

## Lesson 3: Holding the Tuba

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### **The Quick Assembly**

*Another great thing about the tuba*

Put the tuba together by putting the mouthpiece in the lead pipe. You're done! A **small** twist of the mouthpiece may help it not fall out. NEVER tap on it or jam it in. This is not necessary and may only damage it.

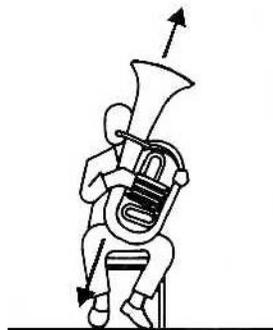
### **Posture**

*Posture is very important because it will help you utilize your breath.*

1. Sit on your chair so your back is straight. This may be towards the front or more toward the back depending on what where the tuba rests.
2. Take a few deep breaths to help you adjust your body to sitting and breathing deeply.
3. Sit tall with your shoulders back and relaxed. Your feet should be flat on the floor.

### **Instrument Placement**

1. Rest the tuba on your lap (the bell should point up!)
2. Position the tuba so the mouthpiece comes to you sitting up straight. Do NOT bend down to the mouthpiece. This may mean resting the tuba on your lap, chair, or on a tuba stand.



Bad Posture—  
His back is arched down so  
his mouth can meet the mouthpiece.



Good Posture--  
Resting the tuba on his lap helps  
bring the tuba up to his level



Tuba Stand--  
Helping adjust  
the tuba height



### Hand Placement

1. Place your left hand where it is comfortable to hold the instrument. For most tubas, this will be on the tubing next to the bell.

Do not grip the slides.  
This causes tension we do not want.



2. Your right hand fingers should be placed over the valves starting with your index finger. On some tubas, the fingers need to be placed away from you. For others, the right hand must reach around to the front of the tuba.



Fingers should be curved naturally over valves in order to push the valves straight down and not on an angle.



Fingers should not be straight and tense.  
This is slow you down.



**Resting position:**

While not playing you have the these options:



On the lap

or

On the floor



While putting the tuba on the floor, there a few things to remember:



Don't step on the bell



Don't set the instrument on the valves and slides



Put the valves and slides toward the ceiling

Can you see the difference between good and bad posture in these pictures?



Leaning forward, backward and hunching over



Sitting up straight with mouthpieces at the proper level

## Lesson 4: Let's play!

### Embouchure and Making a Sound



#### Embouchure

Your **embouchure** is the way your lips are put together to make a sound on your instrument. All instruments have a unique embouchure. This, along with breathing, will help you get the best sound possible.

It is easy to practice making an embouchure in the mirror so you can compare your lips to the pictures or the written descriptions.

The tuba embouchure is generally relaxed but you NEVER want to puff out your cheeks. Your cheeks may relax as you go into the low register, but that will be much later.

1. Say the word "OH". This will bring your lips together to form your **aperture** (the hole in your lips where the air escapes).
2. While holding the word "OH" say "OOO".
3. Then, pretend you have a small tube in between your lips and teeth (like a straw). Gently squeeze this tube so your aperture becomes a bit smaller. *There should be a small gap between your top and bottom teeth.*
4. Place the mouthpiece gently up to your lips. The mouthpiece should be centered.



Too high



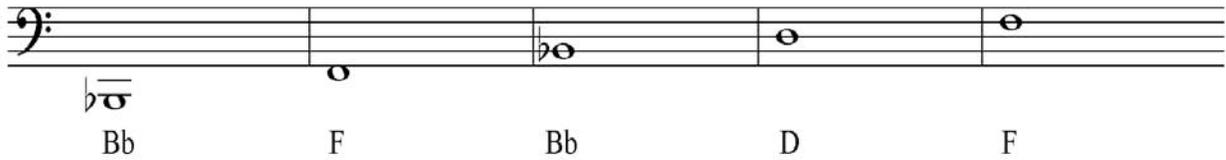
Too low



Just right

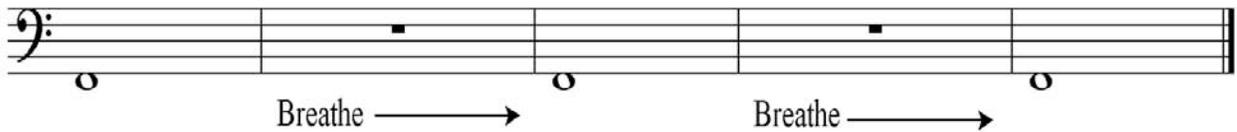
5. Take a large breath like we practiced and keeping your corners tight, blow the air quickly past the lips! Stay the word "TOH" and move the air.

