

Feed The Beast

(Part 1 for summer practicing)

Chris Smith

As many of you are headed into a summer break, some of you may have questions as to what to practice for the next 3 months. If you don't already have a solid plan in place - here I offer up my "go to" practice routine.

It is simple to follow, will keep you in top shape and will address all aspects of trumpet playing. I have used this formula every summer (and other weeks off) for the past 10 years and use a variation of this for daily practice during working weeks.

The books I use (you should feel free to copy this or find other books that you enjoy playing out of) are as follows:

- Clarke *Technical Studies for the Cornet*
- Gekker *Articulation Studies*
- Gekker *Endurance Drills for Performance Skills*
- Snedecor *Low Etudes for Trumpet*
- Snedecor *Lyrical Etudes for Trumpet*
- Boehme: *24 Melodic Studies in All Tonalities, Op. 20* for Trumpet
- Bousquet *36 Celebrated Studies* for Cornet
- Brandt *34 Studies* for Trumpet
- Charlier *36 Etudes* for Trumpet
- Smith *Top Tones for the Trumpeter*

Here's the formula - Day of the week Month of the year Day of the month SIMPLE!

Out of each book, you will play the following numbered etudes corresponding to the day of the week (Mon-Sun = 1-7), month of the year (Jan-Dec = 1-12), and day of the month (1-31).

- Beginner/Maintenance Version - Play only 1 Etude out of each book corresponding to the day of the week = 10 total daily etudes
- Human Version - Play 2 etudes out of each book corresponding to the day of the week and the month of the year = 20 total daily etudes
- Beast Version - Play 3 etudes out of each book corresponding to the day of the week, month of the year, and day of the month = 30 daily etudes

Below is a one week plan. DO NOT BE AFRAID TO SCALE THIS PLAN TO YOUR CURRENT ABILITIES! Those just starting out will want to ease into this program.

So - today is **Monday (1), May (5), 20th (20)** The playing day would like this:

- Clarke #1

- Gekker Articulation #1, #5, #20
- Gekker Endurance #1, #5, #20
- Snedecor Low Etudes #1, #5, #20
- Snedecor Lyrical Etudes #1, #5, #20
- Boehme #1, #5, #20
- Bousquet #1, #5, #20
- Brandt #1, #5, #20
- Charlier #1, #5, #20
- Smith #1, #5, #20

Tomorrow - **Tuesday (2), May (5), 21st (21)**

- Clarke #2
- Gekker Articulation #2, #5, #21
- Gekker Endurance #2, #5, #21
- Snedecor Low Etudes #2, #5, #21
- Snedecor Lyrical Etudes #2, #5, #21
- Boehme #2, #5, #21
- Bousquet #2, #5, #21 Brandt #2, #5, #21
- Charlier #2, #5, #21 Smith #2, #5, #21

Wednesday (3), May (5), 23rd (23)

- Clarke #3
- Gekker Articulation #3, #5, #23
- Gekker Endurance #3, #5, #23
- Snedecor Low Etudes #3, #5, #23
- Snedecor Lyrical Etudes #3, #5, #23
- Boehme #3, #5, #23
- Bousquet #3, #5, #23
- Brandt #3, #5, #23
- Charlier #3, #5, #23
- Smith #3, #5, #23

Thursday (4), May (5), 24th (24)

- Clarke #4
- Gekker Articulation #4, #5, #24
- Gekker Endurance #4, #5, #24
- Snedecor Low Etudes #4, #5, #24

- Snedecor Lyrical Etudes #4, #5, #24
- Boehme #4, #5, #24
- Bousquet #4, #5, #24
- Brandt #4, #5, #24
- Charlier #4, #5, #24
- Smith #4, #5, #24

Friday (5), May (5), 25th (25)

- Clarke #5
- Gekker Articulation #5, #25
- Gekker Endurance #5, #25
- Snedecor Low Etudes #5, #25
- Snedecor Lyrical Etudes #5, #25
- Boehme #5, #25
- Bousquet #5, #25
- Brandt #5, #25
- Charlier #5, #25 Smith #5, #25

Saturday (6), May (5), 26th (26)

- Clarke #6
- Gekker Articulation #6, #5, #26
- Gekker Endurance #6, #5, #26
- Snedecor Low Etudes #6, #5, #26
- Snedecor Lyrical Etudes #6, #5, #26
- Boehme #6, #5, #26
- Bousquet #6, #5, #26
- Brandt #6, #5, #26
- Charlier #6, #5, #26
- Smith #6, #5, #26

Sunday (7), May (5), 27th (27)

- Clarke #7
- Gekker Articulation #7, #5, #27
- Gekker Endurance #7, #5, #27
- Snedecor Low Etudes #7, #5, #27
- Snedecor Lyrical Etudes #7, #5, #27
- Boehme #7, #5, #27
- Bousquet #7, #5, #27
- Brandt #7, #5, #27
- Charlier #7, #5, #27

- Smith #7, #5, #27

You will notice there is some overlap of numbers. BE CREATIVE ... or gratefully accept a lighter playing day. The idea here is that you will see the etudes corresponding with the days of the week (1-7) once a week. The etude that corresponds with the month of the year (1-12) you will see each day for 30 days straight. And the etudes that correspond to the day of the month (1-31 - particularly 12-31) are basically for sight-reading.

