

Instructions for Skill Builder Exercises

1. **Check your Key Signature:** No metronome. This is just a chance to listen to proper pitch and tone quality. Don't move on from any note until we have 100% accuracy from the ensemble. They should begin at forte and relax the volume in the upper register while maintaining air support.
2. **HA-DA Attacks:** Use a metronome. This will insure that jaws are set at the right aperture and faces aren't being mashed in the brass. The goal is that Ha's and Da's are nearly indistinguishable from each other. Use "DOT" for the staccato notes. Feel free to have them sing on the vowels written. In addition, using wind patterns on their palms or on a held piece of paper can help to diagnosis air flow issues. We don't want to hear any "wha" attacks from closed jaws that open after the note begins. We also don't want to hear pressured air behind tongues that start on the teeth. In addition, we want good response of lips in the brass. That means the sound begins right in time.
3. **Long Tone Hairpins:** Use a metronome. This exercise will work attacks, dynamics, tone quality at all volumes, releases, and audiation of notes before they play them. Have them relax and shake it out for four beats after each series. Then they get set, finger the next pitch, and sing that upcoming pitch through horn on a "Ha." This will allow you to hear if they are thinking accurately of pitches before they play them, and to reinforce fast air. They should attack on a HA with no tongue on all of these.
4. **Droned Intervals:** Use a metronome. This exercise works on unifying a sense of pitch through intervallic relationships. They should slightly grow the volume as they change to the 2nd pitch in each series. The exercise is structured so that the first set of intervals in each series is played by the stronger players, and the answer is in the weaker players. If we hear a significant reduction in volume, intonation, or tone quality in that group it will be very obvious this way.
5. **Lip Slurs:** Use a metronome. This exercise focuses on the brass, but also serves as an intonation and long tone exercise for the woodwinds. Play this exercise several times in multiple ways to get the full benefit:
 1. Brass stand and sing their parts on an "Ah" while the woodwinds play their parts. This will allow them to get the pitch into their ears before buzzing.
 2. Brass stand with mouthpieces only. They should buzz the exercise while the woodwinds play their parts. The brass buzzing should be glissed/smeared with no slotting. Watch their faces. Are their jaws locked open, eyebrows up, pressure of the mouthpiece off their upper lips?
 3. As quickly as possible, have the brass put their mouthpieces in and play the exercise with the woodwinds. Once again, stress

connected air, even if there are some cracked notes. We don't want to trade air flow for slotting notes. There are no pulses or breaks in the brass airstream. Stress to the brass that higher notes are not tighter or louder; the air is simply faster and pointed towards their feet.

6. **Technique Development:** Use a metronome (feel free to start slow and work up to tempo over a period of days). This exercise is simply designed to improve finger speed. Focus should be on constant airflow to power the technique while slamming down keys and valves.
7. **Articulating Scales:** Use a metronome (feel free to start slow and work up to tempo over a period of days). This exercise just makes them play a variety of articulation permutations. It also makes them develop good habits with keeping teeth open and making sure the tongue isn't too low or heavy. If you hear any "TA" or pressurized sounds in the brass, put a stop to it. *<NOTE: They should be pretty warmed up by now. Once this exercise is done, it's a good time to tune before you begin the chorales.>*
8. **Unison Chorale:** No metronome. This allows everyone to play the same pitches, rhythms, and articulations so we can focus on tone quality, intonation, and balance and blend. It's especially important that they not let range dictate volume. Higher notes do not equal louder. If we land on a note that has issues, direct their ears to the issue but make them experiment and make the adjustment themselves. Once they discover the solution, they can write it down.
9. **Harmonized Chorale:** No metronome. The same chorale, but harmonized. All of the same ideas apply from number 8. I have intentionally chosen a tune that they may be used to treating more carelessly when it comes to tone quality and intonation. Once you've got them playing this one with good sounds, try having them play it fortissimo. This will force them to play with a great sound and listening skills even when working hard to play loud. They must eschew the idea that loud means changing technique and tone color.