

Trombone Basics #2

Breathing And Tonguing

Dr. Michael Smith
Luther College

Breathing

Playing trombone is a physical activity that takes a lot of air! When we breathe to play trombone, we have to concentrate on getting large quantities of air in very quickly. We also have to breathe in without disturbing the pucker, base, or corners of the embouchure. The corners of the embouchure shouldn't move and the mouthpiece should remain anchored beneath the lower lip (chin) while breathing.

How to Breathe for Trombone Playing

1. Breathing must be done through the pucker, without moving the lips. As you inhale, say "**oh**" (this helps keep your throat open).
2. Pretend you are drinking a milkshake through a straw and you are trying to get that last drop at the bottom of the glass.
3. When you breathe this way, you should see your stomach move, but not your shoulders.

Pointers

Practice breathing through the mouthpiece alone, and then with the mouthpiece in the trombone. Use the mouthpiece and trombone like a straw. You should hear a "whoosh" sound. Don't hold your breath or close off the throat! Breathe in and out keeping the air moving all the time.

Tonguing

Tonguing on brass instruments is similar to speaking. If we speak clearly, people understand what we are saying, if we mumble, they don't. When we play the trombone, we need to tongue clearly so that we can communicate clearly.

How to Tongue

Say the word **toe** (**toh**) like you would if you were whispering. This is the syllable we use on trombone to get a clean beginning to every note (the "t") and to give each note tone (the "oe" or "oh").

Pointers

Start every note you play on the trombone (or buzzing the mouthpiece) with **toe**. Make sure you keep the tongue quick and light. Practice breathing in on **oh** and exhaling on **toe**.