant so that, no matter the speed, they can still be clear



Eighths Low and High:

As you can see, the slurs get more intricate as you progress through your warm-up. We don't expect you all to be able to do these perfectly yet. These are exercises for a reason, they're supposed to be difficult. This is why we practice.

1.



2.



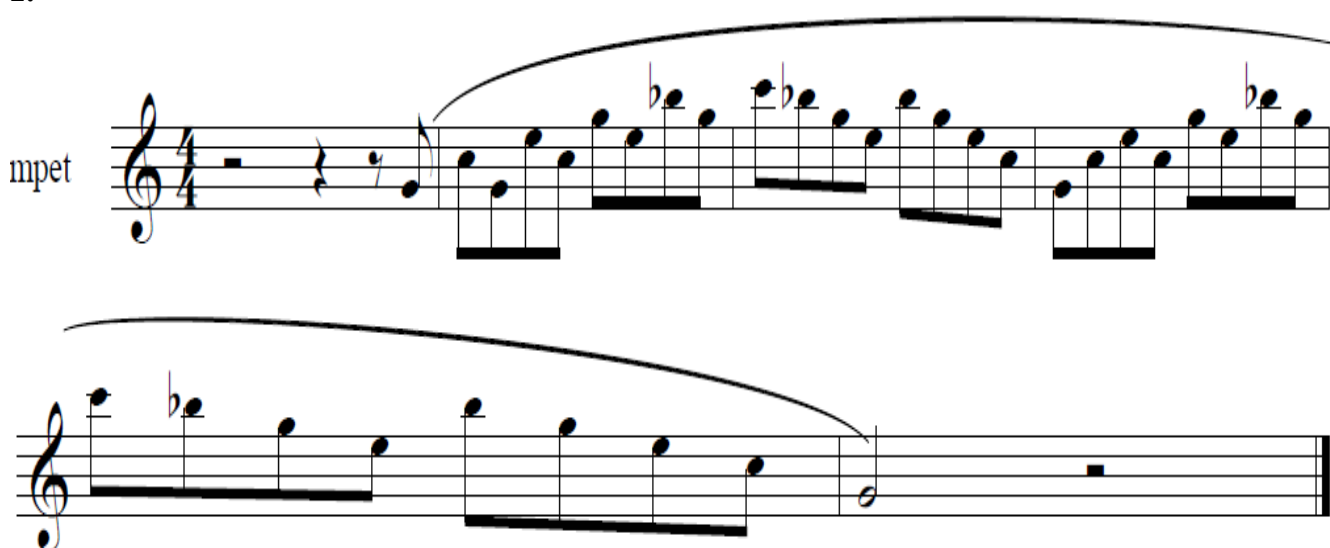
Joe Alessi slurs:

These are advanced slurs that take a lot of effort and maturity on the players end. When you can do these effortlessly, reaching upper registers becomes less of an issue.

1.



2.



Articulations:

An articulation is, simply put, a moment where air is obstructed by the tongue for a brief moment in time. There are many styles of articulations (i.e., accent, staccato, legato, marcato, etc). There are also several theories on execution of said styles. Whether you use a 'da', 'do', 'ta', etc. It all depends on the music, the composer, the period at which it was composed, and the common practice of the period. These styles will be defined as they relate to the demands of the piece in which we play.

Articulation Study 1.

Here we have our first series of “un-slurred” notes. These studies are generally used to just get your articulations moving at the start of your day. By defining a specific style to the exercise you work on a specific skill set that should relate to a similar style in show music. For this study, we will cycle through with several different styles (legato, staccato, marcato, accent, etc..)



Articulation Study 2.

Just to start, we'll approach each change of note as a "da" articulation without any particular style marking, single tongued. On the 16ths, consider your tongue as interrupting a solid column of air. Not one pulse of air a 16th note long. In other words, KEEP YOUR AIR MOVING!



Articulation Study 3:

The next exercise works articulations with valves and moving through different partials and octaves. This is also a finger dexterity exercise. Moving cleanly from one position to the next is challenging. Your valves have to move instantaneously from one pitch to the next or else you will produce a fuzzy sound.



Tuning:

This is really the act of being aware of ourselves and how we relate to others. Starting with the things you can control, let's talk about individual tuning. Your intonation can be affected by the slightest change anywhere in your body. If you raise your eyebrows, you're likely to push sharp unless you are aware of your pitch center at all times. What does that mean? If you aren't playing right down the center of your horn, you will alter your pitch. Any work done to tune you is a waste of time if you don't have a solid hold on where the center of your horn, sound, and pitch is.

