

Don McComas Warm Up

Don McComas was the assistant principal trumpet of the Philadelphia Orchestra. I studied trumpet with him my senior year of high school, and this is the warm up study he had me do. I have used it on trombone and found it to be equally successful.

The first thing you do when you warm up should be the Arnold Jacobs breathing exercises. This will establish how your respiration should function while playing.

The next thing you should do is 10-20 minutes of mouthpiece buzzing. What you buzz is not as important as being very precise with your intonation and getting a strong, full buzzing sound.

I. Half Steps

The goal of this study is to reinforce the concept of blowing through note changes, and to perfect the sound and articulation through careful listening. You should think of blowing a thick column of air continuously through the instrument, just like you would with a long tone.

Make sure that each and every note is as pure and even as you can make it. Do not allow the sound to waver. You want the same consistent, beautiful sound throughout. The tone should start instantly, and there should be no glissando or bumps in between note changes.

The articulation should be legato. Tongue the intervals that do not have partial breaks in between, but there should be no space in between notes. Always practice this with a metronome, so that you get used to changing notes exactly in rhythm.

♩=60

mf

Rest

You can vary the positions that you use for notes that have alternates. This allows you to work on different position combinations. Try to vary the positions you use each day, and get the same great sound no matter what position you use for a note.

$\text{♩} = 60$

mf

Rest

With the next section, only go as high as you can comfortably.

$\text{♩} = 60$

mf

Rest

II. Whole Steps

The goal of this study is to get smooth interval changes and steady, even sound on each note, just like above. It works up the whole tone scale in segments, adding a higher note each time. Think of blowing air through the horn continuously, just like you would in a long tone.

Start with a new beginning note each day; i.e, Monday=C, Tuesday=C#, Wednesday=D. You'll learn all your whole tone scales and cover the range of the instrument.

Don't play higher than you can play with accuracy and a full sound. This is a study to transfer quality of tone up, not to see how high you can play.

IV. Intervals

The same concepts as above should be applied to all intervals. Pick a couple intervals to do each day: P4, Augmented 4, P5, Minor 6, Major 6, Minor 7, Major 7, Octave. Because the intervals are wide, they don't take long to play. Breathe where you need to.