

# **BRASS**

# **SUPPS**

FOR

# **BASS TROMBONE**

1500+ Supplementary  
Technical Exercises

**PERSONAL EDITION**  
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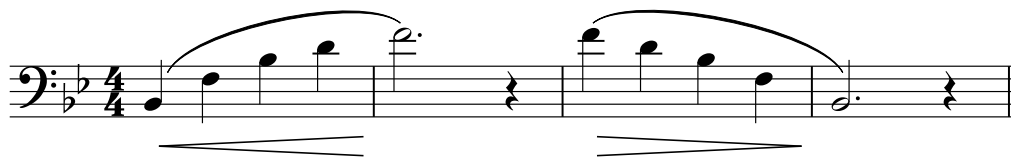
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N.B. the following are all useful practice tools but, generally speaking, aren't used for performance:  
**Glissandi, Sniffing, Breath Attacks, Breathing Between Each Note**

## Dynamics & Tempi:

There aren't many dynamics or tempo markings in this book. Exercises should be played at a comfortable speed and volume but you may wish to challenge yourself by playing them louder/softer or faster/slower. Small crescendos can also be very useful as you ascend to keep the air moving.



## Feedback Loops:

We all react to what we do: positives reactions are good as they give us confidence and encourage us. Feeling accomplished makes us feel confident and play better but, unfortunately, the opposite is also true, as we make mistakes we lose confidence and this will lead to more mistakes. Encourage positive thinking as much as you can when you play and break those negative feedback loops.

## Fretting:

Fretting (or 'playing against the grain') is being able to slur across harmonics as easily as you can slur without moving the slide (a). You can do this if the slide moves in the opposite direction to the pitch: in other words ... slide goes down/notes go up (b) or slide goes up/notes go down (c).



## Fake Notes:

Fake notes are played in the 'wrong' position, usually valve notes but played without the valve, e.g. low-F in 1st position. Positions are given in the form of (e.g.) '4+' which is Open 4th but extended to where the valve position would be. They are excellent for focusing your embouchure and ensuring your air-stream is working well and subsequently playing the note in the correct position should feel easier and sound better! They appear throughout and on P.288-289: look out for the cross-head notes.

## 'Same As' Exercises:

A simple phrase is taken up or down the trombone range. The slide positions stay the same and the idea is to trick your brain into playing each phrase as freely and easily as the first. You will need to adjust for tuning. Each of these bars is Positions 4 - 2 - 1 - 2 - 4



## Valvology & Fixed Valve Exercises:

Valvology exercises are all about your ... valve(s)! Being accurate and efficient is harder than it looks. One way to develop the tone of your valve notes is to keep the valve(s) depressed for an entire exercise to get used to how the resistance feels. A simple idea is to play a scale you are very familiar with but press your valve and it will be transposed downwards, usually by a 4th. You can imagine one scale but play another as below:

Think: B♭ Major	
	1 6 4 3 1 4 2 1 V1 V6 V4 V3 V1 V4 V2 V1
Play: F Major	

Remember to adjust the valve note positions.

# VALVE & TONGUING NOMENCLATURE

The following abbreviations are used throughout this book.

VALVES:

**Op.** or **O** refers to the open trombone (ie. no valves) as do slide positions with no other letters e.g. 3, 2<sup>nd</sup> etc.

**V** refers to the single F-**V**alve, e.g. V1 or V3 etc

**D** refers to **D**ouble Valves if you have two.

Positions for different types of instruments are given thus:

The top positions are for B $\flat$ /F/D and B $\flat$ /F/E $\flat$  are below.

D3
D4

**S** refers to the **S**econd valve used independently. Not all instruments have a second valve and exercises which need an independent second valve only appear in the Appendix.

Pages appropriate for different instrument types are clearly marked. About 90% of this book is suitable for single valve instruments: alternatives for low-B are marked or the note can be ignored/skipped.

Positions are *not* described relative to the open trombone, e.g. V3 is further out than Open 3 but is best not thought of as 3½ as it is more beneficial to visualise the valve-slide positions independently of the open positions, see the charts in the Appendix for further details.

## TONGUING:

**T** refers to a 'normal' tonguing stroke which gives a clean beginning to a note, e.g. TAA or TOO.

The tip of your tongue makes contact somewhere behind your top teeth

**D** or **L** refer to a softer legato tongue, your tongue will be in contact further back with the roof of your mouth rather than touching behind your teeth. Tongue with the same amount of effort, 'soft' applies to the attack.

*You may wish to use a **D** tongue for a 'normal' attack, depending on preference and the style of music played.*

**H** refers to a breath attack (HAA) when the tip of the tongue is not used (this is not really used for performance but is a very useful practice technique).