Stick with this for 3 months and you'll be arriving back to school in better shape than when you left! Happy practicing! -Chris Smith

BUZZER BEATER

(Part 2 for summer practicing)

Chris Smith

Many of you may be watching the clock (or the calendar) and counting down the days and minutes until you are finished with school (or work) for the summer. For the last 10 years I've had my eyes and ears on a different clock - an interval timer.

Last week I gave you a simple formula on how I structure my practice routine in the summer months. This week I would like to give you another formula on HOW to gain stamina and efficiently practice.

The formula is simple: 84 Or rather - 8 on, 4 off In my seemingly endless quest to find ways to track and demonstrably show improvement in all aspects of trumpet playing and music making - one of the best tools I've found - outside of a metronome - is an interval timer.

Years ago, I practiced like most everyone else I knew - warmup and play for a while, or until I could not play anymore. The general idea was "more is better". This served me well for many years, until I slowly realized I was practicing too much, without enough rest, and I was getting used to playing on tired and damaged chops.

Something needed to change. I still needed to practice, but I needed to put up some guardrails for myself. I started with practicing 45 minutes ON, 15 minutes off. Then months later (after still accepting exhausted chops as normal), I went to 30 minutes ON, 10 minutes off, then months after that, 20 on and 5 off.

FINALLY I began to really hack into this idea of wanting a complete, well-thought out single multi-hour session of playing that could be tracked and replicated day after day, but could also be adjusted up or down in length based on my needs on any given day or week. I settled on developing blocks of time that start short and easy, with short rests and gradually extending both the working and resting blocks in length. In short - I want efficiency. I need to work but I also want to stay fresh.

What I ended up finding that worked best for me was working up to 8 minutes blocks of virtually nonstop trumpet playing followed by 4 minutes of rest (preparation for the next 8 minutes).

This is a good point for me to explain that initially the 8mins was setup to mimic a first round of a trumpet audition. (We can play 5-6 excerpts in that 8mins). As I continued to add 1 Min to each working block, I was finding that by the time I got to 15 minutes ON and 7:30 off, I needed more rest than 7:30 off. So I adjusted to a time frame that allowed me to feel like I worked (5

minutes ON wasn't enough of a stimulus) but not so much that I couldn't quickly recover (10 minutes ON with 5 minutes of recovery was too much ON and not enough rest). I ultimately

settled on 8 minutes ON and 4 minutes off blocks of time and this is what I've used for the past 5 years.

Here is what I've found for myself. Obviously, the physical benefits are enormous - I stay fresh well into a third straight hour of practicing if need be. The rest allows me to get better organized for the work blocks. I am better able to prioritize what needs to be practiced into short and well defined time frames

Practicing with a timer forces me to stay on track and therefore requires less time to complete my daily goals. By practicing in well-defined short blocks of time, I can track - to the minute - how much trumpet playing I'm actually doing on any given day.

Let me take a moment and write about this last point. Outside of playing all the right notes in all the right places... and the ability to play high notes (we're brass players after all) - the single biggest issue most of us brass players are concerned with is STAMINA.

To be clear - most people confuse endurance with STAMINA. They are not the same. Endurance is a relatively low level of exertion over a long period of time. STAMINA is how long we can maintain relatively high levels of exertion before fatiguing. Increasing STAMINA will improve endurance... but improving endurance does not improve STAMINA.

Nonetheless - stick with me here - by practicing in short, intense blocks of time - I'm improving my stamina and practicing in a manner that mirrors my everyday needs on the trumpet. Other than an extended etude or a Mahler Posthorn solo, I've rarely had to play the trumpet without rest for more than 1 minute or so. By practicing in these short and intense blocks of time, I am conditioning myself to be able to repeatedly exert myself and recover.

By tracking the number of blocks of time I am playing each day, I can demonstrably show I am getting stronger and gaining more strength and stamina.

For instance, assuming I've got an end goal and I've prioritized my weaknesses over my strengths, I can basically practice the same things in the same order nearly everyday. If I play 3 minutes into the 7th 8 minute block of time today, and tomorrow I play 1 minute into the 9th 8 minute block of time, I've demonstrably shown that I have gotten stronger and/or more efficient and able to play for longer periods of time.

How much stamina and endurance we truly need are topics for a different post - but suffice it to say that most trumpet players don't play recitals every day, nor do we generally get called for 6hr recording sessions the morning of the recording sessions. My point being - having a deep understanding of WHAT is expected of you and WHEN those expectations must be met is key to not over or under practicing.

The following is my daily routine: From the moment I press play on James Thompson's Buzzing Book (BB) to the last note I play in my session, I'm on the clock. I press play on the BB and I press start on the Seconds Pro App (interval timer) which I have pre-set with the intervals I'm

using. The app audibly announces the end of one block of time and the beginning of the next. No matter where I am in an etude or piece of music I'm working on - when it buzzes, I STOP!

