

Brass Instrument Maintenance

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One of the most important parts of owning an instrument is knowing how to maintain it. This is especially critical for young band students who sometimes find it difficult in their busy lives to properly care for their horn. In this fast-paced, "instant gratification" world a few moments of daily attention will keep your instruments performing properly for many years. We will outline a few general and not-so-general maintenance tips for you below.

General Brass Maintenance

- Oil valves every time the instrument is played!
 - o **VIDEO: www.YouTube.com – search for “Oiling Piston Valves”**
- Silicone lubricant should not be used on valves – ONLY on trombone slides
- DO NOT mix synthetic and natural (petroleum-based) valve oils
- Move ALL slides every time the horn is played
- Use spray furniture polish and a polishing cloth for removing fingerprints from lacquered instruments
- Lubricate slide tubes once per week and before storage periods
- Clean and dry all valves and valve casings before storage periods
- Check all waterkey springs, screws and corks weekly for damage
- For lacquered instruments, wipe down the finish of the instrument weekly to remove fingerprints, oils, moisture and other debris
 - o For silver instruments use only a specialized silver polishing cloth to avoid damaging the finish
- **Have all brass instruments chemically cleaned every 12 months!**
 - o Marching instruments should be chemically-cleaned at the end of the marching season, not during the summer
- Do-it-yourself non-chemical flush (every 90 days)
 - o Use LUKEWARM water ONLY!
 - o Take pictures of complex parts for easy reassembly (i.e. Rotary Valve Linkage, valve assemblies, French Horn/Euphonium slide order)
 - o Disassemble instrument and remove any felts and/or corks – set these aside
 - o Use a mild detergent or degreaser (dish detergent, Simple Green) in a very small ratio to water
 - o Using only non-abrasive vinyl or plastic brushes, clean all tubes, all valves, bottom caps, and snake the bell, paying special attention to mouthpipes and lower portions of slides (any area where moisture collects)
 - o Clean all lacquered/plated surfaces BY HAND ONLY!
 - o Allow to dry completely before reassembly

Piston Brass

- Lubricate valves by using six drops of valve oil for each piston EVERY TIME THE HORN IS PLAYED
- NEVER oil the valves through the slide tubes, bottom caps or through the mouthpipe – place the oil directly on the piston
- Do not spin the pistons when reinserting them in the casings

Rotary Brass

- Lubricate valves each time the horn is played by using 30 weight oil on the back bearing, spindle and stop arm. Use rotor oil through the outer slide tubes
- Replace worn strings or linkage parts BEFORE they break!
- Removal of rotary valves is not recommended
- DO NOT use a screwdriver to remove the back bearing plate
- Replace rotor strings when they are worn – do not wait until they break (see attached diagram)
- Check all linkage screws and pivot points weekly for signs of movement and wear



French Horn Rotor Stringing Diagram

When stringing, tighten string set screw 2 to hold the lever while you finish stringing. This is the same screw that adjusts spatula height.