All of the above 'front tongue' actions can be combined with different range-appropriate tongue positions of the middle/back of the tongue (research *Seeing the Unseen* by Douglas Yeo and the MRI Brass Repository):

**EE** (rhymes with 'bee') is for the high register, the back/middle of the tongue is raised e.g. TEE, DEE, HEE. For the extreme high register this can be exaggerated to TCEE or THEE.

**AA** (rhymes with 'car') is for the mid-register, OOO can also be used, e.g. TAA, DAA, TOO. The back/middle of the tongue is in a neutral position neither raised nor lowered.

**OE** (rhymes with 'toe') is used for the low register, e.g. TOE, DOE, HOE. The tongue is lowered.

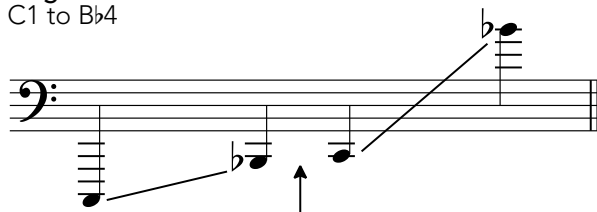
**OR** ('oar') is for the very low register, e.g. TOR, DOR, HOR. The tongue is lowered as much as possible.

All the tongue strokes/positions are mimed and don't, of course, involve speech. The throat is relaxed and open at all times. Practice saying the words away from the trombone and feel the difference they make.

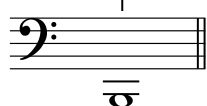
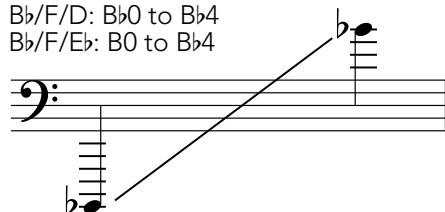
## Range:

The Bass Trombone has a wider range than the Tenor Trombone.

Single Valve:  
C1 to B $\flat$ 4



Double Valve:  
B $\flat$ /F/D: B $\flat$ 0 to B $\flat$ 4  
B $\flat$ /F/E $\flat$ : B0 to B $\flat$ 4





There is one note which you can't play on a single valve bass trombone: low B $\flat$ 1.

# 10 Minute Warm-up

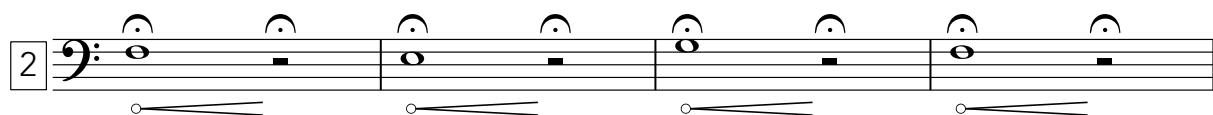
It's always a good idea to warm-up when you play, it gets both your embouchure and your ears ready for a practice session. Start with a few deep breaths and a bit of a stretch before getting your instrument out. Keep relaxed and hold your trombone without getting tense. Bring the instrument to you rather than pushing your neck forward to meet the mouthpiece. A warm-up wouldn't necessarily involve every single exercise on this page: keep it varied.

Mouthpiece buzzing: take a deep, relaxed breath and think about the shape of your mouth and tongue position. Ensure you remain relaxed as you raise the mouthpiece to your lips. Pitch can be approximate.


1a 


1b 

Crescendo from silence: thinking of the beginning of a 'P' sound will help your embouchure position. The note may take a while to appear, just wait; it will be quicker next time.

2 


Slide slowly down and back, really let the air go, don't hold back. Start with a breath attack (H).

