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I. Sitting the Right Way

Posture

At its most simple, our posture while playing the horn should not physically interfere with the relaxed balance which we create when we play. Therefore, it is clear that we must sit in a way that **balances** the body. In other words, the demands of your particular instrument should not force you into a **playing** position which will be disadvantageous to overall relaxation and balance.

A good rule of thumb is to relax the body first, and bring the horn to that position. If that cannot be done, then the horn itself must be changed. For the beginner, remember: Do not slouch. Do not cross your legs. Sit with your legs far apart so that you can get a balancing "tripod" effect with your lower body. Watch yourself in the mirror when you play. You should see a picture that is natural, with no crazy angles or parts of the body bent in irregular ways.

Let's examine some of the parameters of horn playing posture. First, the back should be straight. It should not be slumped. It should not be arched. It should not be supported by the back of the chair for support. Personally, I find that sitting properly with the back canted forward a bit from the vertical is more comfortable. In the long run, it doesn't matter. Much more important is this: make sure that the shoulder blades are as close together as possible, especially paying attention to the position of the shoulder blades to the point where they meet the spine. For the most part, it is very common for the spine to curve "down" and meet the mouthpiece. This is not a good thing. It creates a channel (in the neck) but it will lead to muscular imbalance.

For tall players, or anyone who is not perfectly fit, keep the spine perfectly straight in the mirror. We basically want to see a straight line. Two, we want to see that our posture fits our posture. We want to see that our mouthpiece is in the right position.



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Remember, the resistance to the air flow increases dramatically as we move up into the high register because the nodes of the vibrating air column in the instrument become much closer together.

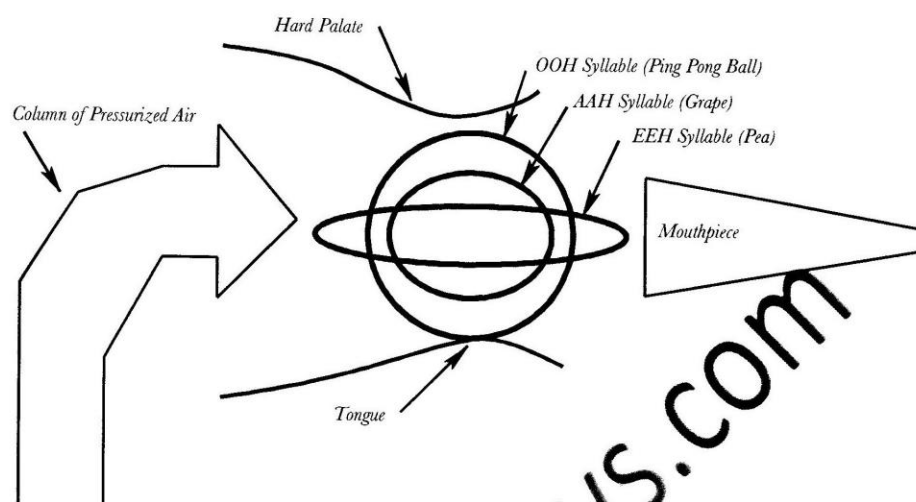


Illustration 8.

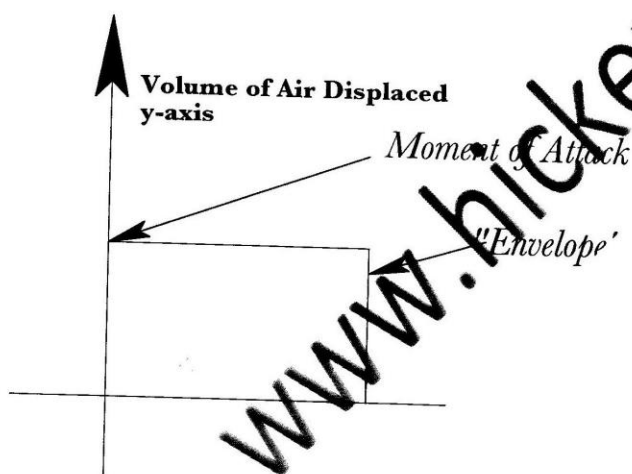
A key component of producing a great sound is matching the exact resistance of the note we are playing (more resistance as we ascend in register) with the volume of resonating space in the front of the mouth. Assuming that our Column of Pressurized Air is relatively constant in intensity (K), then the relationship between the amount of resistance felt in the horn (P) and the volume of resonating space in the front of the mouth (V) can be expressed as $PV = K$ (the famous Boyle's Law). **In other words, as the amount of back-pressure in the horn increases, the volume inside the mouth must decrease, and vice versa.** All the while, the **intensity** of our Column of Pressurized Air remains relatively constant. The illustration above is a representation of a side view of the mouth, showing the three syllabic shapes we must visualize in the front of the mouth to achieve this balance of resistance.

