

MEHSband Warm-Ups

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- 1.) Breathing Exercises
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Foreword:

Before MEHSband musicians play their musical selection, they must perform these warm-ups that are usually in this order. These five warm ups are performed by select students in the band that are not limited to band council members. Warm-ups begin precisely (by the minute) when rehearsal begins, regardless of when Mr. Cato arrives. The student is responsible for beginning warm ups – not Mr. Cato!

Breathing warm-ups

First and foremost, before even warming up on an instrument, wind players must first practice their **breathing**. Because air and air support is crucial to the sound, pitch, tone, and quality of an instrument's sound, warm-ups must include breathing in order for the body and lungs to prepare for the strenuous task of playing an instrument.

There are several breathing exercises that simulate long-tones, staccatos, accents, and various other attacks your diaphragm must be able to control and play. Several examples are below.

Before we begin breathing, check posture.

Students should be standing up straight with their hands on their diaphragms. Instruct them to push against this muscle and feel how this muscle coordinates with air. All the air from an exercise should be expelled by the time the exercise is completed. Students must have a strong stream of air as they expel their air supply. A good example Mr. Cato uses that really sticks: Pretend you have a sheet of paper in front of you and you would like to blow it away from your face for (x) amount of counts. With the correct posture in place, let's begin with the actual exercises!

- 1) **8 – 8 – 8**

This exercise is fairly straightforward: breathe in for 8 counts, hold for 8 counts, and hiss out for 8 counts. During those 8 long hisses, crescendo from piano to forte. This focuses on long tones and a lot of dynamics.

2) **8 – 4 – 16**

This exercise focuses on the subdivision of notes, specifically quarters, eighths, and triplets. Breathe in for 8 counts, hold for 4 counts, followed by (still in the same tempo, conducted in 2): two quarter notes (2 counts), 2 *sets* of eighth notes, two triplet sets, repeat this sequence, and then a long sforzando (sfz) and crescendo the hiss for the remaining 4 counts.

3) **2-1, 2-1, 2-1, 1-4, 1-4, 1-4**

This exercise is a bit different as there are no counts allotted for the “hold”. After the student breathes in for 2 counts, they must expel ALL their air within 1 count. Thus, the air stream must be forced and strong. Breathe in for 2 counts, hiss out for 1 count, repeat three times; immediately after, switch to breathing in for only 1 count, and then hissing out for 4 counts. Make sure the breathing and hissing is very metrically accurate- no bleeding over to the next count!

4) **1 – 1 – 2, 1 – 1 – 3, 1 – 1 – 4, 1 – 1 – 5**

Breathe in for 1 count, hold for 1 count, hiss out for 2 counts, making sure to accent the 2nd beat; repeat, but increase the hiss out to 3 counts, still accenting the 2nd beat. Repeat again, increasing the hiss by a count each time until the count gets up to 5, still accenting the 2nd beat.

5) **1 – 1 – 20 (singles, then doubles, then triplets)**

This exercise is very similar to the second exercise in that it practices the subdivision of note values. This exercise however, is more difficult as students are expected to hiss their air within 20 counts. Thus, they must conserve their air while doing this exercise. Although some students are unable to perform this exercise the first few times, through practice, they will improve.

SINGLES:

Breathe in for 1 count, hold for 1 count, and hiss out singles (quarter notes) for 20 counts. However, this exercise is also a dynamics exercise. The first set of 4 quarter notes are descrescendos. The second set is also descrescendoing. The third and fourth sets of quarters are crescendos. The last set of four quarters are accented and strong.

DOUBLES:

The decresc. And cresc. Are exactly the same as the singles exercise. This time, instead of hissing out single quarter notes, students are expected to hiss out eighth notes (doubles).

TRIPLES:

Same routine, hiss in triplet sets. (Same dynamics, same concept).

If breathing exercises are done properly and consistently, they will help increase a person’s lung capacity, thereby improving a person’s tone and range. Happy breathing!

Slurs

This exercise warms up the instruments by initially playing long tones. During this time, students will focus on air support and tone. However, as the slur sequences progress, the pace will quicken and rhythm will become the central idea of the slurs exercise. During the slurs exercise, students are expected to slur all the notes! That means, faster fingers, faster slide movements to improve accuracy.

1.) Whole Notes Slur Sequence:

The notation pattern is in 5ths. All notes are 5 note apart. (Concert) Bb – F. After the above sequence is finished, repeat the sequence but play the next note and it's 5th. (Concert) C – G and so on until the student conductor chooses to begin the next sequence.

2.) Half Note Sequence

Same idea as the previous, but shorten the note value to just half notes.

3.) Eighth Note Sequence

This is the last and trickiest slur sequence. Moreover, the notes change (not really)! Instead of starting with the 1st and then continuing with the 5th, it is inverted. Thus, the 5th (Concert F) is played before the 1st (Concert Bb). The first measure - a set of 4 eighth notes. The second measure – a set of 4 triplets. The third measure – sixteenth triplets.

Following the 5th to the 1st pattern, the next notes should be Concert G – Concert C and so on.

Articulae

Articulae is a warm-up exercise composed by our director, Mr. Cato. It is comprised of a many different rhythms that all exercise a student's ability to play the Bb scale (albeit the Articulae packet comes with all major scales). Section leaders are expected to assign their sections to memorize the Bb scale section of Articulae. Thus, most musicians should know it by heart!

The packet is self-explanatory and the student conductor will determine the tempo. Occasionally, students are requested to play Articulae in the style one of one of their pieces. For example, in Cato's "Train" piece (debut 2008-2009), the articulations that are most evident are marcatos and accents. So, the student conductor might request all musicians to nullify all written articulations and replace them with marcatos and/or accents.

Tuning Sequence

All musicians are expected to own a tuner. Students can order one by filling out an order form posted around the band room in the plastic folder containers.

MEHSband students tune in a particular way and in concert Bb. Here is the order of instruments:

- 1.) Principal tuba player tunes with his/her tuner.
- 2.) Trombones add in at a lower volume. No accents! Come in smoothly. Add in to the texture. String Basses may add in here as well.
- 3.) Baritones/Euphoniums.
- 4.) French Horns
- 5.) Trumpets
- 6.) Saxophones/Bassoons/Bass Clarinets
- 7.) Clarinets, Flutes, Cellos

After all instruments are added in, musicians will play concert Eb (the 4th) and/or concert F (the 5th) at their own pace and will. As the year progresses, students are to decrease the amount of time needed to be in tune. Eventually students are obligated to be in tune after 5 seconds of hearing the original pitch.

Another tuning sequence that might occur during the year: Principal clarinet player will give a pitch and the sequence will be reversed. (High voices -> Low voices)

Wind Symphony

This last warm up exercise is either performed by Mr. Cato or the Assistant Director. Key concepts: Blend, Tune, Balance, Tone (the whole lot!) All students are expected to “lift and breathe”. This lift must be visible as it inspires musicians to be more together in their entrances.

As for the music, there is a wind symphony score available somewhere in the band room. However, the rhythms are altered to fit the MEHSband program. First measures up until the first fermata are in whole notes. Next measures are played in quarters up until the next fermata. The last measures are played in eighth notes.