THE FORMULA

- 1 Min ON (free buzz BB exercise #1 and Mouthpiece buzz part of BB #1)
- :30 off
- 2 minutes ON (continue mouthpiece buzz BB #1 and free buzz BB #3)
- 1 Min off
- 3 minutes ON (continue free buzz BB #3, mouthpiece buzz #3, half of #3 on the trumpet)
- 1:30 minutes off
- 4 minutes ON (continue #3 on Trumpet, free buzz BB #8, mouthpiece buzz #8)
- 2 minutes off
- 5 minutes ON (BB #8 on trumpet and Maggio lesson for the day)
- 2:30 minutes off
- 6 minutes ON (double tongue 2x-4x each Clarke Study I have assigned myself to play that day)
- 3 minutes off
- 7 minutes ON (Single Tongue for an assigned tempo for 1 Min, Triple Tongue for an assigned tempo for 1 Min, 3x thru 1 octave scales, 3x thru 2 octave scales, 3x thru 3 octave scales)
- 3:30 minutes off

A total of 42 minutes later (28 minutes of trumpet playing), and my warmup and maintenance on the trumpet is now complete. From here, I go to blocks of 8 minutes ON and 4 minutes off for the remainder of my practice session.

If you haven't figured out yet, this is a good place for me to note that the ON blocks of time are intended to be true working blocks with minimal rest. Use the rest blocks to get music organized for the upcoming work blocks

On to the 8/4. The following is an example of an audition prep day that is about 3 weeks away from the audition. Most everything is learned, but SOME tempo work is still required on a few excerpts.

- 8 minutes ON - if you've properly prioritized and organized, this would be a great place to start with spending 8mins of working on a weakness - say tempo work on *Scheherazade*
- 4 minutes off
- 8 minutes ON - moving down the list of priorities of weaknesses - this might be a good

place for some tempo work on *Petrouchka* and some tempo work on Ravel *Piano*

Concerto

- 4 minutes off
- 8 minutes ON - tempo work on *Pines* 1st Mvt. and *Schmuyle*
- 4 minutes off
- 8 minutes ON - weaknesses have been improved for the day and it's time to start

running rounds - Pick 5-6 of the usual suspects in a first round of an audition

- 4 minutes off
- 8 minutes ON - 5-6 more excerpts
- 4 minutes off
- 8 minutes ON - 5-6 more excerpts

Continue alternating 8s and 4s until you've completed the list of required playing for the audition. Another example for those of you interested in following the "Summer Protocol" I introduced last week: Once you get to the 8/4 segments - Put the 30 etudes for the day on your stand. When the timer buzzes - you start playing thru the etudes. When the timer buzzes again, you stop playing wherever you are in the etude. When the timer buzzes to alert you to start playing again - you pick up where you left off.

Repeat this 8 ON 4 off until you've completed the 30 etudes for the day. SIMPLE!
As always - If you would like a PDF of this, just message me and I'll send this your way.
Start getting in those 84's and get strong without wasting time. Happy Practicing! Chris

MOMMY, ARE WE THERE YET?

(Part 3 of summer practicing)

Chris Smith

In the last two posts I've encouraged adopting a method for staying in shape and gaining endurance and hopefully stamina over the summer via playing a rotation of etudes. I've also encouraged adopting a method of using an interval timer to increase efficiency and maintain focus while practicing. Today I'd like to throw a wrench into things, dig a bit deeper and offer some ideas on how to practice within the parameters of 8 on 4 off (84).

Yes, I believe we need to put in the work to gain access to more strength and stamina and endurance and confidence - some of the things that make us great trumpet players and musicians. HOWEVER - many of us are under the impression that more practicing is always better and always the answer.

First - I need to tell you I strongly believe in a concept called "Minimum Effective Dose". For our purposes - the LEAST amount of practicing that will yield the maximum desired outcome. Yes, we need to play and get the repetitions in, but we also need to have a deep understanding of what our realistic daily, hourly, and 8 min goals are and when enough is enough.

To be clear, when I say least amount of practicing I'm not suggesting not to practice or to be unprepared! I'm AM, however, suggesting that endless/mindless practicing isn't helpful. Endless/ mindless practicing leads to physical and mental fatigue. The more we accept that physical and mental fatigue is normal - the more we no longer view fatigue as actual fatigue - we just think it's normal. IT IS NOT NORMAL TO BE FATIGUED ALL THE TIME! Being fatigued all the time leads to burnout and potentially overuse injuries.

Endless/mindless repetitions can also create a deep sense of mistrust in ourselves, and what we are trying to accomplish on our instruments. It's literally the opposite of what we need as musicians - CONFIDENCE!

So - How do we account for our need to perform to our exacting standards while not overpracticing?

My solution - an equation based around VERY attainable goals within each segment of the 8 minute working blocks of time. Once those minuscule goals are attained - MOVE ON. Outside of the trumpet player's ever-present worries about "high notes", I would argue that most of us get most hung up on issues surrounding tempo, so I'll focus on that for this post.

The equation = (End Goal Tempo) minus (start tempo where there are no mistakes) divided by (Time Frame)

Example - Goal of 100 beats per minute (bpm). Start tempo where I don't make mistakes is found to be 70bpm. Time frame is 2 weeks. $100-70=30$ $30/14\text{days} \approx 2$

My daily practice on X piece of music is thus limited to 2 bpm increase in tempo per day. This equation requires us to be completely honest with ourselves, at what may start out as a seemingly ridiculous or frustratingly slow tempo. But if we follow this equation, without ego attached, we will have a much deeper understanding of each and every piece of music or exercise we are attempting to learn. We will also start and end each practice session and playing day with a better, confident and HEALTHIER relationship with the trumpet and that music which we are learning.

I'll give you 2 scenarios. Both require a deep and honest personal assessment of an appropriate starting point and an end goal.

