

## BRASS INSTRUMENT MAINTENANCE (Information originally from Abodaq website [www.abodaq.org](http://www.abodaq.org))

You are the principal component of your brass instrument! Keep yourself healthy by engaging in regular physical and breathing exercises to maintain good lung capacity and airflow.

ORAL HYGIENE is very important. Cleaning teeth prior to playing prevents food residues from accidentally getting into an instrument and decomposing there. Do not allow other people to play your instrument using your mouthpiece

### TOOLS - EQUIPMENT - MATERIALS for MAINTENANCE

- Warm water and washing up liquid.
- Soft cloths
- If possible, mouthpiece brush and specialist tube-cleaning brushes, available from music shops

### LUBRICANTS

- For tuning slides: Special slide grease or Vaseline.
- For Trombone Slides: Good quality proprietary trombone slide cream or oil. For example Slide-O-Mix.
- For Valves: Use a good quality instrument valve oil.

### STRIPPING THE INSTRUMENT...

Valves: On a large working surface, lay out clean cloths so that components can be placed safely in sequence. Undo the upper valve-cap on the valve cylinder, and remove the piston, taking care not to loose the spring (depending on the valve type). Place the valve, piston, and lower valve cap in order of sequence in a safe position in the layout area. Repeat this process with all of the valves, taking care to keep each of them in order of sequence. The individual components can be inspected for the presence of any corrosion and signs of abnormal wear.

Verdigris (green coloured corrosion), and oil or dirt deposits can be removed by using one teaspoon of vinegar in a cup of water and soaking the component. (Use only cold or tepid water, and do not use on lacquered valve caps). When the component appears clean, rinse in fresh, cold water, and dry with a soft cloth. After the cleaning, rinsing and drying process, each valve may be lightly oiled with a good quality valve oil. The thread of the valve caps (upper and lower) may be greased or oiled. This helps prevent corrosion and jamming. Replace each valve in sequence into the correct valve cylinders.

Tuning Slides: Take these out of the instrument in sequence. Soak them in warm water made soapy with mild detergent (not hot water). Flush out then rinse in

fresh clean water and dry thoroughly. Apply a thin film of Vaseline or slide grease to the newly cleaned ends ready for being assembled into the instrument.

Trombone Slides: Probably the most critical part of a trombone is the slide. Proper care and maintenance of this mechanism is essential. Remove the outer slide and place it carefully on some clean cloths in a large working area. Wipe the entire surface of the inner slide tubes with a clean cloth. Ensure that no grime or dust remains on the inner slide surfaces. The slides may then be soaked in a soapy solution and thoroughly rinsed afterwards in order to remove old oil and/or cream. Pull-throughs may be used but care should be taken to ensure that pressure is not put on the 'U' bend tubes to cause them to crimp or bend out of shape. Apply a thin even coat of slide cream or oil following the instructions on the container.

#### THE MOUTHPIECE:

Clean with soap and water using either a small mouthpiece brush or pipe cleaner. Inspect the surface areas for any signs of wear or damage as such areas could harbour bacteria that can cause infections. In some cases a very worn mouthpiece may allow base metal to come into contact with sensitive skin and could result in an allergic reaction. **DO NOT LET OTHERS USE YOUR MOUTHPIECE!**

#### THE INSTRUMENT BODY:

Before re-assembly, the main body of the instrument should be thoroughly cleaned. Use a flexible brush to remove grime from the inside surfaces of tubes, slide housings, etc. Clean all areas of dirt and fingermarks. Flush the instrument out with lukewarm water, and rinse until the water runs clean. Inspect all tubes, slide housings, valve cylinders etc for signs of wear marks, dents and any other damage. Dry and shine with a soft cloth. Check corks, felts, valve covers, caps, springs, buttons, linkages, and other components. Re-assemble the instrument. Work the valves, check the operation, test the slides.

#### THE CASE:

Clean out the case for the instrument and check that any 'extras' not belonging there do not contact or damage the instrument. Vacuum inside the case. Check that the catches work properly