Just how is this efficiency achieved? The most effective method is to use **syllables** in a very similar way as when we speak. Imagine a football-shaped space behind the teeth as shown in Illustration 8 above. This is the place where we visualize the air pressure created in the lungs and diaphragm coming together, focusing as at the apex of a funnel. **The pressure focused here, in this football-shaped space, is what directly actuates the lip vibration!** Said another way, you are not directly making

IV. Breathe / Set / Release

A disciplined approach to practicing articulation (essentially, the beginning of the note), cannot only speed one's improvement in that area dramatically, but it can set the stage for massive improvement in other parameters of tone production. As we begin our analysis of articulation, it is helpful to think of the individual notes in terms of their inherent shape. We can divide each note into three parts: the attack, the body, and the release of the note. **These three parameters can be thought of together as the "envelope" of the note.**

When we think about the way that notes are formed, it is often very helpful to of, to visualize, the "shape" of what we are trying to achieve. The best way of is to do this on a two-axis coordinate system, or Cartesian plane. For haven't studied this in school yet, or don't like math, don't worry. τ understand, and very powerful once we grasp what's going on.



Basically, we will have
volume as time progresses
will represent the attack
while the horizontal line
Shown below is the
mail envelope
Imagine
the



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As we work on achieving the proper balanced feel in the embouchure, a couple of additional exercises can be very helpful.

SLURRED SCALES



A great way to begin our warm-up every day, slurred scales are the controlled closing and opening of the aperture as well as a column of pressurized air. For young students, remember these are quite difficult to accomplish if the fingerings are not

HARMONIC SMEAR (F:13)



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MAJOR SCALES

C MAJOR



C-SHARP MAJOR



D MAJOR



E-FLAT MAJOR



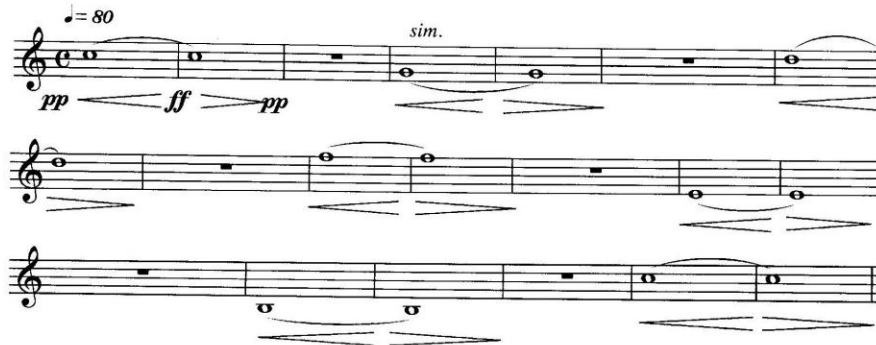
E MAJOR



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LONG TONE ETUDE



Even when we use absolutely perfect technique when practicing these exercises now is a great place to put a 5-minute break into the routine. Allowing the flow into the area of trauma (the embouchure) to "settle" a bit will further our feel when practicing the next part to the Daily Routine, soft playing.

With the exception of Long Tones, there is no more important practice than soft playing. Not only will this practice enhance every difficult technical process, but the visualization "gripping" the air stream and building strength is unsurpassed. Practice soft playing every day! It is the starting point. Any etude, excerpt, or "made-up"

SOFT PLAY



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