SCENARIO 1

Challenge - Learn Charlier 1 for my next lesson. The indicated tempo (goal) is 104-120 beats per minute. My solution - REMOVE MY EGO, press start on my timer and find a starting tempo where I am absolutely sure I can play thru the entire etude without missing any notes. Let's say I figure out that my starting point is a mere 60bpm.

From there, I create my workable and trackable equation - The goal of 120bpm minus 60bpm = 60bpm. 60bpm divided by 6 Days = 10bpm. 10bpm faster per day is now my established daily goal. Note - my goal is to play the etude at 120 in a week from now, NOT today or tomorrow!

Having a realistic expectation of what work needs to be accomplished and when the work is due is key to remaining positive and confident! I'm confident I can play at 60bpm and I want to remain confident as I progress. The issues surrounding tempo are generally related to coordination - so I will want to keep the jumps in tempo to a minimum so that I don't actually notice the tempo changes. The goal is to trick my body into feeling at the end of the week that 120bpm is as easy as 60bpm was at the beginning. A 2bpm increase should do the trick to progress but keep myself coordinated.

Increasing the tempo 2bpm = 6 repetitions (60,62,64,66,68,70). It's probable that playing Charlier 1 6x through is overkill and I'll fatigue quickly, thus not necessary. So - I find the trouble spots, bracket them off and practice only those spots. I try to keep the bracketed trouble spots as exact as possible - as small as one interval and not more than 4 measures. I move the tempo up only when I'm confident I can play those trouble spots at each slow tempo. Today 60-70, tomorrow 70-80 and so on...

Let's say I have bracketed 4 trouble spots. I play each bracket beginning at 60bpm and move up by 2 clicks. When I reach 70bpm I'll play the entire etude at 70bpm and I'm finished and moving on to the next thing. In the end, I will have confidently played the complete etude at 60bpm (maybe again at 65bpm halfway thru the process) and at 70bpm. I will have practiced the 4

trouble spots 6x in increasing small tempo jumps. AND with the timer running, this will have only taken maybe 2 8min segments. That's 16 minutes of work on Charlier 1 for the day. That's it.

Here's the key - I started the work on the etude with total confidence and I ended the work on the etude with total confidence! My relationship to the trumpet/music never changed. I was always confident and was never frustrated.

SCENARIO 2

Challenge - I've decided to take an audition. There are many excerpts and some of them I need to play slowly to learn or re-learn. Solution - quickly identify and separate out the excerpts that I know will require significant deliberate tempo work (Scheherazade, Pines 1st Mvt, Petrouchka Dance, Ravel Piano Concerto - to name a few) from those excerpts that I know I can play well at any given moment and thus don't need to play as often.

I will need to decide when I want the tempo work to be complete and begin running rounds to mimic the audition. Let's say the audition is 8 weeks away and I want to start running rounds 2 weeks before - this means I have 6 weeks to do tempo work. 6 weeks = 42 days. I take 1 day completely off the trumpet every week. This leaves me with 36 available practice days.

I will take the the excerpts that need tempo work and subtract 36bpm from the desired end tempo. This is my starting point. Scheherazade - 95bpm - 36bpm = 59bpm Pines 1st Mvt - 90bpm - 36bpm = 54bpm Petrouchka Dance - 116bpm - 36bpm = 80bpm Ravel - 117bpm - 36bpm = 81bpm

By increasing the tempo 1-2 bpm each day - the simple equation guarantees that I will be "at tempo" with confidence and without frustration in 6 weeks from now. Also - by following this equation - I can expect to play thru an excerpt correctly 2x and MOVE ALONG. Please understand - I don't need the excerpts to be at tempo right now - I only need them to be at tempo in 6 or (even with a cushion of time) 8 weeks from now.

By increasing the tempo at an agonizingly slow pace, I'm allowing myself to concentrate on sound and articulation and coordinations - but I'm also moving QUICKLY and confidently by not getting bogged down with endlessly playing through each excerpt. These excerpts are short. I can confidently get the required work done on 4-10 excerpts in just a few 8min work segments.

Speed kills - so instead of trying to learn something as fast as possible and making mistakes and getting frustrated - I think of it like this - ***what's the slowest pace I can deeply learn something in the available timeframe?***

Hopefully you are beginning to see that by:

- using an interval timer to limit the amount of continuous playing time - thus keeping us fresh, and
- employing a well-thought-out tempo equation that will allow us to confidently practice while being efficient in achieving very small daily goals and avoiding frustration and fatigue.

These two things combined allow us to exhibit a certain amount of trackable control over what and how we practice each day. Having an efficient, quantifiable and trackable method of daily practice SHOULD allow us to move quickly and – methodically through a large amount of repertoire and be CONFIDENT in our performances!

What's your equation? If you don't have one, give mine a try and let me know what you think! As always - if you'd like a PDF of this, I'm happy to forward this to you.

Happy Practicing! Chris

CONTROL FREAK

(Part 4 for summer practicing)

Chris Smith

If you've been following along for the past few weeks, then you may have some questions or hopefully assumptions about what I'm trying to accomplish in my own practice routine and what I'm trying to get you to realize in your routine. Namely - this isn't actually practice, this is TRAINING and when you are seriously training for something, you:

- Set goals (both large and small)
- Make an actionable plan to achieve those goals
- Track and quantify as many aspects as possible so that you can make the appropriate adjustments (work AND rest are both tracked and accounted for)
- Stick with your well-thought-out training plan

In short - you need to gain control and - YOU CONTROL MORE THAN YOU THINK YOU CONTROL!

