2024

Mellophone Technique Guide

OPEN LETTER FROM THE BRASS TEAM

Dear Brass Ensemble Member:

"Success is no accident. It is hard work, perseverance, learning, studying, sacrifice and most of all, love of what you are doing or learning to do."

-Pele

It is with great pleasure that we welcome you to The Sunrisers. This packet contains valuable information regarding our technique program, our warmups we will use, required materials and various off-season training exercises.

The Sunrisers have a long history of excellence. We take a lot of pride in our brass section, and the staff has been honored to work with such amazing members that have come through this hornline in past years. Along with this honor comes many responsibilities and expectations for you as a member of this hornline. A team is only as strong as the loyalty of its members. As the season starts up, it is imperative that you as members are all on the same page with regards to your expectations as a member. These include:

1. A respect for all of those around you
2. Trust in your staff and fellow members
3. A desire to work hard
4. A commitment to excellence in everything you do

When these expectations are taken seriously by every member and practiced daily, it can become a formula for success for everyone involved, and these lessons can be transferred into your day-to-day life as well.

It is important that before any rehearsal starts you set a personal goal for yourself and aim to achieve that goal. Whether they be goals based on rehearsal procedure, or proficiency in your instrument/show, a successful member always strives to set and achieve their goals and continues to set the bar higher for themselves every day. While doing this, take pride in what you have accomplished, and that you are a part of a world class organization

Once again, welcome – we look forward to meeting you and making music together!

Sincerely,

The Sunrisers Brass Team

IMPORTANT REHEARSAL MATERIALS

Brass Ensemble members are required to have these materials at EVERY rehearsal:

THREE RING BINDER: This will hold all music handouts in clear sheet protectors. All music and information you may need should be in here.

PENCILS: Every member must have a pencil at all times. These will be used to make changes in your part, or to write down whatever you may need into your music.

GLOVES: These should always be worn while handling any of the Sunrisers brass instruments and can be purchased through the corps if needed.

BLACK TOWEL: These will be used when we need to place our instruments on the ground. Your instrument should either be in one of three places at all times: your hands, in its case or on your towel. High brass and baritone players should get hand towels, while tuba players will need to get full bath towels.

BASEBALL CAP: These will be used when we start rehearsing outside and must be worn whenever we are outside.

TENNIS/RUNNING SHOES: Correct foot attire is required at all rehearsals. We will be moving a lot this summer, even during the winter time, so athletic shoes are required at all rehearsal.

CLOTHING: Along with wearing the correct shoes, you must be dressed for drum corps. Like stated before, we will be moving a lot, so you must wear clothing that will allow that, ie. T-shirts, shorts, sweatpants, NOT jeans.

TUNER/METRONOME: Everyone is required to own a metronome/tuner. We will be doing a lot of work with intonation throughout the summer, so it is imperative that everyone has a tuner. We recommend getting the Korg TM40 and not using your phone, as it may get wet if it rains during rehearsals in the summer.

WATER JUGS: Every brass member is required to own the Blue Coleman 1-gallon water jug. This way we all look uniform, and everyone will need their own water jug for during the season.

BACKPACK: This will be required for every rehearsal as your backpack will carry all of your rehearsal materials. There is no specific one for this, but we recommend not using a string backpack.

BRASS TECHNIQUE PROGRAM

POSTURE:

To be the most efficient in the marching activity, both visually and musically, the body should be in its most natural and upright position. Leaning back/forward, or slouching can cause injury and can negatively impact your brass playing. While playing, your weight should be evenly distributed between your feet; your upper body should be lifted away from your hips; your shoulders should be relaxed; and instrument angle should be at 10 degrees above parallel. While your instrument is up your hands should be relaxed with your fingertips touching the valve caps, and your valve casing should be perpendicular to the ground (for everyone besides tubas) and your wrists are straight.

AIR AND BREATHING:

While playing a brass instrument, it is important to always strive for a state of relaxation. We all come into rehearsal in different states of mind and body and it is important that all players are on the same page. Easy ways to alleviate stress in the neck and shoulders is to roll out your neck and stretch it to relax the muscles and make sure they don't impede in the breathing process.

Along with staying relaxed, great breath control is an important part of playing any wind instrument well. There are many different ways of breathing and many different concepts, but these are the ones that we feel are the best for what we do and will be what we talk about during the season:

- To achieve maximum breath control, it is important to take full deep breaths. As you take a deep breath from the lower part of your lungs, your diaphragm pulls your lungs down, so they can expand and take in a lot of air. Once the lower part of your lungs has expanded, your chest will expand a little as your entire lungs fill up with air. We strive to take as full of a breath as possible while staying relaxed before we play. This will ensure great air support and a fullness in our sound.
- To maintain relaxation, the shoulders and upper back must not be tense so that your breathing won't become restricting while inhaling or exhaling. You should always keep the throat open to allow the air to move freely in and out.
- Your air should NEVER stop moving while playing. You should either be taking a breath in or blowing it out. You never want your air to become stagnant as this will cause unwanted tension and even timing issues.
- While exhaling, it should never feel forceful. It should be relaxing to exhale, and the air should have a warm dark feeling to it.
- When releasing a note, we simply just want to take a breath. We do this to insure we don't change the tone or intonation of a note and it can ring once we stop playing. Notes should NEVER be stopped with the tongue, and should ALWAYS be stopped with an open breath.

