

COMMON PROBLEMS AMONG TRUMPET PLAYERS

1. *Restriction of the Exhalation Process.* By Far, the most frequently encountered tone production problem is restriction of the exhalation process. This can stem from several causes. Players who bring their body into a state of tension attempting to create support often suffer from this difficulty. Despite the muscular effort, the *flow* of air is meager. The body must remain relaxed if an unimpeded outward flow of air is to be achieved. A related hindrance is attempting to expel the air by consciously controlling specific muscles. Both of these problems can be eliminated if the use of the air is seen as *movement* by creating *wind*. The body has known how to expel air from the lungs from birth so the correct procedure will automatically be employed in brass playing if the player concentrates solely on moving the wind freely while thinking of the beautiful sound. Problems of this sort are often wrongly attributed to the embouchure or to an insufficiently large breath. In fact, taking overly large breaths sometimes creates tension.
2. *Impedance at the Mouthpiece.* The exhalation process is occasionally restricted within the mouthpiece. If the portion of the lips inside the mouthpiece rim is flexed or otherwise brought into a state of tension, the embouchure will resist vibration. It is essential that this area retain maximum flexibility. The musculature of the lower cheeks provides the necessary support so that the pliable formation within the rim can vibrate freely. Similarly, the aperture must remain open and oval in shape. Using a formation similar to the letter "P" will help the aperture to open. Any construction of the aperture will obstruct the air stream and inhibit vibration. This problem is also the principal cause of tightness in the throat.
3. *Interrupting the Breath.* Students sometimes develop the habit of stopping the breath at the peak of inhalation and restarting the air on the exhalation phase. This puts the body into a resistive state of tension that interferes with the free outflow of the air. Inhalation and exhalation should be approached as a continuous action, with no interruption at the point where one becomes the other. Another error is to hold back the air by attempting to build up air pressure behind the tongue before an attack. Tension is again generated causing a constriction of the throat.
4. *Stretching the Embouchure.* Brass players must always be on guard against any tendency for the lips to pull outward (as in smiling). If this occurs, the tissue inside the mouthpiece rim becomes tense and the aperture tends to close, hampering a free tone production. Beginners occasionally make the fatal mistake of stretching back the lips in forming the embouchure. Others develop this difficulty as a temporary means of reaching the upper register. The muscles of the lower cheeks must prevent any inclination of the lips to pull outward through adequate support of the embouchure formation. Another ruinous habit is to allow the cheeks to inflate, rendering their vital muscles useless.
5. *Incorrect Mouthpiece placement.* Embouchure difficulties can occur if the mouthpiece placement is too low. If the edge of the rim contacts the "red" of the upper lip it will interfere with its vibration and affect the aperture. Lateral placement is less crucial and only if the mouthpiece is distinctly off-center should any change be made.