

Arnold Jacobs' Breathing Exercises

It is very helpful for brass players to practice large volume movements of air away from the instrument and music. By doing this, the body learns the correct processes much faster. Eventually these processes will unconsciously transfer to his or her playing. Within a few weeks these exercises will begin to produce results, but they must be practiced for six months or longer for them to move into the subconscious. At that point they will replace old breathing habits. The player's breathing habits will be changed forever.

The body will be learning new skills. It must be remembered that the goal is large volume movements of air, not large body movements. While doing these exercises it is helpful, however, to exaggerate the physical phenomena to ensure that the body learns proper movement. It is also wise to establish motion independent of the air. This helps the body learn function and teaches the player that body movements alone will not guarantee proper air flow.

When the player goes to his or her instrument, these exercises must be forgotten. The player must get into art, not mechanics. It will be helpful to the player to spend twenty minutes per day with increased awareness of function. During this time the player should observe that a large breath is being taken and that it is flowing freely from the body. In time these awarenesses should be forgotten -- they will have entered the subconscious level of the brain and will have become a natural part of the playing.

Exercise No. 1

1. Fill lungs to the count of 5 while raising arms above head
2. Drop arms on count 5
3. Retain the air with an open throat
4. Gradually exhale
5. Do this exercise in front of a mirror with 6 repetitions
6. After a week, do this exercise in 3 counts
7. After another week, do this exercise in 1 count

Exercise No. 2

1. This exercise is done while walking
2. Inhale through the nose for 5 steps – a slow, smooth inhalation of large quantity
3. Exhale through the nose for 5 steps
4. After a week, perform the same exercise in 3 steps

Exercise No. 3

1. This exercise should not be done until Exercises No. 1 and No. 2 have been practiced for three weeks

2. Take a breath in thirds (partial breaths, not Yoga breaths)
3. Pause between each partial breath and observe how it feels
4. Exhale in thirds
5. Pause between each partial exhalation and observe how it feels

Exercise No. 4

1. This exercise may be done only after Exercise No. 3 has been mastered
2. Take in 2/3's of a breath and pause
3. Take in last 1/3 of breath and pause
4. Exhale 2/3's of a breath and pause
5. Exhale last 1/3 of breath

Exercise No. 5

1. This exercise may be done only after Exercise No. 4 has been mastered
2. Inhale fully and pause
3. Exhale fully
4. This exercise must be done for three months

Exercise No. 6

1. After Exercise No. 5 has been completed, this exercise may be done
2. Inhale for 1 count – complete inhalation

3. Exhale for 3 counts – complete exhalation

Exercise No. 7

1. This exercise may be done only after Exercise No. 6 has been mastered
2. Inhale for 1/2 count – complete inhalation
3. Exhale for 3 and 1/2 counts – complete exhalation

Exercise No. 8

1. This exercise may be done only after Exercise No. 6 has been mastered
2. Repeat Exercise No. 7 with a faster tempo

Exercise No. 9

1. This exercise is for those who need help breathing from the diaphragm area
2. Put hands on stomach with the middle finger tips on the navel
3. Spread fingers over stomach
4. Push stomach out without breathing
5. Pull stomach in until "you touch your backbone"
6. Repeat steps 4 and 5 while breathing
7. Try to establish a range of motion
8. Do this quite a few times a day
9. The use of the hands is to ensure correct motions – nerve impulses alone from this region can

be misleading

Exercise No. 10

1. This exercise is to help the player learn to develop air pressure without large muscle contractions
2. Inhale fully
3. Begin to exhale rapidly through partially closed lips
4. Continue to blow, but block lips with finger held sideways
5. Do not change anything in blowing muscles
6. "Pop" finger away and continue to exhale

The following exercises are designed to help the player learn to use large quantities of air while remaining relaxed:

Exercise No. 11

1. Take a large breath
2. Count out loud, pausing after each number -- the throat must remain open during pauses
3. Use very little air while speaking

Exercise No. 12

1. Inhale
2. Exhale in the most unrelaxed manner possible
3. Inhale
4. Exhale as relaxed as possible
5. Transfer the quality of step 4 to the instrument

Exercise No. 13

1. Hold a book at arm's length
2. Blow the pages apart

Exercise No. 14

1. Hold a lit match at arm's length
2. Blow it out

Exercise No. 15

1. Imagine holding a drinking straw with a bean inside it
2. Blow the "bean" across the room

Anything that improves the vitality of the brass player will improve his or her playing and mental attitude. Exercises such as running, swimming, etc. are very good. It should be realized that exercises like these contribute to the player's general health, but they do not transfer directly to the breathing skills needed

by brass players. Only exercises of the type listed above will do that. An excellent overall test to determine that breathing is correct and involves large volumes of air is to take three full breaths in close succession. If everything is correct, this will produce the first stage of hyperventilation.

If hyperventilation is encountered during these exercises, the player should breath into some type of bag, recycling his or her own air. This will enable the player to continue practicing them for a longer period of time.