

## Tips for Successful Beginner Band Instruction

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### **Discipline**

Setting up a standardized way to do everything creates organization and purpose. This includes the way students enter/leave the room, placing the cases on the right side of the chair, carrying cases with snaps toward your leg. Extend to other elements in the class.

### **Teach Correct Assembly Early**

We may wish the students would not assemble the instrument until embouchures are secure, but they are going to do it at home when you are not looking, so you might as well teach them how to properly assemble and disassemble the instrument.

### **Posture**

- Sit as you stand.
- Head floats above shoulders, body soft and down.

### **Breathing Exercises**

- Teach breathing with metronome at about 72-84.
- Use hand to visualize.
- Say “M” and air goes in and out through this. (once they have learned embouchure concepts, each instrument does its embouchure for this exercise.)
- 4 counts in, 4 counts out.
- 2 counts in, 6 counts out.
- 1 count in, 8 counts out, etc.
- But always with proper posture!

### **Maintain Priorities**

- Tone is always, always your most important goal, not technique.
- Rhythm is the next most important priority.

### **Long-range Plan: Daily Drill**

Begin building concepts that will be part of middle school band daily drill.

- One good sound—clean start, steady sound, no bumps, face still at end of note.
- Teach with metronome often (85% of the time).

### **Routine is the Answer**

Having a routine frees you to teach! You can always add or subtract elements, but do most of it every day, and always in the same order.

- Posture
- Breathing
- Mouthpiece drills. Brass should do some drill on the mouthpiece every day of the beginner year. WW should do their “pre-instrument” first every day for a month, then a check-up once a week for at least another month.
- Instrument assembly, learning “home keys.”

- With full instrument begin building tone and drills.
  - >One steady sound (that will become a whole note)
  - >Four steady notes, all with tongue starts (that will become four quarters)
- Counting exercises (meaning not the standard lines in the book).
- When you begin doing lines, always:
  - >Count and clap
  - >Variation: name notes in rhythm, singing on pitch (easy to do with the first lines especially)
  - >Fingers (positions) and count
  - >Play

### **Successful Classroom Routine**

To build embouchures, students must rest momentarily in the early days of beginner classes. Interpolating short (less than 5 minutes) segments to teach various items gives faces a chance to rest and a chance to reinforce embouchure concepts anew. Elements given below in “teaching times” are interchangeable and other ideas may be added.

- First, 5-part daily plan: approximately two weeks, until embouchures are secure
  - Play
  - Teaching time (theory, instrument maintenance, etc.)
  - Play
  - Teaching time (rhythm, practice habits, new terms)
  - Play
- Then, 3-part daily plan: approximately half of the year, and the center segment can decrease in duration and gradually disappear.
  - Play
  - Teaching time
  - Play
- Finally, regular class, although you must continue to incorporate fundamental playing concepts, tone, rhythm, theory and music history elements throughout each day.
- Individualized listenings begin to provide plenty of time for faces to rest and may be substituted for a teaching time segment after the first two weeks.

### **Strive to Have Closure Each Day**

Closure for class each day should include enough time to properly disassemble instruments, swab out ww, etc. During this disassembly, verbalize what was learned and/or what has been assigned.

### **Special for Percussion**

- Have a standard “playing” position at the drum/pad.
- Have a standard “ready” position, and insist on it. Ready position is feet together, sticks together with both hands on them in overhand grip. Can be a step back from the drum/pad if necessary.
- You may also add a third position, called “rest.” This would be used when you take 2-5 minutes to go over a new theory item, rhythm study, etc. “Rest” position is sticks on the floor, out of the hands.