

REHEARSAL RESOURCE

FOR BAND

CHAPTER 3

FUNDAMENTAL CONCEPTS

CHAPTER 3 - Fundamental Concepts

Fundamental Concepts is the starting point upon which all future growth and development is built. **DO NOT** overlook the importance of these concepts.

THE WINDS CONCEPT...

RELAX - BREATHE (SUBDIVIDE) - PLAY

Although it may sound simple, this is the entire foundation for success!

The source of sound is

AIR!

Put simply...

AIR = VIBRATION = SOUND

MORE AIR = MORE VIBRATION = MORE SOUND

LESS AIR = LESS VIBRATION = LESS SOUND

In order to fully understand how to use our air
we must understand two key concepts...

POSTURE & BREATHING

Proper posture is the foundation of becoming an outstanding musician.

Breathing correctly uses a great deal more of our lung capacity
than what we normally use in everyday life.

The proper use of our airflow is a skill that must be practiced and perfected.

THE PERCUSSION CONCEPT...

RELAX - SUBDIVIDE (BREATHE) - PLAY

Although it may sound simple, this is the entire foundation for success!

That source of sound is

YOU!

(and the stick/mallet!)

In order to fully understand how to manipulate the stick/mallet
we must understand two key concepts...

POSTURE & GRIP

Proper posture is the foundation of becoming an outstanding musician.

Proper grip allows for an unified approach to every percussion instrument
and thus a unified technique development.

The use of proper technique is a skill that must be practiced and perfected.

POSTURE (WINDS)

The manner in which we approach sitting or standing to play a musical instrument is the foundation for mastery. We must master this concept before we can hope to make beautiful music. Proper posture ensures that 1) the body is aligned, 2) we maximize space for breathing, and 3) we eliminate tension. Follow the steps below to ensure proper posture while playing.

Sit on the front edge of the chair

Rump on the hump!

Sit with both feet flat on the floor

Three point stance

You should be able to stand directly from your “seated position”

Lengthen the spine & widen the shoulders

Take up space around you

“I am the Puppet Master”

Head is relaxed and floating

Relaxed through the neck and shoulders

**Hold instrument with
proper hand & finger placement**

Bring the instrument to you

Music stand is an extension of your posture
Can you see the conductor... without sacrificing posture?

Trumpets & Trombones... DO NOT aim your bell into the music stand.
Place the stand in front of your right foot and angle the desk slightly.
Play to the left of the music stand.

POSTURE (PERCUSSION)

The manner in which we approach sitting or standing to play a musical instrument is the foundation for mastery. We must master this concept before we can hope to make beautiful music. Proper posture ensures that 1) the body is aligned, 2) we maximize space for breathing, and 3) we eliminate tension. Follow the steps below to ensure proper posture while playing.

Stand behind the instrument

Feet shoulder width apart - knees slightly bent

Never lock your knees

Weight centered**Lengthen the spine & widen the shoulders**

Take up space around you

"I am the Puppet Master"

Head is relaxed and floating

Relaxed through the neck and shoulders

**Hold sticks / mallets with
proper hand & finger placement**

Bring the instrument to you

Music stand is an extension of your posture

Can you see the conductor... without sacrificing posture?

It is of utmost importance that all musicians approach their instruments in a state of relaxation.

BREATHING

The key to playing any wind instrument well is having great breath control. There are many components to taking a “proper breath”. We will focus on the two fundamental aspects of breathing: inhalation and exhalation. Follow the steps below to ensure proper breathing.

INHALATION**“How” Breath****Breathe down and from the diaphragm**

“Breathe deep in the lungs.”

Stay relaxed at all times & keep the throat open

“Think about your posture and taking up space around you.”

“Think “AH” in the throat and “OH” in the mouth.”

2-Step inhalation

“Half - Full - Reverse!”

EXHALATION**“Ho” Breath****Do not hold or “cap” the breath**

“Air is always moving - in or out!”

Stay relaxed at all times & keep the throat open

“The air should have a warm, engulfing sound and texture.”

“Think “AH” in the throat and “OH” in the mouth.”

The whole breathing process is similar to a sigh or yawn... a large, full, relaxed, steady inhale (expansion) followed by an immediate full, relaxed, and steady exhale (release).

If you always play with good air support,
the pitch will be stable and the tone will be full and resonant!

DO NOT think of pushing with the diaphragm.

When possible... use the body’s natural elasticity and gravity to exhale,
adding support from the abdominal wall when necessary.

BREATHING EXERCISES

DISCLAIMER: Many of these breathing concepts are further developed in “The Breathing Gym” by Sam Pilafian and Patrick Sheridan. These guys are the masters of breathing and it is awesome that they have shared their ideas with the world. Check it out for more in-depth and useful information.

RELAXATION

It is of utmost importance that all musicians approach their instruments in a state of relaxation. To ensure relaxation, you should practice relaxing all of the muscles that are related to playing.

