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Trumpet School of Virtuosity

Tongue Shape



ABOUT THE LESSON

Our tongue does more than just articulate. We can use the shape of our tongue to influence notes just as much as our air and embouchure. Ben Gunnarson, a member of the President's Own Marine Band, goes over the best syllable to shape our air and how to use the different parts of the tongue to efficiently expand our range and get clean slurs across partials.

TONGUE SHAPE

When playing the trumpet, we often discuss the tongue, as it is connected to tuning, articulation, and moving the air. We want to ensure we are using the tongue appropriately so that it helps us instead of getting in the way.



The best tongue shape for this is a scoop or a funnel. The syllable spelled out is *tiU*, said with a French pronunciation. As Arban was French, all his suggested syllables should follow this approach, making it slightly higher pitched syllable and placing the tongue slightly higher in the mouth. You should be able to feel your tongue pointing at your aperture, allowing us to create a more resonant and present sound.

We can use different parts of the tongue to affect parts of the sound. If we leave the front of the tongue forward, in our funnel shape, the back can be used for airspeed. Raising the back of the tongue helps increase our airspeed. Using our tongue instead of our lungs to do this, we can do it much faster and more precisely.

One thing to remember is that the back of the tongue can only be raised so much. If you are doing a large slur and want it to be clean and precise, using tongue arch instead of air will make it feel much more effortless, but only slightly. We can't rely on it for more than one partial at a time. We need to primarily use airspeed for slurs and add tongue arch as a bit of course correction to get clean, fast slurs.

Some exercises you can do to fine-tune this process is 3B from the James Stamp Warm-Ups and Studies for Trumpet.



This exercise takes us all over the horn and shows the balance between airspeed from your abdomen and the back of the tongue. Think about flow and keeping the tongue right in the scooped *tiU* shape.



If you have any corrections, comments, or critiques relating to this workbook, please send them to marek@tonebase.co. We strive to deliver the highest quality enrichment experience. Thank you!