From what, how and how much you train, to what order you train things in, where you train, what you wear when you train, to what you consume throughout the training day - all of these things are trackable and in your control!

As I've shown in the last 3 posts about practicing (training)- we can easily make systems and structures around ourselves that allow us to get out of our own way. From WHAT we are playing each day to HOW and HOW MUCH we are playing each day, if we demand of ourselves to follow a well thought out set of guidelines, we will accomplish more by staying out of the way and following the system we've set up for ourselves.

Again for those in the back who didn't hear the first time - YOU CONTROL MORE THAN YOU THINK YOU CONTROL

My goal is to put working definitions to as many aspects of trumpet playing as possible. In other words - if I can accurately define what I'm trying to do (BE THE BEST MUSICIAN I CAN BE), I need to be able to break down that goal into smaller pieces that can be quantified and tracked to demonstrably show improvement ... or a worsening of conditions.

When I think about how to define "MUSICALITY", the only word that keeps coming back to me is CONTROL. "Musicality" is a somewhat nebulous term, but the word "Control" gives me something to work with. The more I can give myself black and white definitions

- the better. I am either IN control or NOT in control. Something is either moving me towards my stated goal or away from my stated goal.

Some examples:

Is it helping or hurting to practice/ train 3+hrs a day?

- Possibly helpful if it's the summer, you have a detailed practice/training plan and you are in need of increased stamina.
- Probably hurtful if it's the night before an audition... or the morning of a performance. Is it helpful or hurtful to take a day off?
- ALWAYS helpful if you've got a detailed weekly practice/ training plan which allows for complete rest.
- Possibly hurtful if you have no plan and/or are barely in shape.
Is it helpful or hurtful to stay out late, eat salty junk food and consume adult beverages?
- Possibly helpful if these activities are accounted for in a detailed weekly practice/ training plan as they can be personal stress-relievers and ways we connect socially.
- Probably hurtful if these activities are engaged in on the night before an audition... or the morning of a performance.

Note - I pass no judgement on anyone's dietary choices - I'm just trying to show that we can indeed exhibit a high level of control over many aspects of our daily training and preparation.

NONETHELESS - Back to "Musicality"

When we think of the most musical performances we've ever experienced - in general, those performers exhibited an incredible amount of control over their instruments to move us in a meaningful way. Yes, everyone is moved in different ways by different performers bringing different nuances to the music they're performing - however - those nuances are allowed to come through via the control these individuals exhibit. For myself I say - "Be the best musician I can be at any given moment". But this is a goal without a definition.

Here's my functioning definition- "Exhibit the most control on the musical vehicle (trumpet) at any given moment". Ugh - now I need a functioning definition of great trumpet playing because even that term seems somewhat nebulous.

In its simplest, most quantifiable and trackable form, here's my functioning definition of great trumpet playing:

Someone who plays:

1. In Time
2. In Tune
3. With a vibrant sound
4. With a good articulation
5. In the correct style

I think these 5 attributes are universal to all trumpet players and can be easily tracked and demonstrably shown.

MUSICIAN Control over Vehicle (Trumpet)

1. Control over playing in time

1. Control over rhythms
2. Control over tempo

2. Control over playing in Tune

1. Control over pitch
2. Control over where the pitch lies in relation to what is happening around it

3. Control over playing vibrantly

1. Control over intensity of volume
2. Control over intensity of color

4. Control over articulation

1. Control over hard articulations
2. Control over legato articulations

5. Control over style

1. Have a deep understanding of different techniques
2. Listen to and regularly practice different types of genre specific articulations

What is YOUR definition and how do you hold yourself to account in order to track and achieve the ultimate goal of control, show nuance and thus play musically?

PRO TIP - Time is paramount. Time affects everything else. Playing in time is the single biggest factor for coordination of intonation, articulation and playing with a beautiful sound. If we're aren't playing in time, usually the result is we are searching for where to put the articulation, where to put the center of the note and thus we search for the intonation. It's incredibly hard to ring vibrantly (and chipped notes abound) if we don't know when and where to put the note.

I've literally never heard anyone play with a great sound, with great articulations and in tune, who regularly played out of time. Never.

Fix your time and you immediately fix (or at least create space to clearly address) articulations, sound, and intonation. This summer - try calling your practice sessions TRAINING SESSIONS and see if that doesn't change your perspective and strike – a different response from deep within you.

As your summer of training continues, I encourage you to dig as deeply as you can to find ways to gain more control over as many aspects of trumpet playing and music making as possible. Happy Practicing... I mean TRAINING!

Happy Training! Chris

PLUS ONE

(Part 5 and 1 last equation for summer practicing)

Chris Smith

The End... maybe... probably... All's well that ends. This has been a lot of fun for me and I hope I have been able to show you some new ways to look at how to practice. Now it's time for ME to give my thumbs a rest (I write these on my iPhone) and get back to work on the trumpet.

RECAP

Q - What should I practice if I do not know what to practice or don't want to think about what to practice?

A - Plug in and go - Find several etude books and follow this formula- Day of the Week (1-7) Day of the Month (1-31) Month of the Year (1-12). Play the numbered etudes that correspond to these days.

