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How to Teach Beginning Tuba and Euphonium Students

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I. Breathing

- a. PVC pipe to reinforce oral shape (1/2 inch)
- b. Use your hand to check the tone of the intake
- c. Teach the breathing mechanism as simply as possible
- d. Start every lesson with deep breaths

II. Air

- a. Speed
 - i. Pinwheels = fun
 - 1. Use fast air for high notes (think blowing out a candle)
 - 2. Use slow air for low notes (think fogging up a mirror)
 - ii. Help the student isolate where air speed comes from (hint: it's not their lips *or* their throat)
 - iii. Think "up and in"
- b. Direction
 - i. Continuum of air, not shift for *most* students the following is true:
 - 1. For low notes, aim your air up, like you are blowing hair out of your face
 - 2. For high notes, aim your air down, like you are blowing a droplet of water off your chin
 - ii. Practice the continuum using your finger as a guide
 - iii. Air stream \rightarrow free buzz \rightarrow visualizer \rightarrow mouthpiece \rightarrow horn

III. Articulation

- a. Location
 - i. Tongue between the lips
 - ii. Put your finger against your lips and you should *barely* feel your tongue striking against it
 - iii. Analogies
 - 1. Like a cobra striking
 - 2. Spitting out a watermelon seed
 - 3. Launching a spit ball
- b. Articulation + air
 - i. It's ok to start with breath attacks
 - ii. FAATFOTN = Fast Air at The Front of the Note
 - iii. Start with slurs, then add the tongue
 - iv. Analogies
 - 1. Jet ski bouncing off water
 - 2. Flag waving in the wind

IV. Posture

- a. Tuba too low = tough high range
- b. Tuba too high = tough low range
- c. Think "Goldilocks and the Three Bears"
- d. Adjustment options
 - i. Euphonium
 - 1. A hand towel (wrapped cinnamon roll style with duct tape)
 - ii. Tuba
 - 1. Hockey puck
 - 2. Dictionary / encyclopedia
 - 3. Tuba rests

V. First notes

a. See what feels most comfortable for the student and go from there

TUBA EUPHONIUM almost always almost always less frequent less frequent

b. Use stepwise slurs to transition from where the student starts naturally to where you want them to be



VI. Tone

- a. Drop your throat like you just drank a cup of cocoa
- b. Find the OH in your sound
- c. High notes ≠ angry notes
- d. Think gentle

VII. Final thoughts

- a. Always give criticism from a place of love
- b. "That's not my favorite . . ."
- c. Some things take time to figure out patience (for both the student and the teacher) is key
- d. End every session with something fun whenever possible! (Like duets!)