

Trumpet Care and Maintenance

Trumpets are easy to maintain – the valves and slides require proper lubrication and maintenance.

Never eat or drink anything besides water before or while playing a wind instrument, since sugar and food particles will accumulate inside the instrument and mouthpiece, causing sticky valves and fostering bacteria growth – YUCK!!

Assembly:

While trumpets are quite easy to assemble, it should be noted that the mouthpiece does not need to be twisted or tapped into place. The shanks of all brass mouthpieces are tapered and designed to make a tight seal with very little pressure into the receiver.

Maintenance

Trumpets, like most brass instruments, will need to be thoroughly cleaned by a professional once a year if it is being played regularly. However, it is advisable for the player to occasionally take a few steps to help reduce the build-up of deposits and dirt inside the instrument.

Trumpets, like all brass instruments, are susceptible to RED ROT. This irreversible damage can often be seen on older brass instruments, but can also happen to newer instruments if they have been played a lot without having been cleaned. On trumpets, it is particularly common to see it along the lead pipe which tends to accumulate most of the foreign materials from the player's mouth. Red rot is the result of the metal being eaten away from the inside out, so by the time you see the tell-tale red dots appear on the outer surface of the instrument, most of the damage has already been done and it is just a matter of time before pin-hole leaks occur. The only real way to remedy this condition is to replace the damaged part, and if there is red rot throughout the instrument, the whole instrument may need to be replaced.

Trumpets should never be set down on a chair, the floor, a table top, or anywhere else. They should either be in the case, in the player's hands, or on a trumpet stand. Also, never store anything on top of the instrument while in the case such as music, as this will bend the second valve slide and cause the second valve to hang up!

The Bathtub Flush

Every serious trumpet player should learn how to give their instrument a bathtub flush. Depending on how much the instrument is being played, this should be done once every few months. This process is vital to keeping the instrument in top playing condition and preventing the build-up of corrosive deposits that can lead to red rot. It is so important that it can be likened to changing the oil in a car. The list of materials you will need are on the next page.

Materials

- Mild liquid dish soap such as *Dawn*
- Trumpet snake
- Mouthpiece brush
- Valve casing cleaning rod
- Dish sponge with a rough and scratchy cleaning surface on one side
- Mild solvent such as rubbing alcohol
- Clean cotton cloths such as old towels or t-shirts
- Valve oil
- Slide grease

Step 1 Completely disassemble the trumpet and set the finger buttons, valve top caps, and felts aside as they generally do not need to be cleaned. It is a good idea to have some kind of container like a dish pan to put the valves, slides, bottom caps, and mouthpiece in so that nothing slides down the drain or gets lost.

Step 2 Fill the bathtub with luke-warm water (do not use hot water! It is better to err on the side of caution and use cooler water) while adding a little dish soap to create suds. There should be enough water to completely submerge the trumpet. Fill the dish pan with soapy water.

Step 3 Allow to soak for twenty to thirty minutes.

Step 4 Run the cleaning snake through all of the tubing, including the slides and valve ports. Clean the mouthpiece with the mouthpiece brush. If the slides are discolored and dirty, you can use the rough side of a dish sponge to remove any corrosion. Be careful as this material will scratch silver plating and lacquered brass. Do not use this to clean the valves!! You can try to remove dirt from the valves with a soft cotton cloth wetted with some solvent, but be extremely gentle since valves scratch very easily and the wall is very thin – yes, valves are hollow and bend very easily! In general, valves should only be cleaned by a professional repair technician.

Step 5 Use the valve casing cleaning rod to clean the valve casings. Be careful that you do not scar the inside of the valve casings with the cleaning rod – the soft cotton cloth should be pulled through the slot and then wrapped carefully around the rod until the metal is thoroughly covered and is roughly the same size as the casing. Apply some solvent to the cloth and work this cleaning area back and forth inside the valve casing. Repeat until the cloth is no longer discolored when removed.

Step 6 Thoroughly rinse everything with cool clean water.

Step 7 Shake as much excess water from the parts as possible and then lay out on a clean dry towel to air dry. When everything is dry, blow through the valve casings to ensure that any small particles left from the cleaning cloth are removed. This is a good time to inspect the water key corks and test them for suction to see if they are sealing: for example, on the main tuning slide, seal one end of the tubing with a finger and suck on the other end. If air is leaking anywhere, the suction will be compromised before you release the pressure with your mouth.

Step 8 Grease the slides and insert them into the receivers, wiping away any excess grease.

Step 9 Assemble the valves and top caps and finger buttons. Add a few drops of oil to the valves and install them into their respective casings.

Trumpets should still be cleaned by a professional once a year even if the player flushes their instrument on a regular basis as described above.