Q - How do I structure a sustainable and trackable practice routine that allows for intense, focused blocks of time but also allows for rest?

A - Use a timer. I suggest starting at 1 Min on and :30 off and increasing in 1 Min blocks of time not to exceed 8 minutes on and 4 minutes off. Continue adding 8's and 4's as your stamina level allows.

Q - How do I practice within the 8/4 parameters?

A - Prioritize and Organize. Set big goals, but also (and more importantly) set incredibly small and easily attainable, trackable, and quantifiable goals for each 8 min block of time. Over time, the larger goals will be confidently met.

Q - I have lots of goals, but how do I quantify great trumpet playing?

A - Take control. Have functioning, actionable and quantifiable definitions for as many aspects of trumpet playing and music making as possible.

If you've read my other posts, you know that by practicing in short blocks of strictly controlled time is how I and others have found a great deal of success in managing how to efficiently practice. Since I'm not your trumpet teacher, I've tried to show HOW to practice without necessarily telling you WHAT to practice.

Think of these small blocks of time as LEGOs. Just as how you assemble the LEGOs is determined by what you need or are trying to build, as musicians how we fill these blocks of time should be determined by what we need or what we are trying to build in our playing. Everyone has different strengths and weaknesses that need to be addressed, and everyone has different goals and playing demands.

Having a deep and realistic understanding of your goals and actual playing demands is paramount. CHOOSE WISELY as to what you decide to fill these blocks of time with.

If you have read this far and are still onboard, CONGRATULATIONS! You've got all the information you need to build new habits and build a new routine based on honest personal assessments and an actionable and trackable practice plan!!

Q - But now what!?

A - I'm not your teacher, BUT - here are the aspects of trumpet playing I find that we all need the most work on. I stole these from former Navy Seal Mark Divine's *10 Ways to Tell How Fit You Are*. I've adapted their original definitions for my purposes:

- **ENDURANCE** - The ability to play comfortably at a medium volume in the middle register (the "cash register") for extended periods of time.
- **STAMINA** - not the same as endurance. It is the ability to play at or near maximum effort for extended periods of time. This is what most of us trumpet players actually want when we use the word endurance. They are different. Use the correct term.
- **POWER** - The ability to project a very loud sound.
- **STRENGTH** - The ability to play high and loud.
- **FLEXIBILITY** - the ability to play low to high and high to low. It's a range of motion. That's it.
- **AGILITY** - The ability to quickly move from one note to another. What we call "Flexibility Studies" really should be called "Agility Studies".
- **SPEED** - This is self explanatory.
- **COORDINATION** - The ability to combine different aspects of trumpet playing into seamless actions.
- **ACCURACY** - The ability to play the correct note.
- **BALANCE** - The ability to play with a sound that is vibrant, focused, in tune, in time, with a good articulation. When we are in balance and playing "down the middle of the horn," trumpet playing seems almost effortless.

READ ON WITH CAUTION

Please know - all of these aspects of trumpet playing require training individually and in combination. BUT, the more brutal aspects (strength, power and stamina) are of particular concern for most of us. They require the most careful consideration on how we train these aspects of trumpet playing. In short - these three require the most

EFFORT. You will NEVER gain access to more power if you never exert and force yourself (at first) to play louder than you usually play. You will NEVER gain access to more stamina if you do not force yourself to play loudly and in the upper register for ever increasing (incremental) amounts of time. You will NEVER have a great high range if you never actually play in the upper register.

NOTE - these efforts will not be pretty at first. No one finesses his or her way into a powerful sound. No one finesses his or her way into stamina. They add finesse AFTER they have gained access to the power and stamina.

If you choose to make power and stamina a priority, remember - we don't get stronger while training, we get stronger while resting. So, since everyone wants to know how to gain more endurance, here's your easy equation for more endurance (not stamina)

+1

I've followed this equation every year for the past eleven years and for several months at a time. It is simple. It is easy. It is effective. TO BE COMPLETED AT THE END OF THE PLAYING DAY

The easiest way to follow this equation is to begin on the first day of the month. We begin on "Tuning A" and work chromatically outward. One minute on each note, breathing quickly as needed and PLAYING AS SOFTLY AS POSSIBLE Add one minute each day.

- July1=1minuteA
- July2=1MinA+1MinBb
- July3=1MinA,1MinBb+1MinAb
- July4=1MinA+1MinBb+1MinAb+1MinB
- July5=1MinA+1MinBb+1MinAb+1MinB+1MinG
- July6=1MinA+1MinBb+1MinAb+1MinB+1MinG+1MinC
- July7=1MinA+1MinBb+1MinAb+1MinB+1MinG+1MinC+1MinF#
- July8=1MinA+1MinBb+1MinAb+1MinB+1MinG+1MinC+1MinF#+1Min

C#

- July 9 = 1 Min A + 1 Min Bb + 1 Min Ab + 1 Min B + 1 Min G + 1 Min C + 1 Min F# + 1 Min