EMBOUCHURE DEVELOPMENT:

Brass instruments are much different than woodwinds in the regard that we must create the vibrations ourselves for our instruments to make a sound, instead of relying on a reed or our air to vibrate. To create these vibrations, we must have our lips be touching, soft in the middle but firm around the corners of the mouth and blow air through the soft part of the lips to get them to vibrate. To work on just vibrating our lips, we will do many embouchure development exercises just on the mouthpiece. Many profession musicians warm up and play just on their mouthpiece, because it is a great tool to check and see if your lips are really vibrating to their full potential, and to ensure we can control the pitch of our lips ourselves. The sound on the mouthpiece is directly correlated to the sound produced on the instrument. So, it is very important that you are able to create a dark and resonant sound on the mouthpiece in order to ensure a great sound on your instrument. Here are some basic embouchure rules to keep in mind:

- The corners of the mouth need to be firm and strong while comfortably set
- The mouthpiece should be placed as closed to parallel to the ground as possible, as to avoid playing too up-stream or down-stream
- Both lips should have enough flesh in the mouthpiece to allow for a full and resonant buzz. Keep in mind that the red of your lips should NOT be touching the mouthpiece, and it should be the flesh outside of the red that buzzes
- The jaw should always be open
- The teeth should be apart

Playing on the mouthpiece should be done by holding the mouthpiece by the shank in your non-dominant hand in between your index, middle finger and thumb to ensure very little pressure against your lips. When buzzing, you should always strive for a dark open "oh" sound, as opposed to a bright or tiny sound.

SINGING:

Singing is a great tool for developing ensemble tone quality and an understanding of intonation. We will take singing very seriously, and it should be approached the same way that you approach playing your brass instrument. Strive for a dark and open sound, utilizing great relaxed breath support. When singing, your throat should always be open, trying to project your voice, and you should always be listening to match the pitch of the people around you.

ARTICULATION:

Articulations should be approached with the idea of just starting the note clearly and not exploding at the beginning of the note. Each articulation should be approached with the syllable "dAH" (notice the lowercase d and uppercase AH). Everyone should strive for less tongue in the beginning of the note and more air to support the tone. 90% of an articulation should be based on

the air, and only about 10% is based on the tongue. Your air gets your lips to start buzzing, and not your tongue. The tongue only DEFINES THE START of the air. There can be many definitions on how to play certain articulations, but here is how we define our articulations:

Legato- Notes are long and connected. It should feel like a long tone but with the air slightly interrupting the airstream to just define the start to a new note.

Accent- The front of the note is slightly louder, the notes are connected, there is a slight decay at the end of the note. This is done with the volume of air and NOT THE TONGUE. They should feel like bell tones. But, notes that are a half note or longer should not decay.

