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The primary aspects of playing are: lips, teeth, jaw, throat, neck, tongue, lungs, torso muscles, posture, mouthpiece selection, mouthpiece placement, mouthpiece pressure, mouthpiece angle, air usage, left hand placement, right hand placement, fingering, …

What is the generally accepted, conventional method, good technique ‘building blocks’ for each property of an Aspect? What should be encouraged and/or suppressed for each property? What is a good ‘analogy description’ for each property?

 Aspect:

Physical Properties:

Physical Feelings Properties:

Physical Control and Coordination Properties:

Mental Focus Properties:

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The following is a ‘work in progress’.

I will add and update sections as time and inspiration allows!

I would like your comments and suggestions about how this information can be expanded and improved.

Aspect: Sound Production

Physical Properties: The player makes the sound, primarily by forcing air to flow through the lip aperture and causing the lips to vibrate in a manner that results in the air flow pulsing (or cycling/vibrating) at the desired pitch.

Physical Feeling Properties: It is critical for the player to consciously choose what pitch (note) is to be played and its loudness. In addition to choosing the pitch, the player must replicate that pitch with lip vibrations.

Physical Control and Coordination Properties: The player learns how to adjust lip tension, air flow, and valve usage to produce the desired notes. There are slight changes and adjustments that need to be done for every note.

Mental Focus Properties: The player needs to envision the pitch that is to be played, and simultaneously make the necessary physical changes. If the player loses mental concentration about the pitch of a coming note, then it is unlikely that that the needed physical changes will be made.

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Aspect: Lips

Physical Properties: The primary concern is being able to establish lip vibration (usually) of the upper lip by forcing a controlled flow of air through the lip opening (the aperture) into the mouthpiece.

Physical Feelings Properties: The lips must be flexible enough for vibration to occur. The lips must not be ‘pinned closed’ by excessive compression of the upper and lower lips. The lips must not be immobile by excessive mouthpiece rim pressure.

Physical Control and Coordination Properties: The rate of lip vibration is determined by the tension and stiffness of the lip tissue at the aperture. To avoid injury to the lip tissue, the lip should not be stretched thin and tight similar to a guitar string. Lip tension and stiffness can be obtained by a controlled ‘isometric’ use of the muscles to simultaneously pull the lip tissue inward and together, and at the same time pull them outward and apart. The player must adjust the lips for each note as mentioned regarding Sound Production.

Mental Focus Properties: When learning how to play and during practice, it may necessary to have conscious attention on the amount and control of lip tension. With adequate practice, the control will become an unconscious response to playing the notes.

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Aspect: Mouthpiece Placement and Teeth Concerns

Physical Properties: At its most basic level, the mouthpiece needs to be placed so that these criteria are met: 1) lips are able to vibrate, 2) the rate of lip vibration can be controlled, the mouthpiece remains in the desired position without conscious effort, and 4) lips are not injured by compression against the teeth.

Physical Feelings Properties: The mouthpiece feels like it is in a secure and stable position. The pressure from the mouthpiece rim feels balanced around the entire rim: there are not any points of pain from the rim pressure.

Physical Control and Coordination Properties: An appropriate size and contour of mouthpiece rim should be chosen to achieve the Physical Properties. Much of how a rim feels on your lips and teeth is determined by the contour of the rim and your teeth structure.

Mental Focus Properties:

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Aspect: Lip Aperture Formation

Physical Properties:

Physical Feelings Properties:

Physical Control and Coordination Properties:

Mental Focus Properties:

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Aspect: Jaw Usage and Teeth Positioning

Physical Properties: The jaw is important because it affects the amount of mouthpiece rim pressure on the lower lip and teeth. The jaw also control the alignment of the upper and lower front teeth, and the amount of space between the upper and lower teeth. It is important to control the jaw position to achieve the desired balance of rim pressure on the upper and lower lips, and to prevent the upper and lower teeth from touching.

Physical Feelings Properties: For many people, the feeling of using muscles to apply a ‘forward force’ with the jaw is not a common experience. And similarly the use of the jaw to control the separation of the upper and lower teeth.

Physical Control and Coordination Properties:

Mental Focus Properties:

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Aspect: Tongue Position and Arch

Physical Properties:

Physical Feelings Properties:

Physical Control and Coordination Properties:

Mental Focus Properties:

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Aspect: Air Flow

Physical Properties:

Physical Feelings Properties:

Physical Control and Coordination Properties:

Mental Focus Properties:

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