

# Developing High Register on the Tuba

by Wesley Jacobs

Everyone can improve his or her ability to perform in the high register on the tuba. With proper practice techniques, sensitivity to the musical quality of your tone, and a clear long-term plan, the route to success is clear.

## Goals

To extend your range on the BB<sup>b</sup> or CC tuba.

To prepare for college auditions.

*Mastery of the middle and high register of the high (E<sup>b</sup> or F) tuba.*

To prepare for a tuba performance career.

*Control, evenness of tone, and endurance are required.*

## Mouthpiece considerations

Even though tuba players often change between the low (contrabass) and high (bass) tubas, the mouthpieces used are usually quite similar. I do not recommend using a substantially different mouthpiece for the upper register.

## Practice Schedule

The process of extending your upper range requires careful integration in your practice schedule. You may not want to perform concerts on your strenuous practice days. A strenuous concert on an "easy" day will not allow proper rest for your vocal cords.

## Rest Schedule

The most effective and efficient method for extending your range is rest. Rest is essential during the practice of your instrument. (Days) must be added to allow the embouchure to rest and recover from the condition of your embouchure and air.

Each Hard Day must be strenuous (following instructions) until your lips are sore. If you feel pain.

Begin with one Hard Day per week. Rest your embouchure to "rest" after your playing day. Hard Day



**HICKEY'S  
MUSIC CENTER**

104 Adams Street • Haverhill, MA 01830  
603.272.8262 • 1.800.HICKEYS (1.800.442.5397)  
www.hickeys.com

Practicing on the mouthpiece alone (buzzing) can be beneficial for many players. However, some players do not find this type of practice helpful. A few players feel that buzzing may be harmful to their playing.

I suggest that you practice this study once each day for about one month. Then you should be able to decide if buzzing is good for you. If it does not produce any positive results, you may stop this type of practice.

If you choose to stop buzzing as part of your routine, I suggest you retry the above procedure about once each year. If you have chosen to buzz as part of your daily practice then once each year—for a few weeks—remove buzzing from your routine. If your routine works well without buzzing then remove the buzzing exercise.

This buzzing study requires that you play a piano (or other type keyboard) while you buzz. This will help you develop good intonation. Even if you have no training on the piano you can certainly learn to play twelve chords with one hand!

Hold the mouthpiece with two fingers on the shank. Buzz with an open throat and use a large amount of air. Observe the rest icons (and the double rest icons). Each rest icon equals six quarter-notes. Rest more often if you become dizzy.

Play only the portion of this exercise that is within your current range. End the exercise when your tone becomes pinched or you are too tired to continue.

***Each rest icon indicates one measure of rest.***



**HICKEY'S  
MUSIC CENTER**

104 Adams Street • Ithaca, NY 14850  
607.272.8262 • 1.800.HICKEYS (1.800.442.5397)  
[www.McBoys.com](http://www.McBoys.com)

I present the following exercise separately for BB<sup>b</sup> and CC tubas. This lip-slur study becomes strenuous as you ascend into the upper-middle register.

Accurate rhythm is very important in this study. There is a natural tendency to produce the downward slurs faster than the upward slurs. Thus, you may distort the rhythm. Be sure the rhythm is absolutely even.

The rest icon indicates two complete measures of rest with your face away from the mouthpiece.

Always use a metronome and remember to adjust the tempo to a slower speed as the exercise progresses higher.

*The rest icon indicates 8 beats of rest.*

CC tuba

HICKEY'S  
MUSIC CENTER

104 Adams Street • Rhine, NY 14880  
607.272.8262 • 1.800.HICKEYS (1.800.442.5397)  
www.hickeys.com

Perform each two-measure figure in one breath. The rest icon indicates five beats with the lips away from the mouthpiece.

Adjust the metronome to slower speeds as you move into the upper register. Write in each tempo where indicated. Notice that the F-tuba sequence changes slightly toward the end of the study.

*Each rest icon indicates 5 beats of rest.*

Tempo ♩ = \_\_\_\_

The musical score is written for three tuba parts: F tuba, CC tuba, and BBb tuba. It consists of two systems of staves. The first system has three staves, and the second system has three staves. Each staff contains two measures of music. The music is written in 4/4 time. The first measure of each system contains a sequence of eighth notes, and the second measure contains a sequence of eighth notes. The sequence changes slightly toward the end of the study. The score includes various musical notations such as clefs, key signatures, time signatures, and rests. Rest icons are used to indicate five beats of rest. The score is labeled with 'F tuba', 'CC tuba', and 'BBb tuba'.



**HICKEY'S  
MUSIC CENTER**

104 Adams Street - Rhine, NY 14850  
607.272.8262 • 1.800.HICKEYS (1.800.442.5397)  
www.hickeys.com