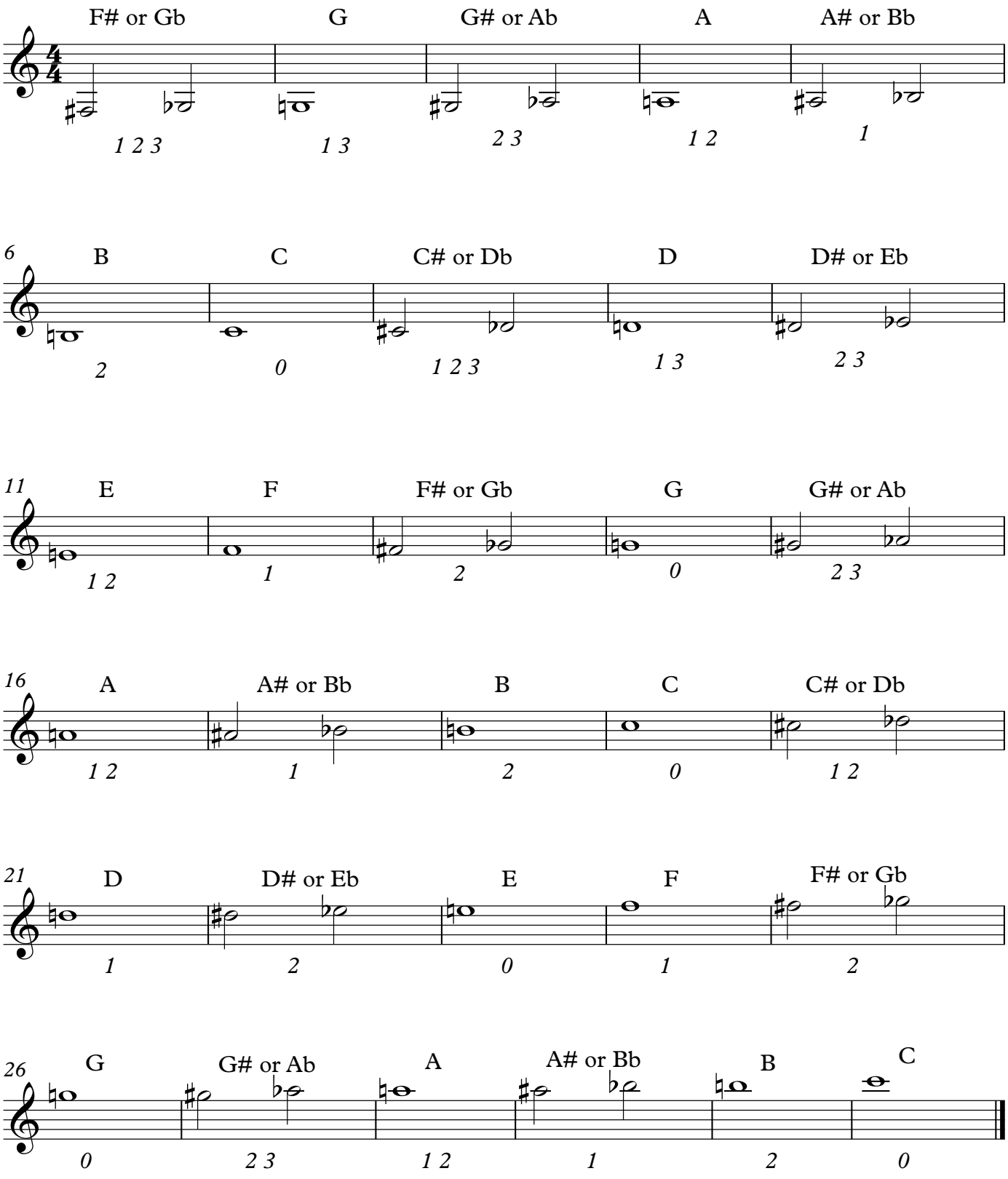
Staccato- This word translates to mean "detached" or "separated", not just short. Any note with a staccato written over it should be played half the value of the note. So, if there is a staccato quarter note written, you would play a full length eighth note. These notes should remain open ended and NEVER stopped with the tongue.

PITCH AND INTONATION:

There are many inherent pitch deficiencies on brass instruments. For example, a bottom line E and second space A on trumpet and mellophone (D and G on baritone and tuba) are both naturally sharp notes on brass instruments, and we must adjust using our tuning slides to play those pitches in tune. But besides natural tuning problems that are natural to the instruments, there are also tuning deficiencies when playing chords that we must address. For example, if you play all the pitches in a major chord in tune, the chord will sound out of tune. But, if you play the major third of the chord 14 cents flat and the fifth of the chord 2 cents sharp, then the chord will ring in tune and you will hear the overtones. The following chart shows all the pitch adjustments for playing different intervals perfectly in tune with each other.

Interval	***How to adjust (in cents)***
Unison	0
Minor Second	Raise 12
Major Second	Raise 4
Minor Third	Raise 16
Major Third	Lower 14
Perfect Fourth	Lower 2
Tritone	Raise 3
Perfect Fifth	Raise 2
Minor Sixth	Raise 14
Major Sixth	Lower 16
Minor Seventh	Lower 4
Dominant Seventh	Lower 31
Major Seventh	Lower 12
Octave	0