3a 

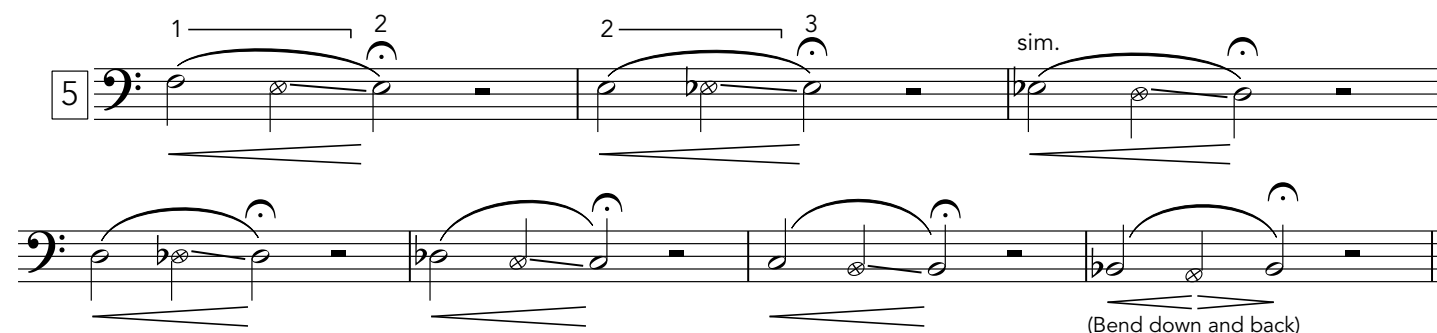
3b 

Box slurs: your arm and the slur make a 'box' shape. Start with a breath attack and relax and let the air flow as you glissando, aim to make the slurs relaxed as well.

4a 

4b 

Note bending: open your mouth/jaw slightly as you bend the note down at the cross-head note (use the crescendo). Broaden the tone as you 'resolve' the note by moving the slide down: play, bend, slide.

5 

(Bend down and back)

Getting co-ordinated: blow, tongue and buzz separately and then add them all together for a 'proper' note. Subdivide the beat for accuracy and repeat each bar until perfectly in time.



6

HAA TAA HAA TAA

Count a sub-divided beat in your head. Just air (no buzz) Air & Tongue Air & Buzz Air/Tongue/Buzz

Easy slur and long tone: set your embouchure halfway between the first two notes and reach down/up. Make the most of the longer note each time, hold it straight, keep on blowing until the rest (off on 4).

7a

Off on 4

7b

Make it flow, let it go: lightly tongue each note and let the air go. The repeated notes will help the flow.

8

Lip reset/supping: tongue every note and breath (through your mouth) before the next one. Quickly return your embouchure to the same 'sweet spot' each time. You'll have noticed that the bass trombone needs a little more air than a tenor, this exercise gets you used to 'supping' very quick (but smaller) breaths as well as improving how quickly you can 'reset' your embouchure to the playing position.

9a

Take small (or mimed) breaths and exhale half way.

9b

Exhale

This time keep your embouchure still (as you normally would) and group the notes in pairs (TA-DA).

9c

Circle of 4ths: warm-up your ears as well as lips. Keep relaxed, tongue only the first note of each phrase.

10

7

## Clefs & Leger Lines

The vast majority of bass trombone music is, not surprisingly, written in bass clef. You may occasionally see tenor clef and maybe even alto clef in some orchestral music (for which you can blame the copyist rather than the composer).

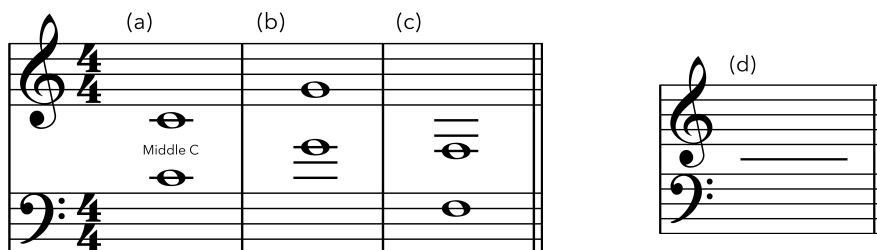
Whenever you see a clef shaped like this the indentation of the clef sits on Middle-C, this will help you work out the notes in an emergency! If you read tenor clef there is a useful trick you can use...



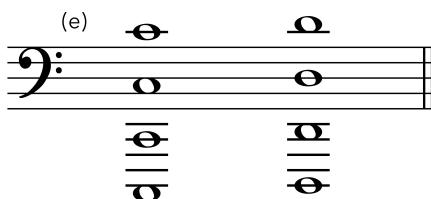
One of the trickiest things about playing the bass trombone is all of the leger/ledger lines that appear above and below the bass clef staff.

As we go above the bass clef staff it is worth remembering that the bass clef is the bottom half of a 'Grand Staff' and that as we ascend we are going in to treble clef. If you play the piano or can read treble clef then this is useful information and you can visualise a treble clef (don't forget to allow for Middle-C) to help you read the bass clef notes above the staff:

- a) The C below the treble clef and the C above the bass clef (middle C) are the same note.
- b) The first leger line is C, after that the leger lines represent the lines of the stave above/below.
- d) The Grand Stave is really an eleven line stave but that would be difficult to read!

