

Coaching Our Brass Students For Endurance

Compiled by Ryan Kerwin; Inspired by Vincent Chicowicz and Arnold Jacobs

Common Issue Limiting Endurance:	Ryan's Explanation:	Short Teaching Cue, Inspired by Master Brass Pedagogues:
Strained/Forced Tone	A strained sound is frequently caused by too much tension or manipulation of the lips 'inside the mouthpiece'. Many students think they need to squeeze their lips together to create a tone. Encouraging students to focus on their wind by reminding them that sound results when air moves <i>through</i> the lips can help them create more resonance with less effort.	"Tone responds to wind" "Vibration is sympathetic to wind"
"Unsupported" Tone	Playing brass instruments with an unsupported sound is one of the quickest ways to get tired. This sound generally indicates that the embouchure is not receiving enough wind to maintain a balanced form. Coaching students to use faster wind can help them access a supported tone and reduce the strain they are placing on their embouchure, without blowing excessively hard.	"Use faster wind" "Flow <i>down into</i> the sound"
Overblowing (General)	Many students run into endurance issues because they simply try to force too much air through the instrument at once. When this happens the students can experience a "back-pressure" that may eventually lead to strain in the throat. Coaching them to focus on <i>frictionless</i> wind can help them find the "sweet spot" in which wind is moving quickly through the instrument without getting "backed-up."	"Use <i>frictionless</i> wind" "Focus on high air flow, low air pressure"
Over-articulation	In an effort to make a clear articulation, many students articulate with too much force or too much surface area of the tongue. Ironically, coaching students to focus on the fast movement of wind and simply pronounce "T" as they would when speaking or singing, helps them discover clear articulation with less effort.	"80% wind, 20% tongue" "The wind blows the tongue out of the way" "Clear 'T', light action"

Overblowing (while moving to the upper register)	Ascending registers requires faster vibrations. Many students' first instinct is to create a faster vibration by <i>blowing harder</i> . Coaching students to switch to the high register by maintaining their wind speed and raising their jaw slightly as they do when they whistle, can help them find an easier way to play in the higher range.	“Maintain you wind, change your whistle” “ <i>Float</i> your sound from the middle register to the higher register”
Extreme soft dynamic	When playing softly, many students' first instinct is to hold back their wind, thinking softer dynamics are made through a controlled, delicate blow. This mindset can manifest in a tentative approach that causes inconsistent entrances and an "unsupported" or "wobbly" sound. Soft dynamics do require more finesse, but many players find restricting their exhale limits their consistency in navigating the instrument. Coaching them to play at a "gentle forte" can help them discover that the quality of the exhale are very similar at all dynamics. Likewise coaching them to "focus their wind" that reliable finesse can best be achieved with a free exchange rather than a timid blow.	"Play at a gentle forte" "Focus your wind" instead of "Control your wind"
Extreme loud dynamics	Many students approach playing <i>forte</i> by <i>blowing harder</i> through their instruments. While this does increase the dynamic, it also tends to limit students' control over their tone quality, drive the pitch slightly sharp, and leads them to tire more quickly. Many students succeed in maintaining control on <i>forte</i> passages by striving for <i>projection</i> rather than sheer volume. In section playing especially, these instructions help them discover loudness through “fullness” rather than decibel level.	"Allow your sound to project" "Play with a thick sound"
Long Sustains	On long sustains, young students are inclined to let their sounds become stagnant, dull, or softer toward the end of the note. Sustaining their best sound for the duration of the phrase requires a consistent wind speed for the entirety of the note. Reminding students that “constant tone requires constant wind” tends to quickly improve their overall sound and efficiency.	"Keep your wind spinning" "Maintain consistent flow" “Blow into the rest”