C# + 1 Min F

- July10=1MinA+1MinBb+1MinAb+1MinB+1MinG+1MinC+1MinF#+1

Min C# + 1 Min F + 1 Min D

- July11=1MinA+1MinBb+1MinAb+1MinB+1MinG+1MinC+1MinF#+1

Min C# + 1 Min F + 1 Min D + 1 Min E

- July12=1MinA+1MinBb+1MinAb+1MinB+1MinG+1MinC+1MinF#+1

Min C# + 1 Min F + 1 Min D + 1 Min E + 1 Min ^Eb

- July13=1MinA+1MinBb+1MinAb+1MinB+1MinG+1MinC+1MinF#+1

Min C# + 1 Min F + 1 Min D + 1 Min E + 1 Min ^Eb + 1 Min Eb

- July14=1MinA+1MinBb+1MinAb+1MinB+1MinG+1MinC+1MinF#+1

Min C# + 1 Min F + 1 Min D + 1 Min E + 1 Min ^Eb + 1 Min Eb + 1 Min ^E

- July15=1MinA+1MinBb+1MinAb+1MinB+1MinG+1MinC+1MinF#+1

Min C# + 1 Min F + 1 Min D + 1 Min E + 1 Min ^Eb + 1 Min Eb + 1 Min ^E + 1 Min D

- July16=1MinA+1MinBb+1MinAb+1MinB+1MinG+1MinC+1MinF#+1

Min C# + 1 Min F + 1 Min D + 1 Min E + 1 Min ^Eb + 1 Min Eb + 1 Min ^E + 1 Min D + 1

Min ^F

- July17=1MinA+1MinBb+1MinAb+1MinB+1MinG+1MinC+1MinF#+1

Min C# + 1 Min F + 1 Min D + 1 Min E + 1 Min ^Eb + 1 Min Eb + 1 Min ^E + 1 Min D + 1
Min ^F + 1 Min C#

- July18=1MinA+1MinBb+1MinAb+1MinB+1MinG+1MinC+1MinF#+1 Min C# + 1 Min F + 1
Min D + 1 Min E + 1 Min ^Eb + 1 Min Eb + 1 Min ^E + 1 Min D + 1 Min ^F + 1 Min C# + 1
Min ^F#

- July19=1MinA+1MinBb+1MinAb+1MinB+1MinG+1MinC+1MinF#+1 Min C# + 1 Min F + 1
Min D + 1 Min E + 1 Min ^Eb + 1 Min Eb + 1 Min ^E + 1 Min D + 1 Min ^F + 1 Min C# + 1
Min ^F# + 1 Min low C

- July20=1MinA+1MinBb+1MinAb+1MinB+1MinG+1MinC+1MinF#+1 Min C# + 1 Min F + 1
Min D + 1 Min E + 1 Min ^Eb + 1 Min Eb + 1 Min ^E + 1 Min D + 1 Min ^F + 1 Min C# + 1
Min ^F# + 1 Min low C + 1 Min ^G

- July21=1MinA+1MinBb+1MinAb+1MinB+1MinG+1MinC+1MinF#+1 Min C# + 1 Min F + 1
Min D + 1 Min E + 1 Min ^Eb + 1 Min Eb + 1 Min ^E + 1 Min D + 1 Min ^F + 1 Min C# + 1
Min ^F# + 1 Min low C + 1 Min ^G + 1 Min low B

- July22=1MinA+1MinBb+1MinAb+1MinB+1MinG+1MinC+1MinF#+1 Min C# + 1 Min F + 1
Min D + 1 Min E + 1 Min ^Eb + 1 Min Eb + 1 Min ^E + 1 Min D + 1 Min ^F + 1 Min C# + 1
Min ^F# + 1 Min low C + 1 Min ^G + 1 Min low B + 1 Min ^G#