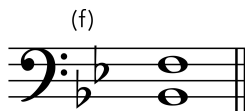


- e) A helpful rule when reading a lot of ledger lines is that the octave notes alternate between being on a line and space. Notice the Cs are space/line/space/line and the Ds are the opposite.

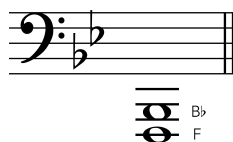


You may have originally learnt bass clef by having some reference points and then working out the other notes from this, this idea can help identify notes below the staff as well.

f) the obvious reference notes are B $\flat$  and F as the bass clef is the 'F-Clef' which indicates the 'F' note (g).



Pedal B $\flat$  and the F below can work in a similar way as a reference point ...



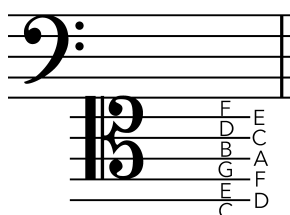
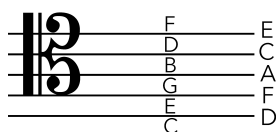
... the B $\flat$  is easily read as it only has two leger lines and fits the line/space/line rule for octaves ...



... and the F is a mirror image of middle-F, one is 4 lines up and the other is 4 lines down.



If you read tenor clef then a quick hack to read lots of leger lines is to visualise a tenor clef below the staff! This is like a grand stave but with no 'middle-C', the tenor clef stave starts immediately below the bass clef. Obviously the tenor clef is two octaves different but this is a rough-and-ready way to get below the staff.



# Flow Exercises

Always tongue the very first note of each phrase in these exercises and then keep the air flowing.

Use valve(s) as appropriate.

1

Match the sound of each phrase: as the key changes so will the types of slurring needed but aim to make them all sound the same. Use alternative positions/valve(s) when necessary. Feel the air flowing.

2a

Decide which Bbs work best in 5th position and which Fs work best in 6th.

2b

V3

Decide which Fs and Cs work best in 6th.

2c

# Slide and Valve Visualisation

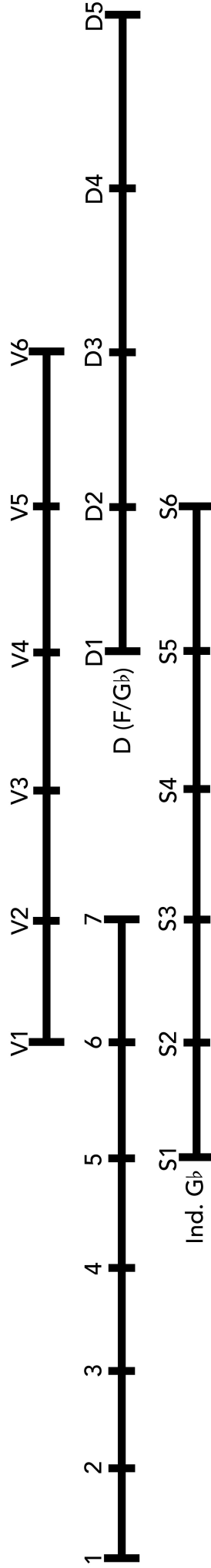
These diagrams show how the 'open' slide positions and all of the valve combinations fit together. Choose the correct diagram for your instrument.

**V** refers to the single F-Valve, e.g. V1 or V3 etc  
This produces an F in 1st position.

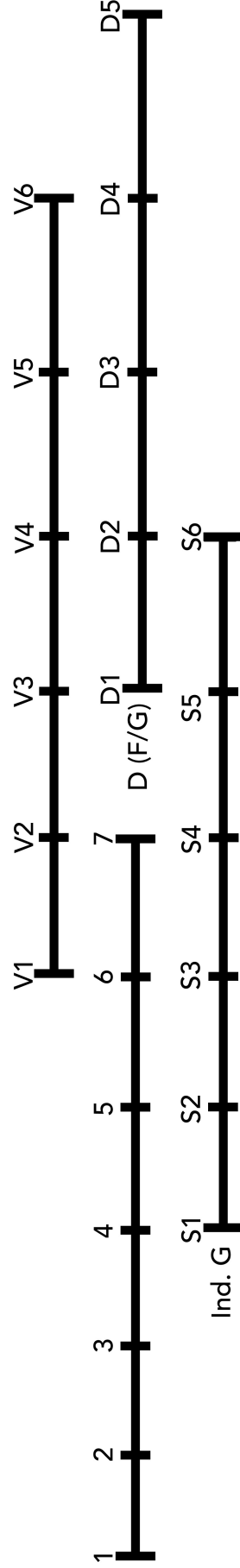
**D** refers to Double Valves: using both valves simultaneously.  
This produces a D or E♭ harmonic series in 1st position.

