



# itg journal, jr.

*"a trumpet newsletter for the young and the young at heart"*

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Douglas Wilson, Editor

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## HOW TO AVOID "OOPS!"

HELPING THE "SOMETIMES" PLAYER STAY IN SHAPE

BY GORDON MATHIE, WAVERLY, OHIO

It has happened too often to most of us: You have decided to give up practicing for a while, as you have no playing engagements coming up. Then the call comes: "We really need a trumpet player to play (*West Side Story*), (lead with a big band), (a church service with special music that can only be played on the piccolo trumpet) *tomorrow*. Welcome to the "oops—panic time" club! The answer to this problem is obvious: Don't get out of shape. But this is often not easy when one is working a full time non-music job, or going to school with a heavy academic load.

The problem is motivation. Why should I practice every day, how can I fit practice into my already too-full day, and how can I "keep up" when I have so little time to practice? Here are some ideas from a retired trumpet teacher and performer, who doesn't perform as often as he would like but who still practices every day. These ideas might not work with everyone, but one or two of them might just be something you can use.

Keep a mouthpiece in the car, in your backpack, in your desk, etc. Do you walk every day? Take your mouthpiece along. Some maintain that we should be able to play everything on the mouthpiece before playing it on the horn. Practice all your normal drills on the mouthpiece: Scales, lip slurs, single and multiple articulations, etc. Try to keep a clear, focused sound in all registers. Hold the mouthpiece in your "off hand" (left if you are right handed) at the midpoint of the shank and avoid pressure. Think of blowing the mouthpiece away with air.

Working at definite short and long-term goals can keep one's interest level up. Few people are over-organized to the point of observing my "mad" schedule, but here it is:

- Monday is major key day: all scales, scales by interval, arpeggios, etc. are practiced in as many major keys as possible
- Tuesday is devoted to the natural minor
- Wednesday, the harmonic minor
- Thursday, melodic minor
- Friday, whole tone
- Weekends, diminished and altered scales

An alternate plan could be to practice in major keys one week, natural minors the next, etc. Developing these skills constitutes a motivational goal, but don't try to do it all at once!

(On a personal note: Since I have played most of the published etudes, most of my etude practice time is devoted to transposing etudes into as many keys as possible.)

Sight-read every day. Find or borrow method and/or etude books that are new to you. Work through one page a day in the following manner.

- Look over the entire page for key(s), modulations, patterns, problems, etc.

- Play through without stopping,
- Look back for mistakes, and
- Do a "performance" without errors and with good musicianship. The tape recorder is helpful in this kind of work.

Some things that will help improve sight reading: The scales and arpeggios mentioned earlier, if done in all keys, should give you a good grasp of the common melodic progressions found in most "traditional" music. Look at the *Melodic Music Speed Reading* books by David Hickman. If practiced for a brief period every day, I guarantee that these books will improve your rhythmic sense and control. If you know and can execute rhythms accurately, and have knowledge of the common scale and chord patterns in most keys, you are well on the way to being a skilled sight reader.

Do as many "performances" as possible. Play in church, play in Sunday school, and play for family and friends. My own most valuable, but hated, audience is a recording device. I know how good I am but I have never been able to convince the recorder.

Life is hard. It is easy to put off practice; we can always find excuses for not practicing. Set goals: I can do every possible pattern in every key; I can sight read anything; I am always ready to thrill an audience musically, etc. You will find a way to maintain that pride. Good luck! The following materials can help.

### Arpeggios and Chord Progressions

Haynie, *Twelve Study Groups*—Leduc

Hering, *Forty Progressive Studies*—Carl Fischer

### Articulation

Gordon, *Daily Trumpet Routines*—Carl Fischer

Hering, *Thirty Eight Recreational Studies*—Carl Fischer

### Daily Routine (including warm up)

Sanborn, *Brass Tactics Companion*—Chase Sanborn

Schlossberg, *Daily Drills and Technical Studies*—M. Baron

### Finger Facility

Bing, *Fundamentals for Brass*—Balquhider Music

Nagel, *Speed Studies* (difficult)—Mentor/Fox

### General Guide

Mathie, *The Trumpet Teacher's Guide* (3rd Edition)—

Manduca Music Publications

### Key Drill

Little, *Know Your Trumpet*—Pro Art

Williams, *Method of Scales*—Colin

### Long Slurs and Flexibility

Cichowicz, *Trumpet Flow Studies*—William Fielder

Lin, *Lip Flexibilities*—Balquhider Music

You may contact Gordon Mathie via EMail (gm45690@aol.com).