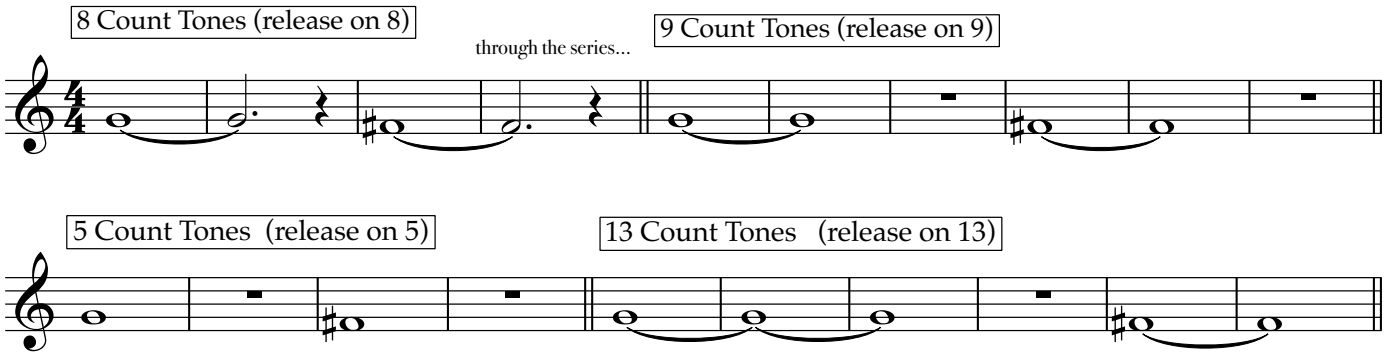
High Brass Fingering Chart



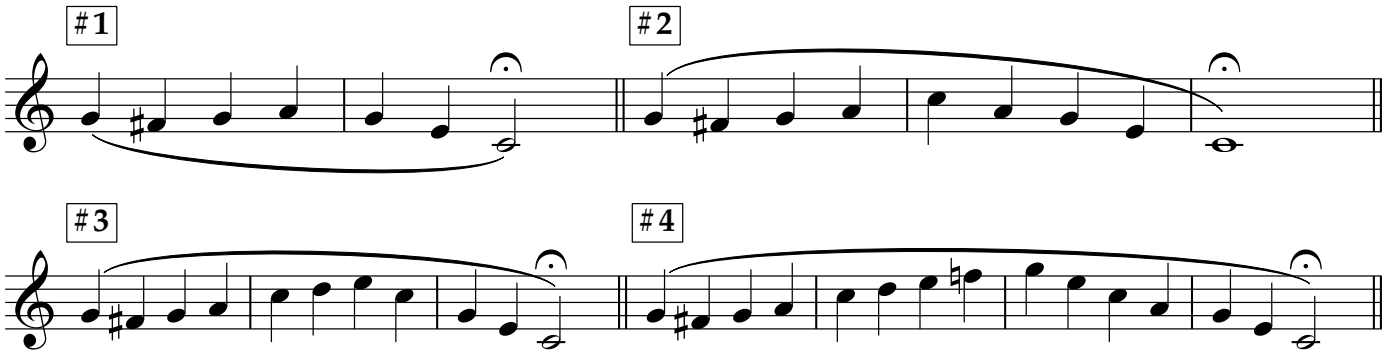
High Brass

Sunrisers Brass Warm Ups

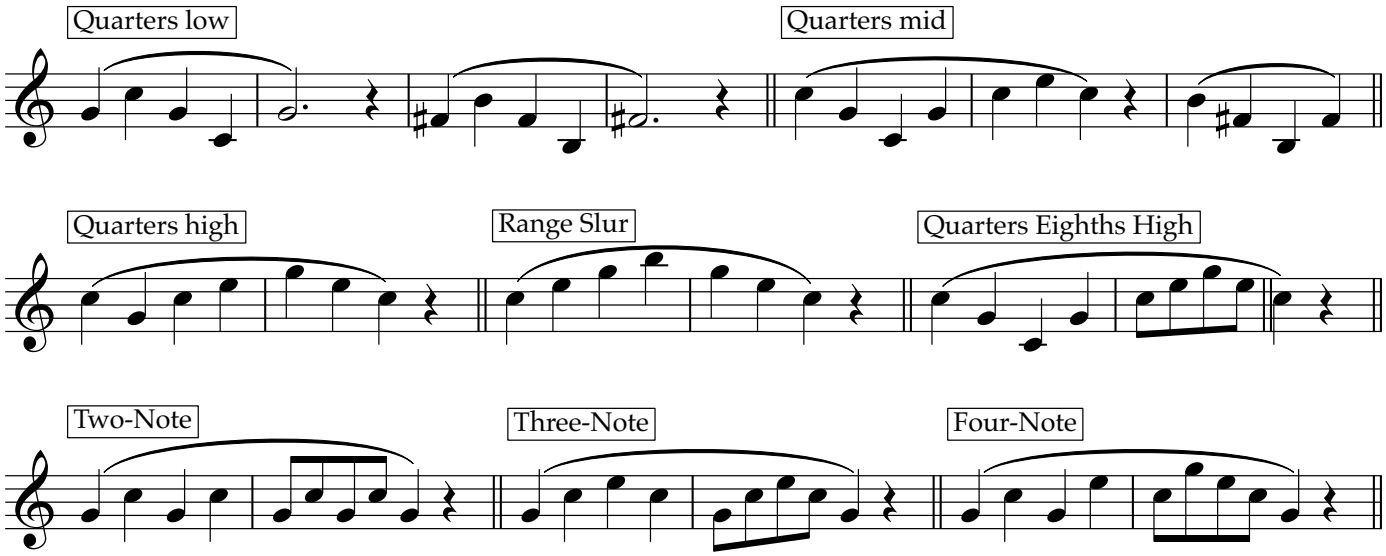
Long Tones



Flow Studies

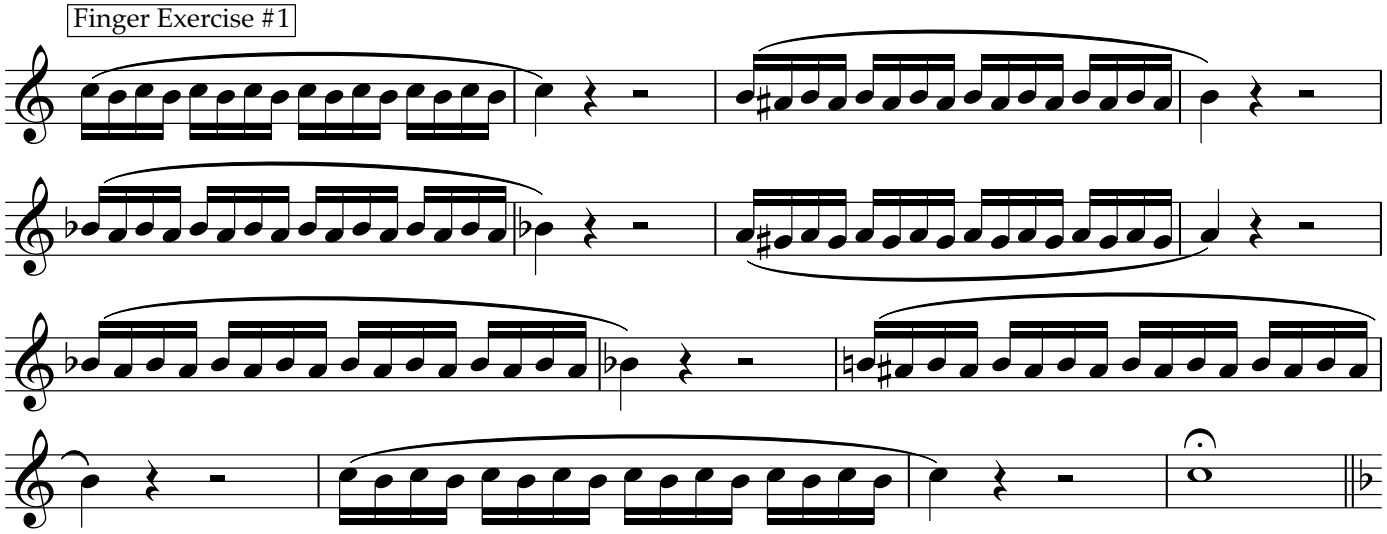


Lip Slurs

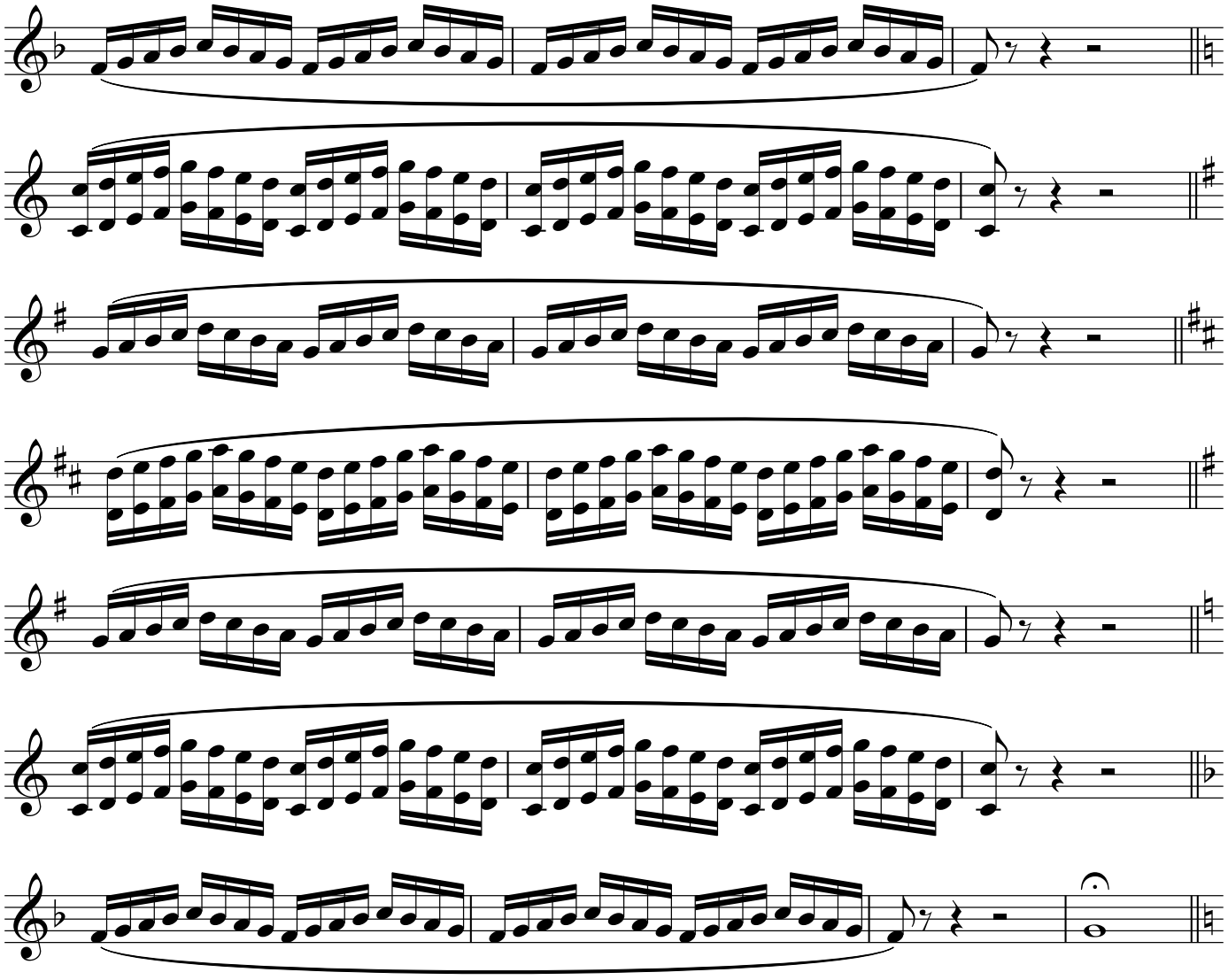


Finger Flexibilities

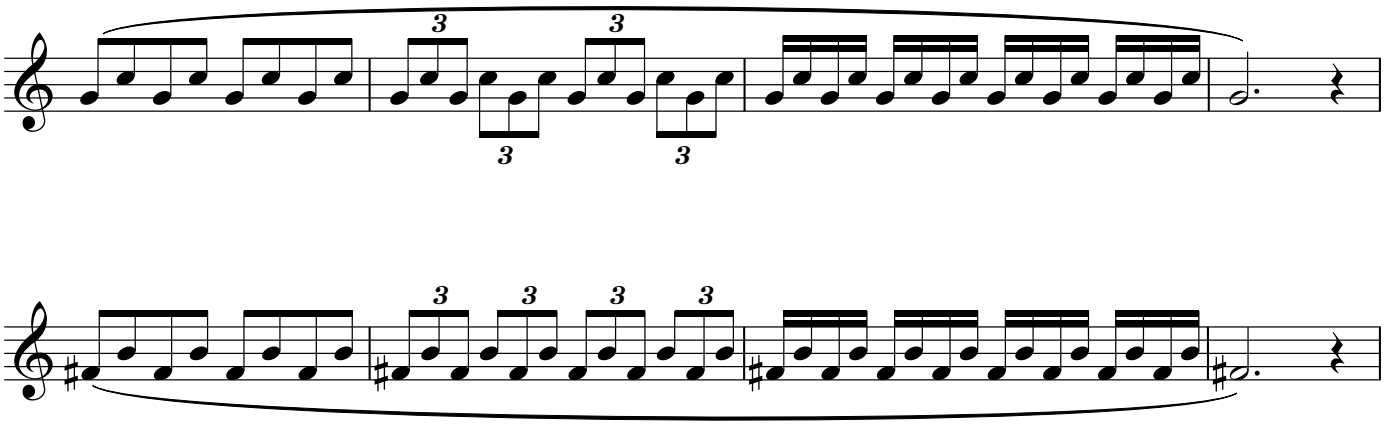
Finger Exercise #1



