

Breathing Exercises

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Always practice good breathing form – a smooth, even and constant air stream.

- *Smooth* meaning no bumps or shaky motions in the air stream.
- *Even* meaning to move the air stream evenly over a given amount of time (inhale for four counts and exhale for four).
- *Constant* meaning that the air is in constant motion – like a golf swing, not stopping at the top or bottom (sometimes a beginner student will inhale, hold the breath, and then explode it out causing missed notes and producing explosive attacks).

Begin by releasing tension in the upper body. Use basic stretches (reaching up to the sky; rolling shoulders, etc.) to release tension.

1. Flop-Over – this helps the player understand where the air goes upon inhaling. Flop the body over and hang down like a rag doll. Let the arms and head hang loose. Take a deep breath filling the belly and chest. Feel the body rise with the inhalation and fall with the exhalation. You can feel and see the body rise and fall with each breath. This indicates a correct “low breath”.

2. Blowing out candles – Hold one finger in front of your mouth. Imagine blowing out a candle. Take a full inhale and a full exhale. Blow out two candles (bigger breath), three candles and then four (bigger breath each time).

3. Smooth Flow – Raise the arms out sideways from body, reaching to the sky on the inhale, lower evenly on the exhale. At mm=60, inhale (raising arms) for 6 counts, exhale (lowering arms evenly) for 6 counts. Make this a continuous flow exercise, moving from 6 counts into 7 counts, 8, 9, 10, consecutively. This is good for calming the nerves and realizing smooth form.

4. Monitor System – Monitor the smooth, even and constant form of the air. Hold two fingers vertically in front of your mouth, lightly touching your lips. Inhale using an “OH” shape, exhale onto the palm of the hand using a bit of resistance at the lips (There should only be resistance at the lips, not in the throat) to feel the even and constant stream of air. With a metronome set at 80, practice inhaling for four counts and exhaling for four counts with the monitor system.

5. Wind Patterns – combine smooth airflow with articulation. Place the palm of your hand in front of mouth, approximately 6 inches away. Blow the articulations on the palm of the hand using a smooth, even and constant stream of air. Breathe where necessary. This exercise should be used in combination with the music being played. Do the appropriate wind pattern corresponding to the music then return to the music and apply the correct air to play the passage.

Visit www.breathinggym.com for more information.