# THROWING THE BABY OUT WITH THE BATH WATER

BY EDDIE LEWIS, HOUSTON, TEXAS

Some of the best advice I ever got was, “Don’t throw the baby out with the bath water. Don’t throw the rest of your trumpet playing away just to add a few notes to your upper register. Don’t sacrifice other aspects or your playing to gain a greater range.”

## What does it mean?

It really comes down to two important ideas:

- How are you spending your practice time?
- Where are your priorities?

## Spending your time wisely

Many of the older players I’ve taught were terribly short-changed in terms of how much time they had to devote to the instrument. Between jobs and family commitments, there’s really not a lot of time left to practice. If you practice only one hour per day (this is a lot for most comeback players), how much of that time will you spend working on range? It’s my impression that too many spend almost all of their time working on range. If you have only an hour or less each day to practice, then *none* of that time should be spent working on range because there are far too many other things which are much more important.

## What are your priorities?

I believe that the bare minimum of what everyone *should* practice includes fundamentals such as physical rudiments (long tones, etc.), scales, technical studies, and an equal emphasis on literature. I tell my students that their “physical” work should be no more than half of their practice time. If you have only an hour to practice each day, then at *least* one half of that should be spent on literature. If you practice an hour each day or less, then you don’t have time to practice range. If you do, you will surely be “throwing the baby out with the bath water.” If you have your

heart set on practicing range exercises, I recommend that you increase the amount of time you spend practicing so that it can include the more important work *and* the range exercises.

## What do I mean by literature?

- lyrical studies, songs, etudes, and solos
- excerpts (for those playing in orchestras)
- jazz tunes, transcriptions, etudes (for the jazz student)

When I tell my students not to sacrifice other aspects of your playing for range, I don’t think many really understand what this means. What I’m referring to is how you spend your time in the practice room. If you are short on practice time and spend it working on range instead of the fundamentals mentioned, then you are indeed making such a sacrifice.

## “You are what you practice.”

“You are what you eat.” Have you heard that saying? Well, music is the same way. You are what you practice. If you are not taking care of the fundamentals, it will show in your

playing and no amount of range work will make up for it. I figured this out for my own playing years ago and found ways to gain range without ever spending any time working on it. I believe you don’t have to practice range to gain range. I haven’t practiced anything range related since that time and my range has not stopped growing.

Fundamentals should always come first. When you’ve finished working on that, then and only then is it realistic to work on range. If you only have an hour to practice each day then you have more important things to work on. It’s like building a skyscraper: you must lay a solid foundation first.

So ask yourself three important questions each day before you practice. What do you spend your time practicing? What’s important to you? Where are your priorities?

Eddie Lewis may be contacted online via his web site (<http://www.eddielewis.com>).



# TRUMPET PRACTICE IDEAS

BY PHILIP T. CANSLER, PORTLAND, OREGON

We live in a busy world, but brass players, like all musicians, need to set aside sufficient time each day to practice. It lays the firm foundation on which we build our musicianship. By working on what is most important to improve our playing, we can practice smarter—more efficiently—and have more time for living.

Tone is the most important aspect of playing any instrument. During practice sessions, devote fifteen minutes each day to tone development. Here are three areas to cover to improve your tone.

## Mouthpiece practice

I have found that students with tone problems improve vastly with a few weeks of mouthpiece playing for five to ten minutes a day. Some players have a technique producing a sound that

may be acceptable on the instrument but horrid on the mouthpiece alone. Make sure the lips start together. Gradually work the lower lip into the mouthpiece and in time the tone will improve dramatically on the mouthpiece alone. Practicing on the mouthpiece immediately after your warm-up will focus your ear on tone.

To develop your tone, try practicing an arpeggio exercise or passage—avoiding the high register. Begin by playing the passage on your instrument. Then play it on your mouthpiece alone. Once this mouthpiece tone has been improved, play it again on your instrument and be prepared to hear a noticeable difference.

## Note-bending (sometimes called lip-bends)

Practicing note-bending is actually a continuation of the concept learned from mouthpiece practice. Practice by playing a

*itg journal*, jr. staff:

Douglas Wilson, Editor    [junior@trumpetguild.org](mailto:junior@trumpetguild.org)  
Gary Mortenson, Advisor    [editor@trumpetguild.org](mailto:editor@trumpetguild.org)  
Joseph Walters, Layout    [ads@trumpetguild.org](mailto:ads@trumpetguild.org)  
More youth information:    [www.trumpetguild.org/itgyouth](http://www.trumpetguild.org/itgyouth)

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middle C (on the trumpet), then the half-step-lower B (second valve), then back to C. Now play the C, and then the B without using the second valve; play it open like C. Use the lower lip muscle to push into the mouthpiece, which bends the C down to the B. As you withdraw the lower lip, the C comes back again. Avoid kissing the mouthpiece with both lips.

