

CLEANING AND CARE OF BRASS INSTRUMENTS

EQUIPMENT YOU MUST HAVE

- Valve oil for trumpets, baritones and tubas
- Rotary oil for French horns
- Tuning slide grease
- Mouthpiece brush
- Cheese Cloth or cotton cloth for cleaning the inside of your instrument
- Snake for trumpets
- Soft Polishing cloth for the outside of your instrument
- Music Stand



If possible, you should keep a toothbrush and toothpaste in your case and brush your teeth before playing. The minute food particles that reside in your mouth after eating can **damage** your instrument. If you can't brush your teeth, **rinse your mouth** before playing.

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TROMBONES ONLY

- Slide cream, Spray bottle and Cleaning Rod for your Main Slide

BEFORE YOU PUT YOUR INSTRUMENT AWAY

1. Wipe your instrument, removing fingerprints. Wipe the area where your **hand holds** your instrument. Lacquer, which is the gold plating on gold colored instruments, corrodes from the natural acids on your hand.
2. Blow any excess water out of your spit valves. (To empty your French Horn of water, turn the horn **CLOCKWISE** to allow water trapped in the horn to come out the bell).
3. Store your instrument in its case. Keep your case clean (vacuum it if it gets dirty)

VALVES

Clean and oil your valves at least **twice a week** and whenever your valves start to move slowly. To clean valves:

- Remove the cap on the top of the valve and take out **ONE valve** at a time
- Wipe off the **dirt or green gunk** with your lint-free cloth (cheesecloth)
- Use a q-tip or your snake to carefully clean the dirt from the holes in the valves
- Squeeze valve oil over the bottom part of the valve, not the spring (do this over a sink or garbage can as valve oil stains clothes)
- Squeeze a few drops of oil onto the bottom part of the valve
- Replace the valve and valve cap
- Remove the slide that's joined to the valve and squeeze a few drops down the slide.
- Press the valve up and down until it works smoothly
- If your valves are slow use **T2** valve oil

* Trumpets: if you press your valves down **at an angle** they will stick no matter how much you clean them. This happens **most often** with the **first valve**. Check your **finger position** if your valve is constantly sticking.

VALVE CASINGS

Clean the valve casings if you have already cleaned your valves and they still stick. To clean the casing:

1. Take the valve out and the bottom cap off.
2. Run a lint-free cloth through each casing (cheesecloth is the best and can be washed).
3. Use a q-tip to clean around the rim of the caps

FRENCH HORNS

French horn players oil their valves with **Rotary Oil**.

1. Take the cap off the valve.
2. Put a few drops of oil on the valve.
3. Remove the slide attached to the valve and squeeze a few drops it.
4. Put the cap back and push the valve up and down to make sure it is working.

MOUTHPIECE CARE

- Clean your mouthpiece at least **once a week**.
- Run warm water through your mouthpiece while you scrub the inside with your mouthpiece brush

FOR TRUMPETS - SNAKE

Your **lead pipe** is the first part of your instrument to get "clogged" up with unwanted food particles. **Once a week** remove your tuning slide and your mouthpiece and **run your snake through your lead pipe**. Wash your snake ends under the tap.

SLIDES

Your slides should move in and out easily. Clean them EVERY WEEK and **whenever they don't move easily in and out.**

1. Remove each slide. Wipe the slide until clean. The green, black or yellow dirt and rust should come off.
2. Once the slide is clean, dab slide grease on the slide again and move your slide in and out until it moves freely.
- 3. Finally, push your slide in all the way and** wipe off the excess grease.

*Trumpets should run their snakes through the inside of their **tuning slide** to push out dirt and grime. You may have to jiggle the snake a little. Do not put the snake in any other slides. It will get stuck.

SPIT VALVES

Check that your water keys (spit valves) are working:

1. Remove the tuning slide that has the water key (spit valve) attached.
2. Place your thumb over one end and blow on the other end. If air or water bubbles come out of the water key it is not sealing properly and must be repaired

Trombones – empty your spit valves properly; **never use your foot to open it.** Use your hand to reach down and open the spit valve.

Giving your Instrument a Bath

You should wash the insides of your instrument at least THREE times a year.

- Fill the tub with just enough water to cover your instrument. Use lukewarm water and dish soap, (not very soapy).
- Remove the valves and slides. **Do not put the valves in the water**, the springs will rust
- Submerge your instrument
- Put the slides in beside the body of your instrument and soak for a few minutes
- Fill each slide with water, cover the ends with your thumbs and shake hard. Pour the water out of the slide. Repeat until clean water comes out of the slide.
- Take the instrument out and empty all the water out of it.
- Wipe the outside thoroughly with a soft cloth. **Any water left on will cause corrosion.**
- Clean the tuning slides and apply fresh grease. Oil your valves.

TROMBONE

The trombone has two slides. The one on the top of the trombone is the **Tuning slide**. You care for it exactly like the other brass instruments care for their slides. The **Main Slide** is the one you move in and out to play your instrument. It needs special care.

1. Remove the OUTER SLIDE. Use your snake or cleaning rod (with cloth attached) to clean the inner part of the outside slide (the part that slides off). Then run your snake through the inner part of the slide, both the left and right arms.

2. Wipe off the inner slide. Dab **small amounts** of Trombone Slide Cream on the slide and wipe it over the slide. Then wipe the grease off to get dirt off. Re Dab the inner slide and put the outside slide back on. Run it in and out until it moves smoothly.
3. Fill a water bottle with water. Spray your inner slide regularly when you play. The slide cream on your slide forms a smooth barrier over your slide. The water sits on top of the cream and allows the slide to slip easily back and forth. Because water evaporates, you must spray your slide throughout your practice session.

DENTS

Although brass instruments may look big and strong, especially baritones and tubas, they are actually very fragile because the metal alloy they are made of is soft. They can be scratched or dented easily. Never put anything on top of your instrument **inside the case** (even little music books). Never leave your instrument on the floor where someone can step on it or on your stand where it might tip over.

Baritones and tubas – always **lower your instrument carefully** onto your lap. Do not rest your instrument on the chair and do not **bang it** on the ground. The most common dents in brass instruments are on the bottom of the tubas and baritones. Dents are caused by lack of care.