

Taking Care of Valved Instruments

Daily Maintenance

As you play, your instrument collects moisture inside from the warm air coming out of your mouth. If you do not clean this moisture out after each playing session, it can accumulate in your instrument and cause various problems. After playing, open any water keys and blow a steady stream of air through the instrument to blow any water out. When opening the third valve key, make sure to also press down the third valve. The outside should then be wiped with a polishing cloth to remove fingerprints. This will stop your instrument from tarnishing and keep it in good working order.

Weekly

The mouthpiece should be cleaned weekly using warm water and ~~soft~~ liquid soap and your mouthpiece brush. This sanitizes the mouthpiece and removes foreign matter from the inside. Oil valves through the holes in the bottom or by removing if needed (most horns only need oil every few weeks).

Every 2 Weeks

Make sure the slides are in good shape and can move in and out freely. If slides are dry, grease them with a smear of slide grease and work it all around with your finger. Work slides in and out until smooth. Close slides and wipe off excess with a rag or paper towel. Return tuning slide to its regular position.

Every couple of months (or more if playing every day)

Take all the valves and slides out of your horn and wipe the grease off of them and set them. Be sure to remember which valve is which – the instrument will not work unless each valve is in its specific place. Place instrument and slides in a tub big enough filled with hot (but not too hot), soapy water to cover the instrument. A little grease cutting dish detergent works well for this.

Let soak, and then run the cleaning snake through all the pipes carefully but firmly (while the horn is still under water). Run it through a few times until no residue comes out paying special attention to the lead pipe, which has a tendency to have more accumulated grime than anywhere else. Rinse the slides and body of the trumpet well and dry each piece. Grease the slides and replace them, working in the grease as explained above. Rinse the valves, wipe them off, oil well, and insert back into the valve casing, taking care to line up the valve sleeve with the notch inside each valve. Blow through the horn to dry the inside for a few moments. (Tip: don't do this on the day of a performance. It usually takes a couple of days for a horn to dry completely inside).

Polish the outside of your horn with a dry cloth removing all fingerprints and any excess grease or oil. Once the instrument is reassembled, play it to make sure everything is in the right place.

Yearly Maintenance

When in doubt, have your instrument checked out at a music store. They will do minor repairs and replace corks if worn. Ask for an estimate for cleaning and repairs before having the work done. If you are renting an instrument, this work might be covered in the rental agreement. Early summer is a great time to do this.

Recommended Supplies

Mouthpiece Brush



Valve Oil



Slide Grease



Cleaning Snake



Polishing Cloth



Valved Brass Instruments Continued



Storing your instrument

- When not using your instrument, keep it in its case closed to help protect it and to prevent the possibility of damage.
- Do not store the instrument in areas of extreme temperature changes (like in a car). Keep the instrument away from heat sources or windows where direct sunlight or other weather can cause damage.
- Don't ever try to stuff music or books into your case, this could cause serious damage to the tubing by bending them out of alignment.

Most Common Ways a Brass Instrument Might Need Repair

- Books stored in cases, pressing against the second valve slide.
- Slides getting stuck, especially the tuning slide. Move them in and out regularly just to make sure they don't freeze in place.
- Setting down the instrument carelessly. Most damage happens when the instrument tips over, falls off a chair, or assorted other ways they might drop if left in an unstable place, especially with other people around.
- Mouthpiece getting stuck. Never 'pop' the mouthpiece. Gently twist in and gently twist out.
- Mouthpiece getting a dent in the round bore rim.
- Spit cork falling out or leaking.

For Practicing

- Having a **music stand** allows proper playing anywhere (sitting or standing). A folding stand can be found online for under \$20.
- Having a **tuner** to rehearse with allows you to constantly check pitch as you play across different ranges. It's common for younger player to be flat as they go into the upper register. Having a tuner helps to 'see' it. (The clip on chromatic ones will fit right on your bell). [Tuning apps for your phone.](#)
- A **metronome** is helpful to rehearse technical studies, but also allows you to be accurate with marked tempos in music. There are many [metronome apps.](#)

Advanced Considerations

- **Instrument Stand** - to hold your instrument safely when not playing.
- **Mutes** (if you need to be quiet!)

Caring for the Valves

- You can oil the valves by unscrewing the top and taking them halfway out to oil, align the valve with the valve slot and screw it tightly back in. In a hurry? You can also squirt a little oil through each bottom cap and work the oil in.
- Before taking out any of the 3 valve slides, press that valve down first to prevent "popping" the slides.
- Random parts - Taking the valves apart requires careful attention to the valve stems, felts, springs, and most importantly which is 1, 2, & 3. It is usually etched into the side or top of each valve.
- Stuck slides - Go to a professional or make sure your teacher has the proper tools. Same with any stuck/frozen valves or slides.

Links --> yamaha.com * [YouTube video](#) * tubas.com

Ask your teacher to use a mouthpiece puller.



Use a truing tool to round it back out.



Portable tuners



Wind up metronome



Trumpet Stand



2 types of straight mutes

Following these guidelines will keep your horn in good order and avoid costly repairs.