

# Fundamentals of Low Brass Teaching and Performance

Tom Ashworth, Professor of Trombone  
University of Minnesota School of Music  
Studio: 612-624-4148 • E-mail: ashwo001@umn.edu

## ***Music: Art and Craft***

As musicians, we are involved in an intensely creative and personal Art form. By studying the Art of music through lessons, diligent practice and listening to great instrumentalists and vocalists, you will develop your own unique musical identity. The ability to express yourself through your instrument is often dependent on the Craft of brass playing, which includes air, embouchure, intonation, articulation, rhythmic accuracy and slide/valve technique. Strive for a high level of efficiency in all aspects of your Craft, attaining the desired results with a minimum level of physical effort. Ideally, the Craft will become transparent and secondary to the Art, with musical decisions never being influenced by technical limitations. Brass players should commit to the same high musical and technical standards expected of all other musicians. Settle for nothing less than your best sound on every note and strive to create music every time you play your instrument.

The following exercises are designed to assist you in attaining efficient mastery of your instrument. In particular, they focus on developing an embouchure that is flexible, strong and accurate. A properly developed embouchure will respond positively to these two essential forms of input:

1. The SOUND you desire to produce
  - a. this can include the range, dynamic and timbre
2. The type of AIR required to produce that SOUND
  - a. from Slow & Warm to Fast & Cool

These exercises are not intended to be used as a “Daily Routine”, or to be played straight through without rest. Instead, work with your teacher to identify which of the exercises would be of use in addressing specific areas of your playing.



## B. EMBOUCHURE - FLEXIBILITY

"Lip bending and glisses provide an excellent foundation for developing smooth lip slurs and overall flexibility."

### ESTABLISHING FOUNDATIONAL SKILLS: lip slurs, slide and valve

- Practice 4 ways:
  - Sing: as a glissando using the syllable "oh"
  - Mouthpiece: Buzz; connect notes with slow glisses
  - Instrument: Connect with slow glisses using indicated gliss (alternate) positions.
  - Instrument: Play as fast, smooth slurs using standard positions

4a

gliss positions

v#4 v1 v#4 6 4 6 6 4 6 #5 3 #5

1 v1 1 v1 4 v1 1 4 1 1 3 1

standard positions

4b

gliss positions

6 4 6 4 2 4 3 1 3 #4 #2 #4

4c

gliss positions

6 4 6 4 2 4 6 4 6 6 4 6

Transpose to other keys using alternate positions as necessary to create glisses.

### LIP GLISSING (or 'BENDING')

- Practice 3 ways:
  1. Sing
  2. Buzz
  3. Play
- Tongue only first note
- Strive for maximum bend between notes (slow glisses)

5

continue chromatically starting on:

## LINKING RANGES #1

- Use slow glisses to connect pitches

## LIP SLURS #1

- Practice 3 ways: 1. Sing 2. Buzz 3. Play
- Make all lip slurs smooth, fast and late (notes should 'melt' together, while retaining brick shape).
- Work mostly inside the mouthpiece, minimizing jaw and/or horn motion.
- Use the following variations:
  - lip slurs: *mf*
  - tenuto: *mf*
  - staccato (slow and fast): *mp*
  - marcato-tenuto (slow): *ff*

7a

continue starting on: *optional*

7b

continue starting on:

7c

continue starting on:

8

continue starting on:

