



# Tips For Developing A Better High Range

By Sean Reusch

Many people struggle greatly with their high range. Here are some tips that I hope help you with making your high range easier, consistent, and more beautiful.

- Relax! Playing is always easier if one is relaxed. Always monitor your body for any extra tension.
- Be sure to take a full, relaxed breath. Many times people take tense breaths when they are about to play in their high range. Remember that your high range requires less air but it is helpful to have a full tank of air.
- Be able to easily say the name of the note and the slide position of any note that you play in your high range. Many students have trouble in their high range because they don't know what the note is and are intimidated by it, often leading to more tension. Make high notes your friend by visiting them each day!
- Practice your high range early in your practice session while your chops are fresh. Do your best to take breaks when practicing in your high range before you get tired. This often leads to bad tension habits.
- Have a clear and vivid picture of what you want to sound like before playing a high note. Sing the note prior to playing it. The more you have a clear target before playing, the easier it is to hit the target.
- Many people are told to use more air when playing in their high range. (More air is commonly the go to answer to fix all problems for a brass player!). High range requires *less air*, not more! By blowing too much air, one creates tension. I like to visualize blowing air through a straw in my different ranges when I play. For low range, I imagine blowing through a big smoothie straw. For middle range, a regular size straw. For high range, a coffee stirrer straw.

- Try changing your syllable - use Ooh or Ee not Aw or Oh in your upper range. By changing the syllable, one's mouth cavity changes size which can make playing in the high range significantly easier.
- Be sure to limit mouthpiece pressure! It's challenging for your lips to vibrate if you press too hard.
- Focus on being relaxed when you play in the high range. Where do you feel tension? Lips, throat, shoulders, slide grip, left hand holding the trombone? Work on relaxing and letting go of any tension. Focus on being as relaxed as possible before playing in the high range.
- Take breaks! Stop **before** you are tired.
- Play songs that you know by ear in your high range. Let your ear guide your playing!
- Find the moment in your playing where it goes from being sounding beautiful, effortless, and sounding great to when suddenly it sounds strained and effortful. I call this point your edge. Play your edge note each day and make it sound easy and beautiful. When that note gets better, every note above it will also improve. Playing in your extreme high range often leads to more tension habits.
- Gliss from a lower note to a higher note. Find the spot where suddenly you drop down to a different partial. This is your edge note. Work on glissing all the way to 1<sup>st</sup> position without letting the note drop.
- Practice a little each day in your high range, not a lot in 1 day. Be consistent!