Practice the lower lip roll first by pouting in a mirror. Once you have isolated the lower lip muscle, apply the technique to your instrument. Go down by half steps, recreating the half-step lower notes with your lower lip. The notes that are lowered without the new fingerings should sound almost as good as the “real” notes. After going through all seven positions, return to C and lip down two half steps.

After the muscles begin to develop and you start feeling some control in the lower lip (usually in one to two weeks), you can start on second line G and bend the notes down by half steps through the seven positions. Each week, as you feel the progress in your lip, you can start on a higher open note.

### Warm-down

One of the most critical practices to follow before putting the trumpet away is the warm-down. Few of us are able to play for an extended period, put the instrument away, and encounter no problems the next time the horn comes out of the case. Lip muscles get tight after extended play and need to relax before stopping.

It takes only three to five minutes to relax the lips. Pedal tones are a great lip massage and will relax the muscles. Play a middle C, then drop the air speed and pull the mouthpiece off the lip slightly. The note should fall off to approximately an octave

below, and the entire lip in the mouthpiece will pulsate. Continue through the seven positions, dropping an octave.

Next, try soft chromatics. Starting on middle C, go down through all seven positions and back up as softly as you can. If notes cut out, your lip is not relaxed enough and the lips are separating. Go back and do more pedal tones. Once you are able to play the lowest seven notes on your instrument softly without response problems, your lips are relaxed enough to put the instrument away. If you are preparing for a special performance, warm down ten minutes the night before, with soft, low playing. The next day, your lips will be highly responsive.

So rethink your practice. Adding new concepts to your daily routine can improve your performance immensely. Remember, it is not the time on the trumpet that counts, but what and how you practice. Practice more efficiently, and you will not only notice improvements in your playing, but you will also find more time for that elusive balanced life.



### DO YOU KNOW YOUR ITALIAN?

*In music, many descriptors including tempo, dynamics, and expressive markings are in Italian. Here are ten words to test your knowledge of musical Italian. (See back page for answers.)*

1	dolce	6	largamente
2	con sordino	7	giocososo
3	dal segno	8	attacca
4	mezzo	9	crescendo
5	cantabile	10	marcato

## WHAT I WISHED I KNEW IN SCHOOL

BY CLINT “POPS” MCLAUGHLIN, GRAND PRAIRIE, TEXAS

I am best known for repairing broken embouchures and give many lessons to fix problems caused by a player attempting something physically before they are ready.

When reaching for high notes too soon players contort the facial muscles and destroy their embouchure sensations by establishing habits of excessive pressure, mouthpiece shifting, multiple embouchure settings, faulty breath support, poor intonation, bad tone, and horrible technique. All of these negatives are caused by working on range too soon, doing range practice improperly, going to trick mouthpieces, and trying embouchure gimmicks instead of steady practice and learning the basics of playing.

We learn to crawl, then to walk, and then to run. This process of learning things in a specific order is a natural part of growth. Yet some refuse to follow it when it comes to learning to play the trumpet.

Many of the people that I see, who have a poor range, have skills on an eighth or ninth grade level. Their range is consistent with their playing level and amount of practice time. Inconsistent practice is the main reason they have poor range. However, most of them want to lay the blame for their lack of range on other factors, instead of admitting that they don't practice seriously.

### Problems

I hear three common problems in my studio from students who come for help.

- Dead spots in their mouthpiece buzzing range
- Playing off pitch center
- Buzzing tones far from the correct pitch center

### The Cure—Mouthpiece Buzzing

The cure is to buzz scales, arpeggios, Arban exercises (including the *Characteristic Studies*), and songs. When you buzz, you must listen closely and stay on pitch. Take breaks every minute or so. This keeps the lips loose and vibrating, your face relaxed, and tension out. The cheek muscles are *not* used in the making of a good buzz. Tensing these muscles actually works against buzzing freely and hinders tone production. If you have never buzzed then spit and keep blowing air. This will show how relaxed playing should be.

I have had many fine professional players in my studio. These professionals obtained additional skills from consistent practice from the Arban, Brandt, Clarke, Schlossberg, and Williams texts. Not one of them achieved their level of mastery by practicing ascending arpeggios or flashy gimmicks.

Every time we try a gimmick instead of working on real technique and exercises we waste time. Sometimes we are lucky and just waste a few weeks or months. But sometimes we develop bad habits that need to be corrected and waste many years instead of

“Every time we try a gimmick instead of working on real technique and exercises we waste time.”

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doing serious work. We develop into good players through consistent practice, mouthpiece buzzing (for pitch center and tone), and by learning to master every page of the Arban book. Everything else comes later.