- July23=1MinA+1MinBb+1MinAb+1MinB+1MinG+1MinC+1MinF#+1 Min C# + 1 Min F + 1 Min D + 1 Min E + 1 Min ^Eb + 1 Min Eb + 1 Min ^E + 1 Min D + 1 Min ^F + 1 Min C# + 1 Min ^F# + 1 Min low C + 1 Min ^G + 1 Min low B + 1 Min ^G# + 1 Min low Bb
- July24=1MinA+1MinBb+1MinAb+1MinB+1MinG+1MinC+1MinF#+1 Min C# + 1 Min F + 1 Min D + 1 Min E + 1 Min ^Eb + 1 Min Eb + 1 Min ^E + 1 Min D + 1 Min ^F + 1 Min C# + 1 Min ^F# + 1 Min low C + 1 Min ^G + 1 Min low B + 1 Min ^G# + 1 Min low Bb + 1 Min ^A
- July25=1MinA+1MinBb+1MinAb+1MinB+1MinG+1MinC+1MinF#+1 Min C# + 1 Min F + 1 Min D + 1 Min E + 1 Min ^Eb + 1 Min Eb + 1 Min ^E + 1 Min D + 1 Min ^F + 1 Min C# + 1 Min ^F# + 1 Min low C + 1 Min ^G + 1 Min low B + 1 Min ^G# + 1 Min low Bb + 1 Min ^A + 1 Min low A
- July26=1MinA+1MinBb+1MinAb+1MinB+1MinG+1MinC+1MinF#+1 Min C# + 1 Min F + 1 Min D + 1 Min E + 1 Min ^Eb + 1 Min Eb + 1 Min ^E + 1 Min D + 1 Min ^F + 1 Min C# + 1 Min ^F# + 1 Min C + 1 Min ^G + 1 Min B + 1 Min ^G# + 1 Min Bb + 1 Min ^A + 1 Min low A + 1 Min ^Bb
- July27=1MinA+1MinBb+1MinAb+1MinB+1MinG+1MinC+1MinF#+1 Min C# + 1 Min F + 1 Min D + 1 Min E + 1 Min ^Eb + 1 Min Eb + 1 Min ^E + 1 Min D + 1 Min ^F + 1 Min C# + 1 Min ^F# + 1 Min low C + 1 Min ^G + 1 Min low B + 1 Min ^G# + 1 Min low Bb + 1 Min ^A + 1 Min low A + 1 Min ^Bb + 1 Min low Ab
- July28=1MinA+1MinBb+1MinAb+1MinB+1MinG+1MinC+1MinF#+1 Min C# + 1 Min F + 1 Min D + 1 Min E + 1 Min ^Eb + 1 Min Eb + 1 Min ^E + 1 Min D + 1 Min ^F + 1 Min C# + 1 Min ^F# + 1 Min low C + 1 Min ^G + 1 Min low B + 1 Min ^G# + 1 Min low Bb + 1 Min ^A + 1 Min low A + 1 Min ^Bb + 1 Min low Ab + 1 Min ^B
- July29=1MinA+1MinBb+1MinAb+1MinB+1MinG+1MinC+1MinF#+1 Min C# + 1 Min F + 1 Min D + 1 Min E + 1 Min ^Eb + 1 Min Eb + 1 Min ^E + 1 Min D + 1 Min ^F + 1 Min C# + 1 Min ^F# + 1 Min low C + 1 Min ^G + 1 Min low B + 1 Min ^G# + 1 Min low Bb + 1 Min ^A + 1 Min low A + 1 Min ^Bb + 1 Min low Ab + 1 Min ^B + 1 Min low G
- July30=1MinA+1MinBb+1MinAb+1MinB+1MinG+1MinC+1MinF#+1 Min C# + 1 Min F + 1 Min D + 1 Min E + 1 Min ^Eb + 1 Min Eb + 1 Min ^E + 1 Min D + 1 Min ^F + 1 Min C# + 1 Min ^F# + 1 Min low C + 1 Min ^G + 1 Min low B + 1 Min ^G# + 1 Min low Bb + 1 Min ^A + 1 Min low A + 1 Min ^Bb + 1 Min low Ab + 1 Min ^B + 1 Min low G + 1 Min ^C
- July31=1MinA+1MinBb+1MinAb+1MinB+1MinG+1MinC+1MinF#+1 Min C# + 1 Min F + 1 Min D + 1 Min E + 1 Min ^Eb + 1 Min Eb + 1 Min ^E + 1 Min D + 1 Min ^F + 1 Min C# + 1 Min ^F# + 1 Min low C + 1 Min ^G + 1 Min low B + 1 Min ^G# + 1 Min low Bb + 1 Min ^A + 1 Min low A + 1 Min ^Bb + 1 Min low Ab + 1 Min ^B + 1 Min low G + 1 Min ^C + 1 Min low F#

On the 31st you will have played for 31 minutes nonstop (***breathe as necessary and play as softly as possible***) and ending with 1 Min of a high C and 1 Min of a low F# Simple equation. Easy.

You wanted access to endurance. Here is your trackable and actionable plan. Please keep in mind - THIS IS A PHYSICAL ENDEAVOR not a musical endeavor.

“It’s boring” ... Yes. I understand. So what? You said you wanted access to endurance. Running a marathon is boring, but there is only one way to train and that is to put in the ever increasing miles. Put a practice mute in, turn on the TV, start the timer and play as softly as possible.

“It’s not musical” ... Yes. I understand. We can and should be able to separate form and function from artistry.

“Will I hurt myself”? ... I’ll ask you back - “Do you think you’ll hurt yourself by playing as softly as possible in increasing 1 minute increments”? My guess would be NO... but I don’t know. BUT I would also guess that if you’re on the verge of injury - it’s not from playing as softly as possible.

“I lose flexibility when I play long tones” ... Don’t ever write that on a public forum or say those words out loud ever again. By definition, flexibility was defined as “range of motion” and we just demonstrated that at the end of 31 days you will have played a high C followed by a low F#. You indeed demonstrated flexibility. You’re confusing flexibility with agility and you should use the correct term.

Someone told you this long ago and you believed them and now you’re hiding behind this as a way to avoid playing long tones. Don’t do this.

You’ve just played 31 minutes of long tones at the end of your playing day - put the trumpet away. You’ll feel great tomorrow when you start again. Don’t test things after you’ve fatigued yourself. That’s like running a marathon and then testing your 100m dash time ... then complaining that your 100m time is slower than when you’re fresh. Don’t do these things - and then complain about them - it looks ridiculous.

NONETHELESS - Do you have the mental fortitude to stick with this program for a month? What about continuing on with 31 minutes of long tones everyday for the month of August? What about continuing on playing 31 Minutes of long tones for 6 months until the end of Dec? Alright! This seems like a pretty good stopping point.

I wish I could write more. I do have lots more to say, but I wanted all of these posts to be about HOW to create training space and blocks of time, not necessarily WHAT musical endeavors to be training. I’ll leave the “what” up to your lesson teachers and professors. Thanks for reading and reaching out to me with your comments and questions. I’m always happy to engage with people who want to know more and have serious questions.

Now it’s back to work for me. Happy Training and enjoy your summer! Chris