**S** refers to the Second valve used independently: not all instruments have this.  
This produces a G♯ or G harmonic series in 1st Position.

This is the Independent B♭/F/G♭/D Trombone, if you don't have an independent second valve then ignore the bottom line.

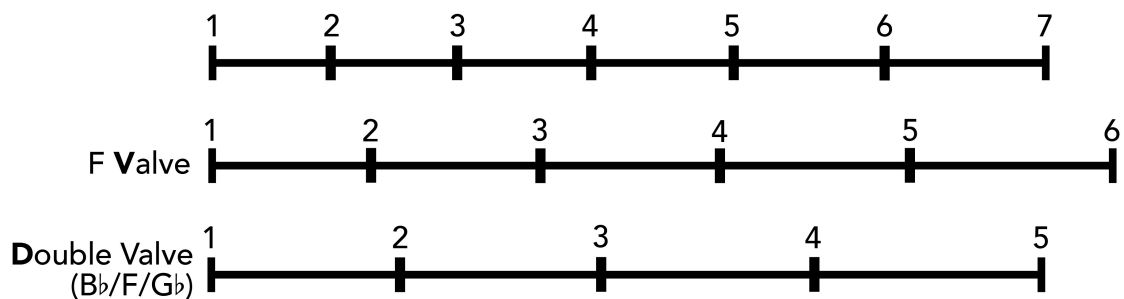
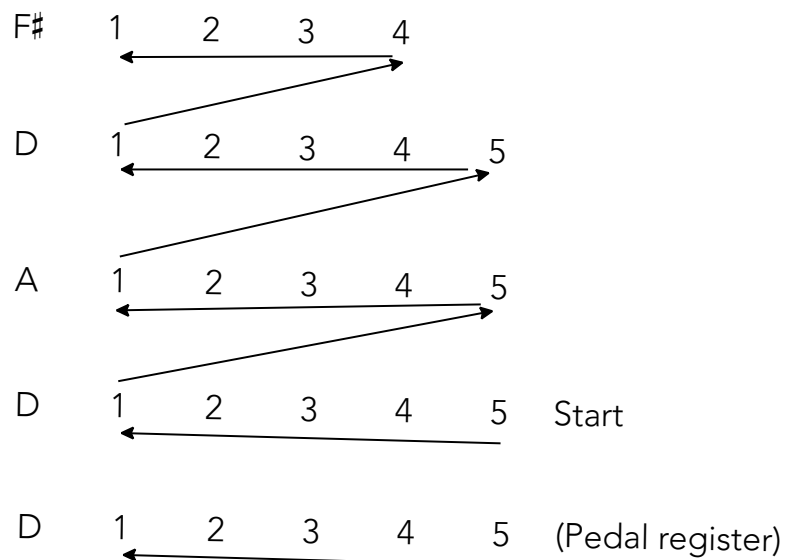


This is the Independent B♭/F/G/E♭ Trombone, if you don't have an independent second valve then ignore the bottom line.



## Double Valves (B $\flat$ /F/D):

When using both valves there are only 5 slide positions. Once again there are 'missing' notes between the pedal register and the next partial going up, there are also two notes which are not possible (the cross noteheads) with this valve combination.



# Bass Trombone Positions & Tuning (B $\flat$ /F/G/E $\flat$ )

These charts give *approximate* positions and tuning: the top chart is more accurate for the relative positions and the staves are more accurate for tuning within positions:

- The 2nd valve is presumed to be in G so that the two valves combined produce E $\flat$  in 1st position.
- The slide adjustments for tuning within each position are **very** small: listen carefully.
- If you have a dependent instrument then ignore the 'Ind. Valve' lines.

The charts provide approximate positions and tuning for the Bass Trombone. The top chart shows positions 1 through 7. Below it are charts for the F Valve (1-6), Ind. G Valve (S) (1-6), and Double Valve (B $\flat$ /F/G) (1-5). The main section shows the Open position and 1st through 7th positions, with a diagram indicating to 'Raise the Slide' or 'Lower the Slide' for tuning. Below this are charts for the F Valve (V1-V6), Single G Valve (S1-S6), and Double Valves F & G (D1-D5).

**Open**

1st 2nd 3rd 4th 5th 6th 7th

Raise the Slide Lower the Slide

**F Valve** V1 V2 V3 V4 V5 V6

**Single G Valve (independent):** S1 S2 S3 S4 S5 S6

**Double Valves F & G = E $\flat$**  D1 D2 D3 D4 D5