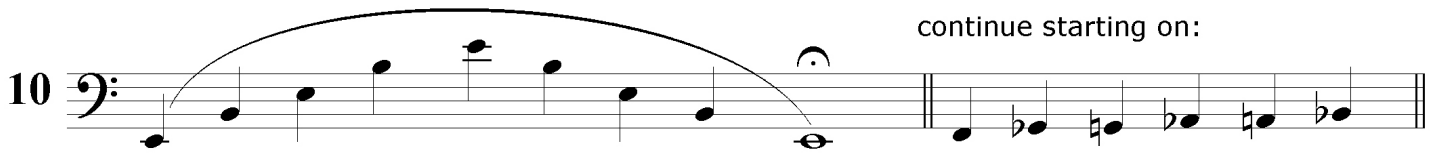
## LINKING RANGES #2

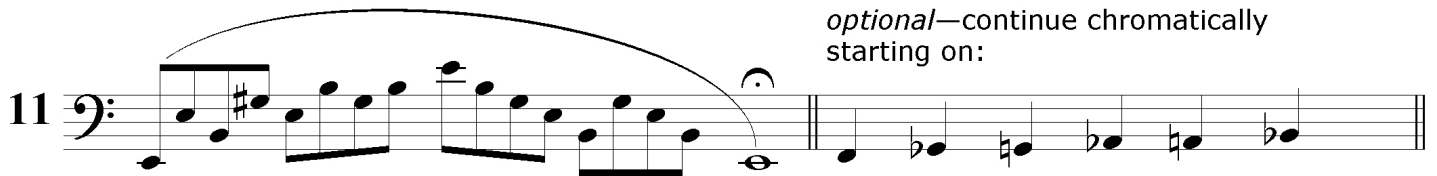
- Use slow glisses to connect pitches

9

## LIP SLURS #2

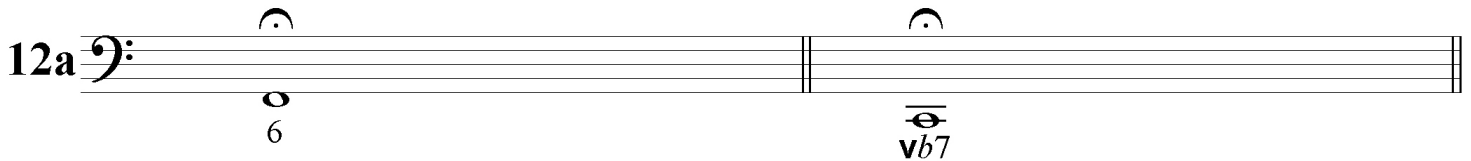
- Practice 3 ways:
  - Sing
  - Buzz
  - Play
- Make all lip slurs smooth, fast and late (notes should 'melt' together, while retaining brick shape)
- Work mostly inside the mouthpiece, minimizing jaw and/or horn motion.
- Use the following variations:
  - lip slurs: *mf*
  - tenuto: *mf*
  - staccato (slow and fast): *mp*
  - marcato-tenuto (slow): *ff*

10  continue starting on:

11  optional—continue chromatically starting on:

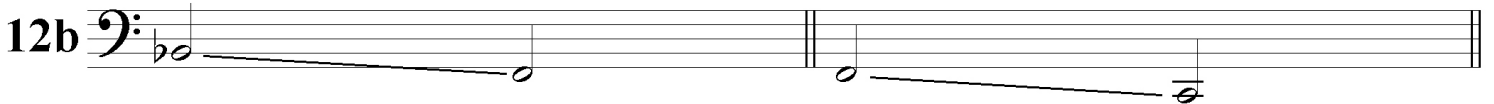
## LOW RANGE EXERCISES: Bending exercise (to link ranges)

- Begin with indicated position; maintain pitch with embouchure while slowly moving slide to 1<sup>st</sup> position.

12a  6 vb7

- Play each of the following bars with all variations indicated.

- |   |                     |
|---|---------------------|
| 1. 1-6 as gliss   | 1. v1-vb7, as gliss |
| 2. All 1st position; bend (no valve)                        | 2. 6-b7; bend       |
| 3. All 1st position; depress valve as bend approaches low F | 3. 6-vb7; fast slur |
| 4. 1-v1; fast slur  |                     |

12b 

- |   |                                      |
|---|--------------------------------------|
| 1. Begin in v1, release trigger as bend approaches pedal Bb | 1. All 1st position, bend with valve |
| 2. v1-1, fast slur  | 2. 1-v1-1; fast slurs                |





1. 1-6 as gliss
2. All 1st position; bend (no valve)
3. All 1st position; depress valve as bend approaches low F
4. 1-v1; fast slur

1. v1-vb7, as gliss
2. 6-b7; bend
3. 6-vb7; fast slur

(12b)

1. Begin in v1, release trigger as bend approaches pedal Bb
2. v1-1, fast slur

1. All 1st position, bend with valve
2. 1-v1-1; fast slurs

- Play first 2 bars together; first 3 bars together; all bars.
- Use the following variations:
  - lip slurs: *mf*
  - tenuto: *mf*
  - staccato (slow and fast): *mp*
  - marcato-tenuto (slow): *ff*
- Play also as fast "rips".

15a

- Play one measure at a time or more if possible
- Use the following variations:
  - lip slurs: *mf*; tenuto: *mf*; staccato (slow and fast): *mp*; marcato-tenuto (slow): *ff*

15b

Optional: Transpose down chromatically

16a continue chromatically starting on:

Optional: To develop valve range.

16b continue chromatically starting on:

(Down an octave)

16c continue chromatically starting on:

16d continue chromatically starting on:

16e continue chromatically (as above)