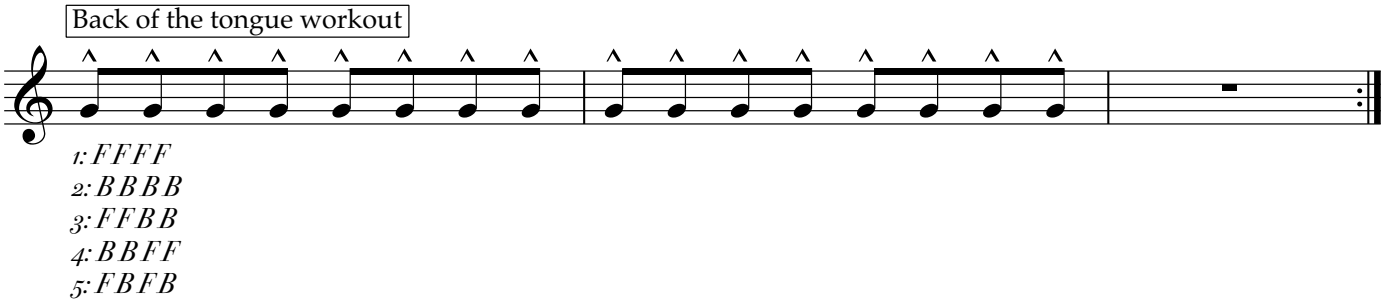
Finger Exercise #2

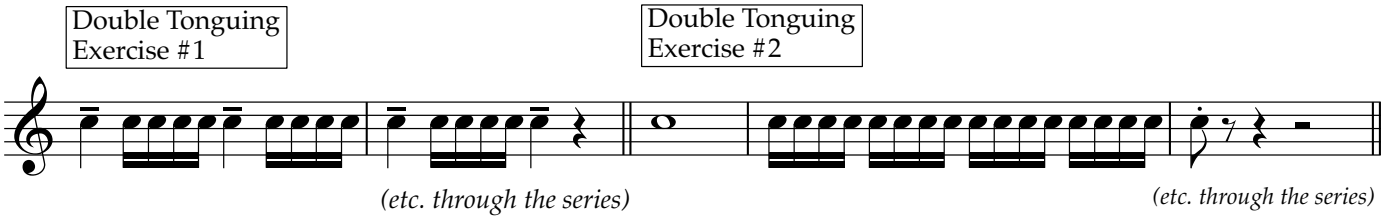


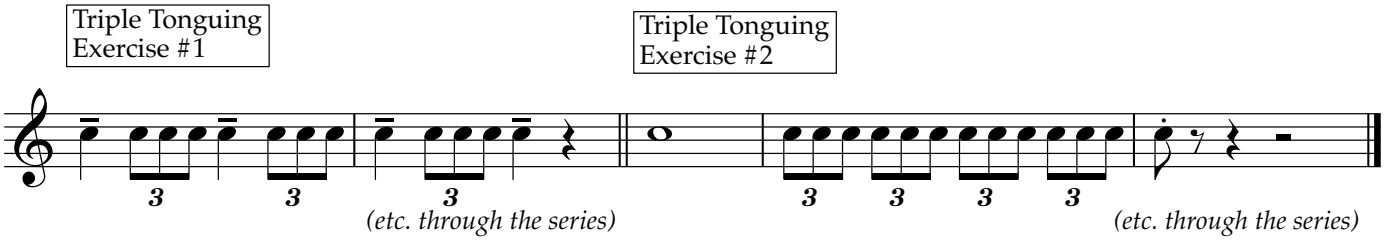
Lip Flexibilities



Multiple Tonguing



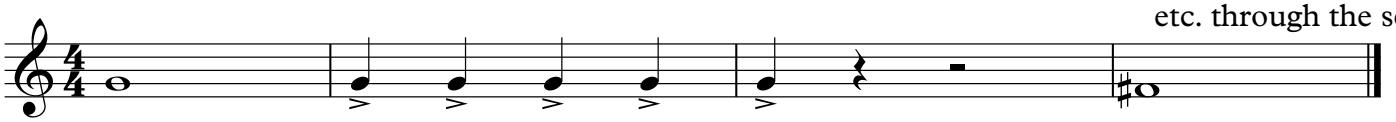




Articulations - High Brass

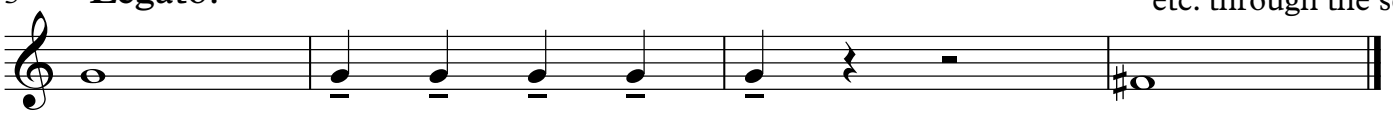
The default articulation of our brass program will be dAH. Notice the little d and the capitalized AH. The little d represents how we want to use as little tongue as possible to create a clear articulation, and we never want our tongue to get harsh. The AH represents how we want our mouth and throat to stay open after we articulate so we can create the best sound possible. All of the following articulations should always start with a dAH attack.

Accents:



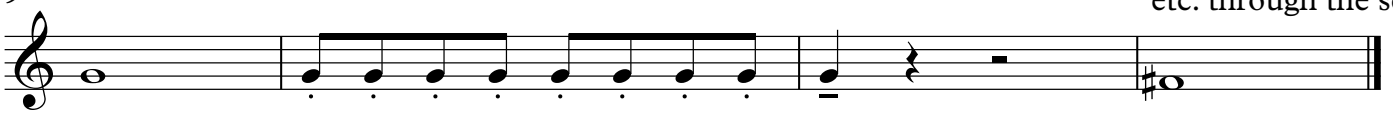
Definition: An accented quarter note should be a full length note. The beginning of the note should be one dynamic level louder than what is written, the middle of the note should be at the dynamic that is written, and the end of the note should decay to one dynamic level below what is written. Any accented note that is a half note or longer should NOT decay.