I believe a minimum standard of playing is the ability to play all fourteen Arban *Characteristic Studies*, the Arutunian *Trumpet Concerto*, and a couple of others like the Haydn, Hummel, and Hindemith by memory and played correctly at tempo.

**Pops, I need a high note mouthpiece**

Often, I hear in my studio, “Pops, I need a high note mouth-

piece.” Well, Arturo Sandoval plays a 3C. I seriously doubt that any of us have a greater need or proficiency for higher notes than Arturo. If you truly need a high note mouthpiece to play the note, then what you really need are a couple of years of serious practice to build your embouchure. Any other action is merely a shortcut that you will pay for later.

My teacher, Don “Jake” Jacoby, didn’t put up with fads, stunts, or tricks. We had to put serious time into serious practice. That is what produced great players 50 years ago and it is what produces them now.

Clint “Pops” McLaughlin can be contacted through his web site (<http://www.BbTrumpet.com>).



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## TAKING A BITE OUT OF LIFE

By MIKE VAX, PITTSBURGH, CALIFORNIA

As a trumpet player, I have always known that you must take good care of your teeth. Therefore, I always brushed and flossed with consistency. I guess some people’s teeth are just not as “cavity-proof” as others. It seems that I have always had a predilection towards cavities. I have always seen the dentist at least twice a year for regular check ups. Even with all this, before my most recent dental problems I had lost a few teeth over the years. There were two false ones in my back right upper gums that were attached to the last “good” tooth. Then there was one on the lower left that was a false one attached to the two teeth on either side of it. Eventually, the two upper ones broke and I was left with nothing in the back upper jaw. I did adapt to this rather easily.

My latest “adventure” took place a little over five and a half years ago. A dentist that I had trusted did a sloppy job on three root canals and that caused me to end up losing four teeth. After the surgery to take out the bad ones, my upper teeth shifted right and now do not line up at all with my lower teeth. With all this movement (and it didn’t take too much time for it to happen), I pretty much lost my chops. This was about five years ago. I had to re-work and re-think my playing. At one point, I couldn’t even get a high C out. I seriously thought about giving up playing for a short time. Then I came to my senses and basically said to myself “You don’t know how to do anything else.” So I started on a five-year trek that is just now finally coming to fruition. I am finally getting my range back to what it was before. Of course I have had to play for a living for the last five years, but I can tell you now that there were nights when it literally hurt to play and I had to make do the best

I could. Hopefully audiences never knew what I was going through, but I sure did! The day after many of those nights I could hardly get a note out. It would take long tones and flexibilities and some patience to get the vibration going again. I can also admit to you that there were times that I was so frustrated that I didn’t practice as much as I should have, but I got myself back to proper thinking and at least did my warm ups, flexibilities, and some Arban maintenance practice to get back into building chops.

Much of the time that was spent on the horn was just for performing or rehearsing in the first couple of years. I didn’t have the chops to do much more than that since I still had to make a liv-

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“I didn’t have the choice of taking time off to try to fix things.”

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ing. I didn’t have the choice of taking time off to try to fix things. As I became more used to the feeling of playing with my teeth not lined

up correctly, I could do some “extra” playing on my own. Lots of long tones and flexibilities were in order, as well as Arban and Clarke studies—the easier ones. As things progressed, I started using the Clarke *Daily Drills* and did more involved things out of Arban... even delving into the *Characteristic Studies* in the back. I didn’t do much with range at all. I wanted to work on flexibility,

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“I had to re-work and re-think my playing.”

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sound, and endurance. I had to rest a *lot* at first, but gradually started playing things all the way through, as I felt more confident. I still did not ever practice for hours on end, just fifteen to thirty minute segments a few times a day. I still think that this is a better way to practice. I am not a fan of killing yourself for a couple of hours with no rest at all. As Méndez and so many others have said, resting is one of the keys to successful practice.

I still don’t think that I am as consistent as I would like to be, and find myself “cracking” notes sometimes, but my endurance is getting better and I am back up to double C’s and D’s. One thing I do notice is that some nights my endurance isn’t as good as I would like. I can get the notes out, but sometimes they don’t feel as confident as I would like. When this happens, I try to think of my Don Jacoby training, use lots of air, think projection, and “go for it.” That does help.



### ANSWERS TO ITALIAN QUIZ

- 1 sweetly
- 2 with mute (normally straight mute)
- 3 back to the “sign”
- 4 medium (used with dynamics)
- 5 in a singing fashion
- 6 broadly
- 7 humorously
- 8 without pause
- 9 gradually louder
- 10 in a marked fashion

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