

Chapter 1: Breathing

All aspects of playing the trombone depend on breath control. Even if other elements of technique are decent, poor breathing technique can prevent the player from performing with adequate control over sound quality, production, legato, range and musical expression in general.

Breathing technique can be considered, perhaps unsurprisingly, in two sections: **inspiration** or breathing in and **expiration**, or breathing out.

Inspiration:

It is vital to develop an efficient intake of a large volume of air; this often needs to be achieved in a very short time when taking a breath between sustained phrases.

In order to get this volume of air it is necessary to develop the ability to draw the diaphragm down firmly, and expand the abdominal muscles and the chest cavity to allow the lungs to expand as much as possible.

While the body will use the diaphragm strongly in an involuntary fashion when short of air, after vigorous exercise for example, this is not an easy function to develop in the voluntary fashion that wind players and singers require and may take considerable practice.

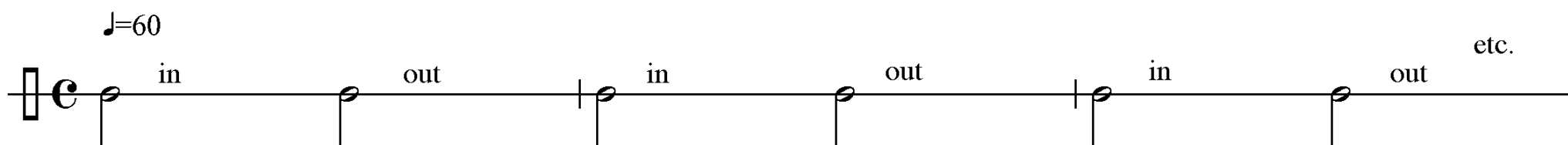
Exercises:

1) Diaphragm/abdominal muscle awareness:

Take a number of very quick, short breaths as if gasping with surprise; try to feel the downward movement of the diaphragm as it 'sucks' the air in. Although the diaphragm and abdominal muscles will tend to work together in this exercise, this is not a problem as this will also often be the case in correct inspiration.

2) Chest cavity expansion:

Take some deeper breaths, over 2 beats at crotchet = 60, prolong the 'gasp' effect, making sure that the throat is open and the shoulders are relaxed, causing the chest to rise as the lungs continue to expand.



3) Chest cavity expansion:

Pull the abdominal muscles in as far as possible, as if tightening a belt, hold them in firmly with the hands and then repeat Ex 2: abdominal expansion is now restricted and so you should now feel the chest rising to accommodate the inflation of the lungs. Keep the shoulders relaxed and the throat open.

4) Rolling breaths:

Think now in 3 stages: diaphragm, abdominals, chest. Repeat Ex 2 trying to feel, in turn, the downward movement of the diaphragm, the outward expansion of the abdominals and the upward lift of the chest cavity as the lungs really fill with air and demand the space to do so. This should be accomplished in one smooth rolling movement.

5) Full breaths:

To make sure you are breathing as fully as possible and to exercise the lungs and all the muscular structure: take a deep, slow breath over 4 beats; hold; breathe in again for 2 more beats; hold for 2; breath out for 4. Repeat a few times. (To start with you will find that taking extra air will be no problem; as efficiency increases in the initial breath, it will become more difficult to take extra).