5 Legato:



Definition: Legato quarter notes should have no space in between each note. They should feel almost like a long tone that just gets interrupted by the tongue.

9 Staccato:



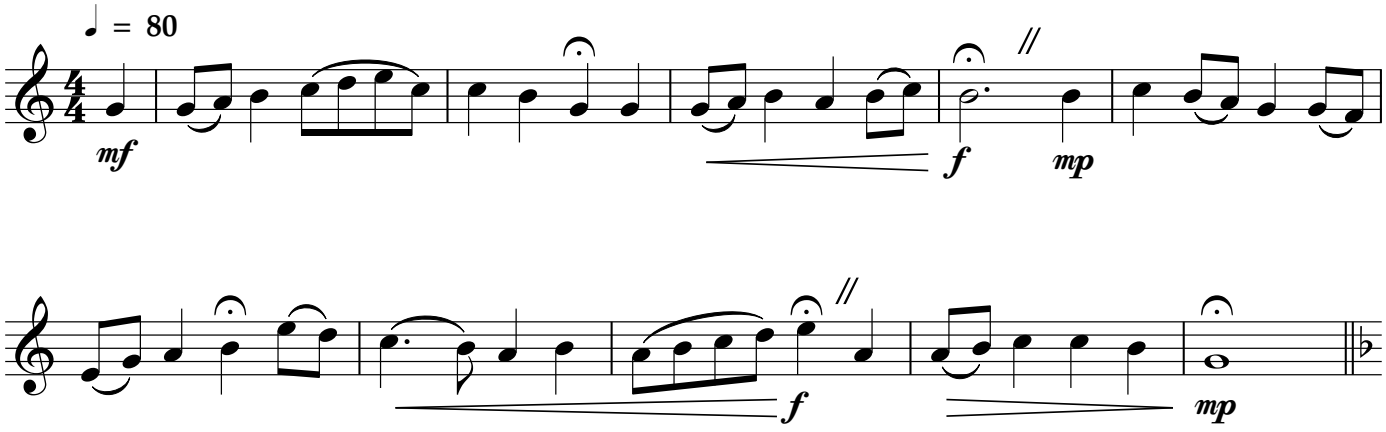
Definition: Staccato notes should be played exactly half the length that is written. For example, a staccato quarter note should be played like a full length eighth note, and a staccato eighth note should be played like a full length 16th note. This is to avoid stopping the note with your tongue and maintaining a dAH articulation.

Horn

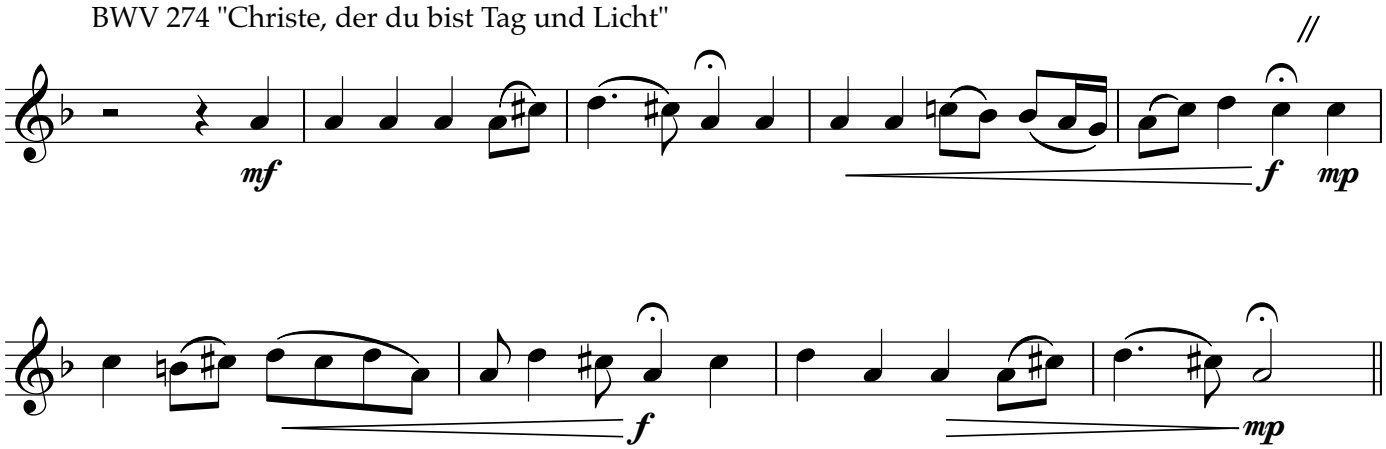
Chorale/Chord Studies

Johann Sebastian Bach
arr. Kenneth Kamping

Major:
BWV 376 "Lobt Gott, ihr Christen allzugleich"



Minor:
BWV 274 "Christe, der du bist Tag und Licht"



Chord Sequence