Now, there are times when we NEED to alter our pitch from center in order to be in tune with the ensemble. For example, in a major chord, if you play the third of the chord you need to play 14 cents flat in order to play a proper major triad in tune. The act of altering our pitch center is a little tricky. Do it the wrong way and it will alter our sound in a negative way. We must understand the fundamentals of "pitch bending".

Pitch Bending:

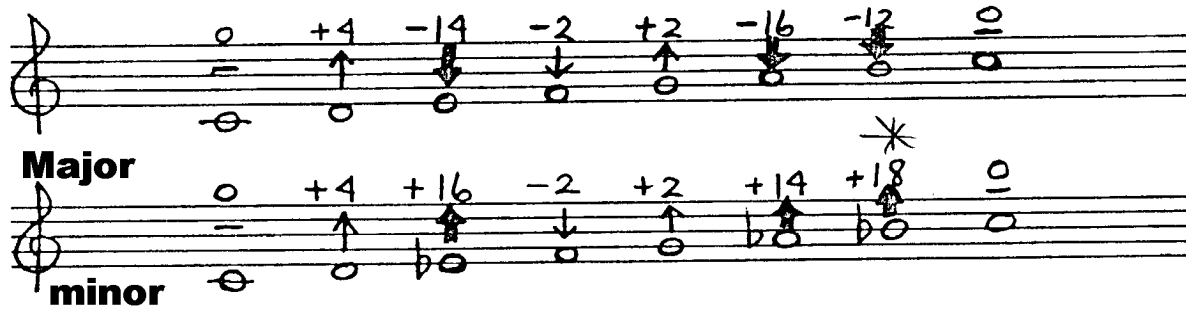
Pitch bending is a fancy way of saying forcing yourself to play sharp or flat. The way we do this is by re-shaping our embouchure slightly. In the exercise below, we essentially bounce from concert Bb to progressively lower pitches. First time through, we will use valves but the second time we will pitch bend to reach each note. Roll your bottom lip SLIGHTLY out to bend down, and roll in to bend up. This angles the airstream slightly higher or lower to produce the desired pitch change. When you bend back to concert Bb, center in on that pitch before moving to the next. This exercise will often be done with two groups. One playing a sustained Bb, the other doing pitch bends.



Chord Tendencies:

Each chord has its own pitch tendencies and necessary pitch alterations. Here is a list of commonly occurring chords and their alterations. In this first chart, the notes and their alterations relate to a tonic C in both major and minor.

Deviation in Cents from Equal Temperament



JUST INTONATION CHART

(Based on a "C" Root Fundamental - +/- cents)

MAJOR	MAJOR 6	MAJOR 7	MAJOR 7 #5

MAJOR 9	MINOR	MINOR 6	MINOR 7

MINOR #7	MINOR 7 b5	MINOR 9	DOM. 7

DOM. 7 b5	DOM. 7 #5	DOM. 9	DOM. 7 b9

DIM.	DIM. 7	DIM. #7	AUG.

Putting it Together:

It is easy to get lost in the monotony of fundamentals. The best way to remedy this is to apply the skills you've practiced to actual music (we are here to play music, after all). Here is a short Bach chorale arranged to pool all your skills into a single exercise. Note that there aren't articulations given, so this can be defined as a variety of different styles. The arranger has also kindly noted which part has the 3rd, the 5th, or the 7th of the chord so you know how to adjust accordingly. Prepare to play this in a multitude of ways. All slurred, bopped, *pppp*, sung, on mouthpiece etc.

Trumpet 1
3rd 3rd 7th R 5th 3rd R R R 5th 3rd

Trumpet 2
5th 5th 3rd 5th 3rd R 5th 5th 5th 3rd R

Mellophone
5th 5th 7th R R 5th R 7th 3rd R 5th

Baritone
R R 5th R R 5th 5th 7th R 5th 3rd

Euphonium
5th 5th R 3rd 5th R 3rd 3rd R 3rd R

Tuba

7
Tpt 1
R R 3rd 3rd PT R 5th 7th 3rd 5th 3rd R R R

7
Tpt 2
5th* 5th 5th 5th 3rd 3rd R 5th 5th 3rd R 3rd 5th R 5th

7
Mello
3rd 3rd R R 5th R R 3rd 3rd R 5th R 3rd R 5th

7
Bari
7th 3rd R R 5th R 5th 5th 7th 5th 3rd 5th 7th 5th 3/R

7
Euph
7th R R R R 5th 3rd R 7th R R 5th 5th 3rd 5th

7
Tuba