PHRASING

“Phrasing” uses our air to simulate breathing patterns used in performance. The goal is to move air without resistance or tension.

General Rules

- If you feel pain, this is a warning signal from your body. **STOP!**
- The shape of the mouth should be “How” or “Ho”.
- Breathe evenly over the entire count.
- Air should be moving at all times (in or out - never holding!)
- Change of direction should be as smooth as possible.
 - Articulation = in -> out
 - Release = out -> in
- Strive for ease and relaxation.

The Count... Ah, Ah Ah (1-2-3-4-5-6-7-8-9-10)

Set metronome to quarter note = 60. Exhale completely!

- Breathe in for 1 count and out for 1 count
- Breathe in for 2 counts and out for 2 counts
- Repeat for 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10 counts

Fours

Set metronome to quarter note = 60. Exhale completely!

- Breathe in for 4 counts and out for 4 counts
 - *Use a “sizzle” sound (tongue against top of mouth)
- Breathe in for 4 counts and out for 8 counts
 - *Increase the counts of the exhale in increments of 4.
 - *Once a maximum has been reached, work back to in for 4 - out for 4
- Breathe in for 2 counts and out for 2 counts
- Breathe in for 1 count and out for 1 count
 - *Increase the speed
- Take a normal, full, relaxed breath in.

Deep Sea Dive

Set metronome to quarter note = 60. Exhale completely!

- Inhale for 4 counts, hold for 4 counts, exhale for 4 counts
- Inhale for 6 counts, hold for 6 counts, exhale for 6 counts
- Inhale for 8 counts, hold for 8 counts, exhale for 8 counts
- Inhale for 8 counts, hold for 16 counts, exhale for 8 counts
- Inhale for 16 counts, hold for 16 counts, exhale for 16 counts

Inhalation Workout

Set metronome to quarter note = 60. Exhale completely!

- Breathe in for 4 counts and out for 4 counts. Repeat
- Breathe in for 3 counts and out for 4 counts. Repeat
- Breathe in for 2 counts and out for 4 counts. Repeat
- Breathe in for 1 count and out for 4 counts. Repeat while increasing speed.

Exhalation Workout

Set metronome to quarter note = 60. Exhale completely!

- Breathe in for 4 counts and out for 4 counts. Repeat
- Breathe in for 4 counts and out for 3 counts. Repeat
- Breathe in for 4 counts and out for 2 counts. Repeat
- Breathe in for 4 counts and out for 1 count. Repeat while increasing speed.

Combination Workout

Set metronome to quarter note = 60. Exhale completely!

- Breathe in for 4 counts and out for 4 counts. Repeat
- Breathe in for 3 counts and out for 3 counts. Repeat
- Breathe in for 2 counts and out for 2 counts. Repeat
- Breathe in for 1 count and out for 1 count. Repeat while increasing speed.

VISUALIZATIONS

Breathe in to comfortably full, then simulate different dynamics with the following images.

- Float Paper Airplanes – Pianissimo Air
- Toss Darts – Mezzo Forte Air
- Bow and Arrow – Fortissimo Air

BREATHING TOOLS

There are many tools that can assist in helping students understand the feel of a proper breath, proper air support, and relaxed breathing. Adding these to your daily warm-up routine will help develop positive habits that will assist both individual and ensemble growth.

Breathing Tubes/Trainers - There are numerous products on the market that assist in developing proper breathing and breath support. I have found that a simple 1/4" PVC coupling (from your local hardware store) is both affordable and highly effective. Place the tube between your teeth and follow any of the breathing exercises above. The tube between the teeth releases the jaw and relaxes the throat allowing you to inhale with a full, relaxed breath (with little tension) and to exhale using a large, warm, column of air.

Balloons - Using balloons provides both a physical awareness and a visual awareness of our air. I use standard 12" balloons that you can get at any party store. Balloons can be used in many different ways.

TIP: Stretch the rubber a bit before first using it the first time or some students may struggle to inflate the balloon.

Air Support - Have the student exhale all of their air and then take a full, relaxed breath in. Expel the air into the balloon (no tongue) until the student is out of air. Take another full, relaxed breath in and hold the air in the balloon with only their air. This engages the breathing mechanism and demonstrates proper air support.

Capacity - Have the student exhale all of their air and then take a full, relaxed breath in. Expel the air into the balloon (no tongue) until the student is out of air. Hold the balloon closed between your fingers and compare your capacity with those around you. Strive to fill the balloon more on each attempt.

Articulation (Initiation) - Have the student exhale all of their air and then take a full, relaxed breath in. Expel air into the balloon (no tongue) and take notice of the additional support required to begin expanding the balloon. This energy required at the beginning of the exhale encourages a quick release of air to begin a note.

Articulation (Legato) - Have the student exhale all of their air and then take a full, relaxed breath in. Expel the air into the balloon (no tongue) until the balloon is about half full. Take another full, relaxed breath in and blow legato quarter notes into the balloon. You can only expand the balloon if the air stays consistent and never stops.