

Care and Maintenance of the Trombone

You Will Need:

- 1) Soft cloth (cotton or flannel)
- 2) Flexible brush that is long enough to go through the main slide (also called a “snake”)
- 3) Mouthpiece brush
- 4) Tuning slide grease
- 5) Slide Cream or Cold Cream
- 6) Spray bottle filled with water small enough to fit in your case.
- 7) Valve Oil, if you have a valve attached.

Daily Care

- 1) Never leave your instrument unattended. It takes very little time for someone to take it.
- 2) The safest place for your trombone is in the case. Leave it there when you’re not playing.
- 3) Do not let other people use your instrument. They may not know how to hold and care for it.
- 4) Do not use your case as a chair, foot rest or step stool. It is not designed for that kind of weight.
- 5) Lay your case flat on the floor before opening it. Do not let it fall open.
- 6) Do not hit your mouthpiece, it can get stuck.
- 7) Treat your slide as if it were made of glass, it is the most delicate part of your instrument.
- 8) No loose items in your case. Anything loose will damage your instrument.
- 9) Do not put music in your case, unless space is provided for it. If you have to fold it or if it touches the instrument, it should NOT be there.
- 10) Avoid eating or drinking just before playing. If you do, rinse your mouth with water before playing.
- 11) Keep your slide lubricated. A dry slide can be damaged by dirt scratching the inside, plus it’s harder to use!
- 12) If you have a valve, oil it by pulling out the small tuning slide and putting two drops of oil down the tube.
- 13) Always keep your slide locked when you are not playing.

Greasing the Main Slide (we don’t use grease, but we calling it “greasing”. I’m not sure why...)

- 1) Take the outer slide off and put it in your case.
- 2) With a paper towel, wipe the old cream off your slide.
- 3) Spread a drop-sized bit of cream evenly on the stocking of the inner slide.
- 4) Spread what is left on your fingers evenly over the rest of the slide.
- 5) Repeat for other side.
- 6) Wipe your fingers clean (your socks work great!).
- 7) Spray the inner slides several times with water and replace the outer slide.
 - Afterward, if your slide starts to drag, spray more water on it. Replace the cream at least once per week, or when spraying on more water doesn’t make the slide smooth any more.

Weekly Cleaning

- 1) Brush the inside of the mouthpiece with soap and hot water. Rinse and dry.
- 2) Wipe the fingerprints and dirt off of your instrument with your soft cloth. This will keep it looking nice. Also, the acid from your hands will eventually cause the lacquer (shiny stuff) to fall off if you leave it on the instrument.
 - Do NOT use any kind of polish on the instrument. Wiping it clean is enough.

Monthly Cleaning

1. While you are practicing, leave your empty case open in the sun. The warmth will dry out any moisture and keep your case from smelling bad.
2. Vacuum the inside of your case.

Winter Break, Spring Break, and Summer

1. Read all of this before starting! You do not want to get halfway through and then find out you don't understand something.
2. Fill a tub with lukewarm (not hot!) water deep enough to cover your instrument. Add some mild soap (not detergent!) while it is filling. Hot water and detergent might strip the lacquer off your instrument.
3. Remove the tuning slide, remove outer slide from inner slide and soak all the instrument parts in the water for a few minutes. If you have a valve, remove the silver cap, but do NOT take the valve apart.
4. Wipe off the outside of all parts with a soft cloth.
5. Brush the inside of all tubes with the snake several times, especially the inner slide.
6. Drain the tub and rinse all parts inside and out.
7. Dry all parts with a soft, lint-free cloth.

NOTE If you are not going to play the horn for months, don't oil or grease the parts. Leave them dry.

8. Lubricate the tuning slide (the small one) with tuning slide grease. Push it all the way in and then pull it out to where you want it.
 - a. If you have a valve, put a couple drops of oil down the tubes to the valve before replacing the slide.
9. Lubricate inner slide with slide cream or cold cream and put it back together.

Regular Check-ups

To keep your instrument in top working condition, have it checked by a qualified repair person once per year (Winter break is better than summer, repair shops are not as busy). Regular maintenance keeps an instrument in good playing condition for a period of years, rather than allowing it gradually to deteriorate, becoming more difficult to play and more expensive to repair.

