

# Breathing

*Disclaimer: The ideas presented in this setting are gathered from many varied sources. The validity of these exercises is arguable within the context of various instruments and schools of thought. Feel free to take what you find valuable, and discard what you do not.*

## Relaxation

1. **The Big Floppy** - (Fritz Kaenzig) - Allow arms to hang at sides. Begin rotating left and right at hips, allowing arms to flop around. Breathe in for 4 counts and out for 4 counts. With this relaxed motion of arms, shoulders will generally not tense. With the rotation at the waist, the stomach area will generally remain relaxed.
2. **Relax and Release** - (Tim Olt) - Take in a full breath of air. Note what your body wishes to do at this point. Release the air. As our body wants to get rid of the air, why do we need to add force? If we release from the lower body first, and then collapse the chest, we expend most of our air without the addition of force. The only energy is used on the inhalation.

## Where the Air Goes

1. **Cross Your Heart** - (Gail Williams) - Imagine an "X" with the lines running from each shoulder to the opposite hip. First, breathe down into the bottom triangle of the "X". Next, breathe into the upper triangle. Now, attempt to breathe into the right side triangle. Then the left side triangle. This will increase consciousness of where the air is flowing. Then divide the body into top and bottom. Fill bottom first, then top, and reverse to release air. Then fill top first, then bottom, and reverse to release. This will show proper and improper breath feelings.
2. **Arms Up** - (Sam Pilafian) - With a metronome (or at least a steady count), breathe in while raising arms for 4 beats, hold up for 4 beats, and then release air and drop arms over 4 beats. Increase to 5, 6, 7, and 8 beats. Be careful not to employ the Valsalva Maneuver to hold the air. This will encourage inflation and retention from the intercostal muscles.

## Turning Air Around

1. **Darts** - (Steven Mead) - As you inhale, follow your air to your mouth with your hand. Visualize and act out throwing a “air dart” as you expend your air. This helps to visualize the motion of the air column leaving the mouth.
2. **Hope Breaths** - (Tim Olt) - When inhaling and exhaling, form the word “hope”. The “ho” is the inhale, forming a round oral cavity and directing the air down into the body, and the “pe” is the attack upon the release of the air. This will help to connect the motion of the air into the attack of the note. Especially useful with younger students.
3. **One** - (Arnold Jacobs) - Snapping fingers four times, inhale while raising arms. Clap hands together at top and allow arms to drop while holding air. Do NOT close throat or lips to hold air, but instead keep intercostal muscles expanded. Say “One”, and then release the air. If done properly, the word “one” should be in a natural, unstressed voice. If valsalva maneuver is employed, the “one” will sound strained.

## Aperture/Oral Cavity

1. **The Finger** - (Steven Mead) - While inhaling, place a finger vertically across open mouth. A dark “whoosh” should be heard. If the sound is high and “wispy”, the aperture is too small and/or the oral cavity is closed.
2. **Hee-Hoe** - (Sam Pilafian) - Begin panting with mouth forming the vowel “E”. As you continue deep panting, slowly change vowel to “O”. This will help form the correct aperture and oral cavity, and direct the air lower into the body. CAUTION: Have a chair behind you or do this exercise sitting down. It is common to become dizzy. Stop and rest.

## Getting Air Quickly/Efficiently

1. **In 4, Out 4** - (Arnold Jacobs) - With a metronome or steady tempo, begin breathing in for 4 beats, out for 4 beats. After several repetitions, switch to in for 3 beats, out for 4. Once you reach in for 1 and out for 4, then switch to breathing in on the last half of beat 4 (as an eighth pick-up). Strive to breath fully on each breath.

2. **Paper Trick** - (Sam Green) - Hold a sheet of paper against a plate glass window or mirror. Take a breath, and then exhale on the paper, visualizing a spot the size of a dime. Begin to exhale, and then immediately inhale, and then exhale, etc. Once you have started moving full air at fast turnaround speed, release paper and attempt to hold in place with breath, breathing in rapidly before paper drops. You must take a full breath every time. Tendency is to take diminishing breaths.

## **Pacing and Air Usage**

1. **Breathing in Thirds** - (Arnold Jacobs) - Using your arm as a visualization, breath in for one third, hold, and then release. Then breathe in for one third, hold, breathe in for second third, hold, release one third, hold, release last third. Repeat this for all three segments. This will help to establish consciousness of amount of air and usage.

2. **In 4, Out 8** - (Sam Pilafian) - With a metronome or steady tempo, breath in for 4 beats, out for 4 beats, using arm for visualization. After several repetitions, change to in for 4 out for 8. Then in for 8 out for 8. In for 8, out for 16, etc. Strive for in 32, out 32. Should be at comfortable walking tempo, and may be done while walking.

## **Problems/ Mistakes**

1. **Overbreathing** - The body has natural comfortable limits to breathing. We can exceed these, but only with the addition of stress and tension. Strive to expand the comfort zone, but also stay within the zone as much as possible. Remember: If the feeling/effort resembles childbirth or defecation, something is wrong.

2. **Valsalva Maneuver** - When holding air into our body, we can do this by closing the throat in a motion similar to saying "hut". When the "t" is reached, the air is trapped, and may then only be release with an explosive initiation. It is ideal to hold the throat in more of a yawning position, very open and relaxed.

3. **Shoulders** - As young students, we are often told that shoulders should not move. However, in the complete expansion of the body, the shoulders will naturally raise. What we need to avoid is lifting and/or tensing of the shoulders to raise the chest. This creates unnecessary tension within the chest, shoulders, and throat.

## Toys and Gadgets

1. **Breathing Bag** - Either in 5 liter or 6 liter size. This device is used to allow various exercises calling for deep breathing without the danger of hyperventilation. Can be purchase through WindSong Press, or a cheap version can be made at home with a cardboard tube (from paper towel or toilet paper), a bread bag, and some duct tape.
2. **Breathing Tube** - A PVC tube, may vary in length from 1 to 6 inches and diameter from 1/2 to 1 1/2 inches from source to source. These also may be purchased from WindSong Press, or purchased in the plumbing section of Lowes or Home Depot. This is used to give sensation of proper open oral cavity and throat on inhalation.
3. **Breath Builder** - This is used to feel the sensation of inhalation and exhalation. This is a plastic tube around 6 inches long, with a closed end, and a pingpong ball inside. the opposite end has 3 holes of varying sizes to allow different resistances, and a tube for breathing through. Also from Windsong Press.
4. **Insipiron** - An incentive spirometer, this was designed to show how much air can be inhaled. However, by turning upside down, one can gauge air flow on exhalation. Can also be used to judge speed and flow of airstream. Also from WindSong Press.
5. **Voldyne** - Designed to gauge air capacity up to 5 liters. Has two chambers, one for capacity, and other for pressure. Also from WindSong Press.

## Valuable Breathing Resources

### Books

*Arnold Jacobs: Song and Wind* by Brian Frederiksen. Available through WindSong Press

### Recordings

*Portrait of an Artist: Arnold Jacobs* on Summit Records.

*Shared Reflections: The Legacy of Philip Farkas* on Summit Records

### Websites

Arnold Jacobs

<http://abel.hive.no/oj/musikk/trompet/ntf/jacobs.html>

<http://www.missouri.edu/%7Eecceric/mclass/index.html>

### WindSong Press

<http://www.WindSongPress.com/>