

Essential Techniques and Concepts for Your Low Brass Musicians

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- **Interpretation of Articulation: Staccato vs. “Short”**
 - *Staccato* has more to do with playing *light and detached* than playing “short.” If we interpret staccato as the latter, the tendency is to play “pecky.”
 - When articulating, the air should always be the constant and the tongue serves as the variable.
 - The purpose of the tongue is to dictate the shape of the articulation.
 - There are three components to every note:
 - *Front (Initial attack)*
 - *Core*
 - *Decay*
- **Using the valve(s) as an advantage**
 - One of the advantages of a valve player is the fact that we can let the valve articulate or “tongue” for us. This is most useful in slurred passages.
- **Tone travels faster than sound**
 - This is an effective approach/philosophy in maximizing your brass’ sound in louder dynamics.
- **Multiple Tonguing**
 - Just as a car needs gas to function, the same could be said with our tongue and the use of air.
 - Double Tonguing
 - Staccato: Ta-ka, ta-ka
 - Legato: Du-gu, du-gu
 - Triple Tonguing
 - Staccato: Ta-ta-ka, ta-ta-ka
 - Legato: Du-du-gu, du-du-gu

- **Legato Tonguing (on the trombone)**

- The Use of the Glissando Technique
 - When your student is trying to master legato tonguing on the trombone, have them to remove the tongue all-together.
 - Incorporating this technique will expose the delayed slide movement in your student's playing, help discover where natural slurs can be used and reveal how efficiently the student is using air.
 - Once this is established, the student can gradually add the tongue into the mix. By incorporating this order, it reemphasizes the notion that the *tongue serves as the variable and the air as the constant.*

- **Tenuto vs. Legato**

- If we were to take a poll and ask middle and high school students to define or perform both musical terms, we would come to the conclusion that their interpretation of both terms are to be performed in the same manner.
- While there may be a similarity, both articulations are performed differently.
 - Tenuto ≠ Legato
 - Tenuto = Accent Family
 - Accent (>): The front of the note is emphasized/stressed.
 - Tenuto (–): The end of the note is stressed.

- **Consistency of Articulation**

- In physics, it is mentioned that the lighter an object, the faster it will be. The same could be said with our tonguing. On the contrary, the heavier the tongue, the slower it will be due to the excess pressure.
 - Because of the extra pressure on the tongue, fatigue will settle in, which will cause the articulation to be inconsistent.
 - It is important to note that the tongue is best used in a forward, upward motion rather than back and forth. This will enable the tip of the tongue to be used when articulating, while the middle and base of the tongue remain relaxed.
 - Identifying this can assist your student in playing lighter and faster.
- Also, if the student is not careful, the length of the notes can fluctuate as they play on the staff and work their way up and vice versa.
 - This is due to the change in aperture size as they go from the upper register to the lower register.
 - A great way to troubleshoot this is for the student to record themselves and listen for notes that are being played longer than others.

- **Clef Studies**

- There are four clefs a trombonist must be able to read: Bass, Tenor, Alto & Treble Clef(s).
- In an orchestra, your student can expect to see:
 - 1st Trombone: Alto and Tenor Clefs (Treble Clef, seldom occur)
 - 2nd Trombone: Alto, Tenor and Bass Clefs
 - Bass Trombone: Bass Clef (Tenor Clef, seldom occur)
- Depending on the difficulty of the trombone solo, the student can expect to see all four clefs.