

# Brass Instrument Cleaning Instructions

Exclusively for Trumpet, Trombone, French Horn, Baritone/Euphonium and Tuba

**CAUTION:** Never use hot or boiling water to wash instruments. Avoid harsh chemicals. Warm water and a mild soap/detergent are recommended.

## Suggested Supplies (maintenance kits are available)

Warm water

Mild soap detergent (dish washing liquid works great)

Valve oil (valve instruments only)

Tuning slide grease or Vaseline

Slide Cream/oil (lubricant for trombone only)

Flexible cleaning brush (long snake-like wire with brushes on end)

Valve Casing brush (short brush, wide bristles- valve instruments only)

Lint free cloth/towel

Mouthpiece brush (optional)

## TRUMPET

### 1. Take instrument apart

Lay out a towel to place tuning slides, caps and valves upon. Position parts on towel carefully in a way that will remind you where to put them back when you are done (especially valves).

Always depress valves when removing slides from instrument to avoid air pressure build up, which can fatigue metal. Removing valves first can simplify the process.

Carefully remove all slides, clamps and valves. Handle with care – one dent can result in costly repairs. If a slide or cap is frozen in place, **DO NOT FORCE**. Take to a qualified repair shop for removal. Remember: Brass is thin and easy to dent/bend.

### 2. Wash instrument/pieces

Submerge the instrument in warm soapy water. A large sink, basin or even a bathtub works well. While under water, instrument may be cleaned out with a long flexible cleaning brush. Be sure to rinse well before reassembling.

Individually clean each slide, cap and valve in warm soapy water. Use brush if available.

Caution: Take special care with valves, they are very fragile. Be careful not to dent or scratch surface or edges. Rinse well.

Valves maybe disassembled but it is **NOT RECOMMENDED** (unless under supervision).

If taken apart, give careful attention to position of felts/corks. The cork rings are brittle – handle with care. New felts and corks are available at the music store. Remember, the valve itself is far easier to take apart than it is to put back together.

### 3. Dry instruments and parts

Use care to dry each part individually using lint free towel or cloth.

Valves in particular must be cleaned with lint free materials and checked for lint or dust before placing back into instrument

Do not be concerned about residual moisture left in slides; it can be blown out of water key (spit valve) after assembly.

### 4. Lubricate and reassemble

Put SLIDE GREASE or Vaseline on tuning slides. Completely coat the part that is inserted. Failure to use grease will result in frozen/stuck slides

Slide grease can also be used on the screw-on caps to keep them from getting stuck. Put Valve Oil on valves before placing in horn. NEVER use slide grease or Vaseline on valves. Valve oil prevents corrosion of the inside of your instrument. Be sure to keep valves oiled regularly. Once a week remove valves and rinse with water to keep them from sticking. Remember to oil.

Be sure to depress valves when inserting tuning slides or replace slides before putting the valves in.

## 5. **Wash Mouthpiece**

The mouthpiece should be washed more often than the instrument. Mouthpiece brushes are available but not necessary if mouthpiece is cleaned regularly.

The mouthpiece is the only part of the instrument that can and should be boiled. Boil for a few minutes at least twice a year to keep sterile and germ free. Also boil mouthpiece after a cold/flu.

## **BARITONE/EUPHONIUM. TUBA. FRENCH HORN**

Same as trumpet. Extra care is required in handling of instrument due to size and weight. Can be washed in bathtub or shower. Watch out for water build-up in coils of tubing. A circular rotation on its horizontal axis will help purge the water.

## **TROMBONE**

Same as trumpet only disregard parts pertaining to valves.

Remember to remove/clean tuning slide as well as main slide.

The inside part of the main slide must be kept clean, polished, lubricated and free of any foreign particles. Handle with care being particularly careful not to scratch, dent or bend inner slide.

Use Tuning Slide Grease on tuning slide (the part to the left of your head when playing).

Use Slide Cream (or even valve oil) on the main slide. Once slide cream is applied, a water spray bottle may be used to keep slide lubricated while playing. With the use of a spray bottle, slide cream needs to be applied only once a week.

## **TIPS FOR ALL BRASS INSTRUMENTS**

Lubricate daily using only store bought oils and lubricants intended for your instrument.

Keep mouthpiece clean weekly.

Wash instrument monthly.

If the water is too hot to touch, it is too hot for your instrument.

If it won't move — **DO NOT FORCE IT**. Do not try to fix it yourself, call the music store.

Always handle with care

A note about brass; It is a metal alloy subject to corrosion. The outside of the instrument is often lacquered (a plastic coating similar to shellac) to protect the surface and can be damaged by excess heat or abrasive materials. The inside is raw brass. Unless silver-plated, do not try to polish. It is normal for a greenish substance to come from inside the instrument.

Regular cleaning/maintenance will reduce corrosion. Give instrument a bath about once a month.