Trombone Technique for Young Players

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RULE #1:
It really helps if the slide moves.

TEST: Gravity
If the test fails, it likely...
A. Needs lubrication
B. Has a dent
C. Out of alignment
D. Sandwich (remnants)
RULE #2: 
Protecting the Trombone.

• Holding it
  – Try not to forget you are holding it (pretend it’s a baby); ESPECIALLY the slide!
  – Every trombone player gets to drop the slide one time in their life. Once you have used up your quota, that’s it!

• Walking with it
  – You are it’s bodyguard; hold it straight up and down with you behind it.
  – Treat it like it was made of glass
RULE #2: Protecting the Trombone.

- **Putting it down** (when not playing)
  - Never balance it on a chair
  - Get a trombone stand
  - Or lay it down where someone won’t step on it

- **Picking it up**
  - ALWAYS pick it up and hold it from the lower brace of the slide! ALWAYS!
RULE #3: One on a stand.

Play off the LEFT side of the stand so your bell is not blocked and that you can maintain good posture and horn position.
RULE #4: Writing in Positions

Like using training wheels. If they do... NOT LIKE THIS!

LIKE THIS! Put number near note head, not stem, to encourage looking also at the note and not just the number. Also, do not put number on repeated notes!
RULE #5: bathing

• Bath – Every 6 months. (At least once a year)!
• Mostly it’s the slide.
• After eating, brush teeth or at least rinse your mouth before playing).
• Equipment
  – Cleaning rod
  – Snake
  – Strips of cloth
  – Mouthpiece brush
• Mouthpiece — Test: hold up to the light. If you can see through it, it’s a good sign.
Four (4) Steps to playing a note

For ALL players!

1. **Set** (instrument up)

2. **Pause** (focus, position mouthpiece)

3. **Breathe** (mouthpiece should stay lightly in contact with lips; don’t lower horn to breathe)

4. **Play**
Like a golfer...
1. Set
2. Pause (focus)
3. Breathe
4. Play
3 ESSENTIAL ELEMENTS

SOUND

SLIDE

ARTICULATION
1. Two (2) things must happen simultaneously to create a basic sound:

   AIR + BUZZ

2. Three (3) things must happen for speed and clarity:

   AIR + BUZZ + TONGUE
Quality of Sound

Develop a concept:
Think — full, rich, round, etc.
LISTEN to professionals!

Whole note  Half note  Quarter note  etc.

Like a slice of bread. No matter how thick the slice (how long the note) it has the same fullness).
MOUTHPIECE BUZZING

1. First, learn how to play “Mary Had A Little Lamb” on the piano; one hand in C.

2. **Buzz one note** (C or E, or whatever is comfortable)
   - Strive for a full, pure, beautiful tone (pretend THAT is the instrument)!
   - Find your best sound.
   - Keep it steady.

3. **Then buzz** the tune; no tongue - just sound and pitch; **play it on piano as you buzz**; then without piano.

4. Repeat Step 4 tune **with** articulation.

5. Buzz other tunes as well.
TONE DEVELOPMENT
Using crescendos to expand sound

• Starting note with tongue optional
• Crescendo (Expand the sound)
• Your “sound” is somewhere in the middle of that crescendo. Memorize the feeling as the sound starts to expand and eventually try starting the note there.
Now 4 things must sync up:

Air — Buzz — Tongue — Slide

Symptoms of poor slide technique:

1. Glissy, mushy, uncentered sound
2. Dragging
3. Poor intonation
Beware the Bb scale!

The second note [C] is 2 feet away!! Develop the slide from 1 to 2; then to 3, etc.
SLIDE

PHYSICAL and MENTAL
Physical
Synching the slide

With this exercise, the slide will be in position *before* the next note is played.

Eventually speed it up so slide and note are engaged simultaneously.
Sustained playing

Engage the slide

Continue with 2nd to 3rd; 3rd to 4th; etc.
Expanding the slide
Building a scale
Mental

Learn your positions — Get your brain in gear.

Say the positions *without* trombone. Keep steady time!

1. Start with the Bb scale
   
   \[ \text{\begin{array}{cccccccc}
   \text{C} & \text{D} & \text{E} & \text{F} & \text{G} & \text{A} & \text{B} & \text{C} \\
   \text{D} & \text{E} & \text{F} & \text{G} & \text{A} & \text{B} & \text{C} \\
   \text{E} & \text{F} & \text{G} & \text{A} & \text{B} & \text{C} \\
   \text{F} & \text{G} & \text{A} & \text{B} & \text{C} \\
   \text{G} & \text{A} & \text{B} & \text{C} \\
   \text{A} & \text{B} & \text{C} \\
   \text{B} & \text{C} \\
   \text{C} \\
   \end{array}} \]

2. Same thing, no music *(close eyes; visualize notes)*

3. Add hand movement

4. Add slide

5. Play
Reading Music
Learn to read ahead — like reading words

Step 1a
Say position numbers out loud in even time (ignore rhythm). Do this slowly enough so that there is no hesitation.

EX 1b. Repeat this exercise with note names.
Step 2

Practice rhythms away from the trombone.

EX 2: Say rhythms out loud – using whatever system you prefer (1-e-&-ah, or simply “tah”)
Step 3
Combine positions and rhythm.

EX 3: Say positions with correct rhythm (combination of Ex 1 & 2). It is even more beneficial if you sing the pitches while saying the numbers.
Step 4
Add hand movement.

EX 4: Repeat Ex 3 and move hand to general position ("ghosting" positions). This can be incorporated throughout from Ex 1.

"American Patrol"
Step 5
Add slide.

Student should now hold the trombone and move the slide while repeating Ex 3.
Step 6

Play!

"American Patrol"
Technical Passages

Break it down!

Rhythm — Notes — Combine

"American Patrol"
Breathing exercise

• Simple. Hold note as long as you can and keep blowing beyond the sound.

• The next breath feels *REALLY* good

My favorite breathing exercise:
WindMaster
PLAYING BY EAR

Try to figure out tunes on the piano (keyboard); then on the trombone (or whatever instrument you play).

• Go slowly
• OK to miss notes
• If you get lost, go back to beginning of phrase
• When you get it right, repeat it several times!
• Determination (like a mouse in a maze)
• Tune a day! Change keys.
INTONATION

Know what a good unison sounds like (like focusing binoculars).

Practice with PEDALS
INTONATION

• Start with a sustained Bb pedal.
• Tune Perfect intervals (1 – 8 – 5 – 4)
• Then 3rds
• Then the other intervals

Note: 6th partial (what’s that???) is particularly sharp!

![Musical notation image]
Alternating pedal and silence

5 - SECOND PEDALS (no click)

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RANGE

• The Glissando is your friend. Use it!
Use grooves!
It’s the modern day metronome.

SuperMetronome GrooveBox
PRACTICING

It starts with motivation...

• Live concerts
• You Tube assignments – listening/watching/experiencing
• Smart Music
• Pop songs; movie music
• Private lessons
• ???