

# Exercises for Developing an Efficient Embouchure (and Building High Register)

by D.J. Barraclough, *Dallas Brass*

The purpose of these exercises is to provide a simple way for brass players of all ages to develop an efficient embouchure, helping improve high register and endurance.

## First Things First: Tone Concept

Before delving into discussion on developing an efficient embouchure, it is essential that the younger student have a strong concept of an ideal tone quality. The student must be surrounded by good examples (recordings) on a daily basis, and live concerts whenever possible.

## Main Idea: Playing On The Lead-pipe

The practice of creating a resonant tone *without* the help of the complete instrument will increase one's ability to improve both control and beauty of tone.

For these exercises, one must first prepare the instrument (lead-pipe). For all brass, except trombones, remove the main tuning slide, so that it is essentially the mouthpiece and lead-pipe with which you are working. For trombones, remove the outer slide, so you will be working with one tube of the inner slide.

## Establishing the Fundamental Pitch

Buzz effortlessly in the middle register to find the instrument's fundamental pitch.

### Preliminary Embouchure Test

Here's a little test to illustrate how efficient the student's buzz is right now:

1. Take off the main tuning slide from the instrument (as discussed above) so that only the mouthpiece and lead-pipe will resonate when you buzz.
2. Place the mouthpiece loosely in receiver so that is about 1/2 inch from being in all the way.
3. While holding the instrument in one hand and the mouthpiece in the other, buzz as softly as possible and begin moving the mouthpiece all the way in and then slightly out, back and forth, all the while maintaining a very soft buzz.

You will notice that it is much easier to buzz with the mouthpiece all the way in. There is more resistance with the lead-pipe and mouthpiece together than with only the mouthpiece and only with the proper amount of resistance does the aperture remain closed so that a resonant buzz can be produced. This illustrates the need for the student to practice the buzz with the proper amount of resistance – otherwise the student will more than likely practice with an open and inefficient aperture, leading to the use of excessive pressure (which is only needed to close the aperture!) and subsequent poor tone, endurance, range, and overall control.

It should be noted that great physical strength is *not* required for these exercises to be effective, and physical effort should be minimal.

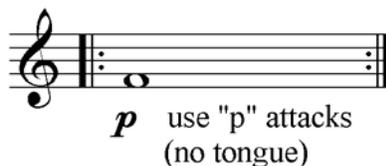
**IMPORTANT:** It is mandatory that good posture, a deep breath and relaxed, open air column be used during the practice of these exercises. The embouchure and air are an inseparable team and must work together.

**It is suggested to do the following exercises for 5 – 10 minutes at the beginning of the practice session.**

(The following examples show *itches* for **Bb trumpet**).

### Exercise No. 1

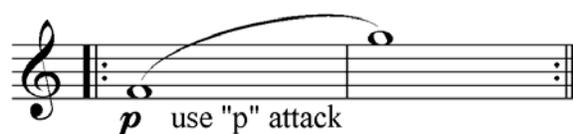
With the mouthpiece in the lead-pipe only, begin buzzing a concert Eb very softly, using a “p” attack (no tongue).



Repeat several times, striving constantly for an ever-softer tone that is in tune at the very instant the buzz begins (for a challenge, try to line up the needle on a tuner to show “in tune” right at the beginning of the note).

Once this is achieved with ease, continue by slurring up to the next partial, which is a concert F (9th degree higher). The slur should happen without strain and very softly.

**Note: On all slurred passages, the “p” attack is for the first note only.**



Beginners may take a few weeks to accomplish this although it is not uncommon to expect results within a few days. The next step is to “p” attack both the Eb and F alternating between the two as many times as can be done without introducing strain to the tone & keeping the volume soft.

*p* use "p" attack

Also do this without slur,  
but continue "p" attacks

## Exercise No. 2 - Adding the High C

With the student able to buzz a clear, consistent, resonant tone on Eb and F, it is now time to extend the buzzing range to high C (the next partial).

*p* use "p" attacks

*p* use "p" attack

Also do this without slur,  
but continue "p" attacks

*p* use "p" attacks

*p* use "p" attack

Also do this without slur,  
but continue "p" attacks

Remember to keep it soft. Think efficient. Experiment with other patterns. Have fun!

Comments? Questions. Contact me at [DJ@Dallasbrass.com](mailto:DJ@Dallasbrass.com)