Your first notes maybe any of these (with no valves pressed down)



Your goal is to hit the lower notes. Relax the grip on the “tube” at the center of your lips. This will help hit lower notes typical for the tuba. Relax only the center of your lips, never the corners allowing your cheeks to puff out.

Play this and don't forget to take a big breath.



### Articulation

Tonguing on the tuba is easy! Place the tongue behind the top of the teeth (near your gums). Begin to blow air and then release the tongue. That is how you start the note. To tongue different notes, simply touch the tip of the tongue to the back of the teeth, as if saying the word “TOH” or “Ta”. Make Keep the air moving into the instrument while saying “Ta-Ta-Ta”. That is how you articulate on an F.



**Your goal is to go at least 8 counts without breathing!**

**You can do it!!!**

**If not today, practice and you'll be able to soon!!**

## Possible Problems with Embouchures

Using a mirror when practicing your embouchure will ensure it is correct.

### No Tone, Rushing Air

- Embouchure is not formed tightly enough.



- Air stream is restricted by a closed throat and/or raised tongue



- Reform embouchure (Oh, OOO, Squeeze the tube) and grip more firmly on the "tube".



- Think "OH" to open your throat.

### Thin or Pinched Tone

- Embouchure formed too tight or lips pinched together



- Insufficient volume of air passing between the lips

- Loosen grip on the tube in the center of your lips



- Take in a deep breath like a yawn and push the air out rapidly

### Gargled Tone

- Lips not tight enough



- Lips folded over teeth causing a double vibration



- Grip tube more firmly



- Do not allow your lips to curl over your teeth. More "OO".

### Stopped or Intense Air

- The lips have pinched completely together



- Exaggeration of the thin pinched tone

- When you set your embouchure, do not grip the tube so tightly.



- Allow your lips to be slightly more relaxed.



### Do not puff your cheeks!

- Puffing won't produce good sound



- Corners of the mouth should not have too much smile.
- The mouth and jaw should be in a natural position.
- Not too much "OO" pucker in the lips.

Muscle memory helps our lips learn what an F “feels” like verses a low Bb. Play these feeling the position of your lips.

**Make sure you are hitting the correct pitch. Use a tuner to indicate what note you are playing or use some other instrument for pitch reference.**

***Bonus Tuba Knowledge: The tuba is a non-transposing instrument....  
.....what note you see is the note you get.***

1.

2.

3.

4.

5. Can you fill in these note names and fingerings and play this?

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

## Lesson 5: Changing Notes

### Partials and Valves



On a brass instrument, there are two ways you can change notes:

1. with changes in our lips
2. and pushing down valves

**The first way mentioned is changing notes by the changes in our lips.** What are these changes we make? We can tighten our lips and increase air flow. This will give us a higher note. We can loosen the center of our lips and it will give us a note lower in pitch.

Raise the pitch:

1. Change the syllable in your mouth from “AA” to “EE”, raising the tongue.
2. Focus on “squeezing the tube” by tightening the center of your lips
3. Increase your air

Lower the pitch:

1. Change the syllable in your mouth from “EE” to “AA”, dropping the jaw
2. Focus on not “squeezing the tube” as much by loosening the center of your lips
3. Increase your air

Try this:

TA                      EE                      TE                      AA

Slur                      Slur

A **slur** is the curved line that connects two notes of different pitch.

Here are all your notes that you can play by simply changing your lips and not moving your fingers:

***Bonus Tuba Knowledge:*** *These are notes on your harmonic series.*

1<sup>st</sup> 2<sup>nd</sup> 3<sup>rd</sup> valves

Some of these fingerings are “Alternate Fingerings”. Always play the fingering that has the least amount of valves pushed down at one time.

**The second way to change notes is to change fingerings.** Sometimes you need to change the lips (as in a lips slur) as well as push fingers down.

High to lower notes = slightly relax the tube even if you push new valves down.

Try playing this (the fingerings are given for you) focusing on how the lips work as you change notes. The distance between notes (**intervals**) determines how much lip movement there will be.

Larger interval (count the lines and spaces) = more lip movement.

Small interval = small lip movement.

TA AA TA AA TA AA TA AA TA AA TA AA TA AA

0 2 0 1 0 12 0 23 0 13 0 123 0 0

Less ←—————→ More  
Lip movement scale

Low to high notes = squeeze the tube as you push new valves down.

Imagining squeezing the tube and increasing the air flow will help you reach the notes. The distance between notes (intervals) determines how much lip movement there will be. The fingers are written in for you.

Larger interval (count the lines and spaces) = more lip movement.

Small interval = small lip movement.

TA EE TA EE TA EE TA EE TA

0 23 0 12 0 1 0 2 0 0

Less ←—————→ More  
Lip movement scale









Play without marking in the note names or fingerings.

1.