

TBZ Monthly

A new monthly content service from Brad Edwards
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Welcome!

Here is the next issue. Thank you to everyone who has subscribed so far. I'm always looking for ways to connect with trombonists and I love having the opportunity to share with people in a way I hope will provide benefit. If you are getting this pdf without having subscribed and would like to subscribe to future issues, simply [follow this link](#). This little digital publication will evolve over time. If there's something you'd like to see included, please reach out to me: brad.edwards6251@gmail.com. (IG: [@brad_edwards_trombone](#))

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Enjoy!

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Websites:

[Trombone Zone](#)
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A Pretty Good Melody

There are different ways to slur this. This is but one solution.

Expansive (♩ = 56)

mf *cresc.*

5 *mp* *cresc.* *f*

8 *mf* *p*

11 *mp* *cresc.*

14 *mf*

19 *p* *rit..*

A Pretty Good Melody

Expansive ($\text{♩} = 56$)

mf cresc.

mp 3 cresc. 3 3 f

mf p

mp cresc.

mf

p rit..

A Pretty Good Melody

Expansive ($\text{♩} = 56$)

mf *cresc.*

5

mp *cresc.* *f*

8

mf *p*

11

mp *cresc.*

14

mf

19

p *rit..*

A Helpful Lip Slur

Wide Interval Slurs

These wider slurs might help with this month's Pretty Good Melody. Go nice and slow.

The image displays seven staves of musical notation in bass clef, 4/4 time. Each staff contains four measures of music. The first measure of each staff features a slur over a quarter-note triplet. The second measure has a slur over a half-note interval. The third measure has a slur over a whole-note interval. The fourth measure has a slur over a descending half-note interval. The notes and accidentals vary across the staves, including natural, flat, and sharp signs, and some staves end with a double bar line.

Technique/Rhythm Builder: Triplets with Differing Emphasis

At first glance, the first half of the measure and the second might seem quite different. Rhythmically they are the same but, in terms of emphasis, they are different. I show this at the beginning by using accents but apply this same principle throughout. At the meter change, keep the main beat the same. It looks different but should sound the same.

simile

The musical score consists of six staves of music in bass clef, primarily in the key of B-flat major. The first staff is in 4/4 time and features two measures of triplets with accents (>) over the first notes. The second staff continues with similar triplet patterns. The third staff is in 6/8 time and contains a sequence of seven triplet groups. The fourth staff is in 6/8 time and features two measures with accents over the first notes of triplet groups. The fifth staff shows a meter change to 4/4 time, with a triplet group in the first measure. The sixth staff is in 4/4 time and contains a sequence of five triplet groups. The word *simile* is written above the first and fourth staves.

*Free book sample:
The Intermediate Trombonist
Dotted rhythms in 6/8 time*

I have always thought that drawing the connection between dotted rhythms in 3/4 and the parallel rhythms in 6/8 is a good teaching approach. Here's how I handle it in my [Intermediate](#) books.

Enjoy!

Mini-Exercise: Dotted Rhythms in 6/8 Time

The two examples below should sound the same. Notice how the dotted rhythm changes.

a. $\text{♩} = 120$

b. $\text{♩} = 120$

As you might expect, 'a' and 'b' will sound the same.

Allegro (♩ = 156)

#32a.

f

mf

cresc. *f*

Allegro (♩ = 156)

b.

f

mf

cresc.

f

Once you have this well-learned, you might try setting the metronome to 52. The notes will move at the same speed but the beat will be slower. So, the tempo mark would be: ♩ = 52 or ♩ = 52

Playing Tip: New Year's Resolution - Create Something Beautiful and Own It



It's that time of year when we think up our New Year's Resolutions. Let's be honest, most of these resolutions are discarded and forgotten by the beginning of February. Actually I've heard that the second Friday in January is even National Quitters Day since that's when most people give up on their resolutions. Still, I'd like to think that the making of these resolutions can be a hopeful activity. It allows us to imagine a better version of ourselves.

Here is a suggestion: ***write a beautiful melody***. Nothing too extravagant. Maybe 16 measures or so (or lasting about 30 seconds). If this is a new experience for you, keep it mostly diatonic. Why?

Because in the next step, I want you to ***learn to play it in different keys***. Start by playing it up a half step and down a half step. Eventually you should learn to play it in every key (I prefer the descending circle of fifths).

Next, ***try varying it a bit***. Add some ornamentation or embellishment. Maybe change the mode. Maybe change the articulation style.

Once you are comfortable playing your melody in every key with some embellishment and with the ability to employ a variety of styles, ***you own it!***

To help get your creative juices flowing, I sat down and started four different melodies for you to complete. For me, writing melodies is a bit like trying to start an engine that doesn't quite want to get going (so, probably not electric!). Maybe think of a lawn mower that starts with a pull rope. It may not start on that first pull but, once the engine gets going, it just chugs along (we hope!). Getting going on that first melody was a bit of a challenge but, once my "engine" was running, new ideas just popped up in my head. This is a wonderful place to be. For any good jazz musician, I'm guessing this kind of thing is going on in their minds all day. Not a bad place to live, mentally!

On this first one, I'm hearing a relatively quick dancing style.



Perhaps a bit slower and softer with some nice dynamic hairpins.



Quick and playful.



Maybe lend this one an impish, gremlin quality.



On Teaching and Playing: Synergy and the Teachable Spirit



Carolyn Wahl, a colleague I respect, once talked to me about the importance of having a *teachable spirit*. Ever since she said that, it has stuck with me.

A successful lesson depends on more than just the teacher! The student is an important part of the equation, maybe more important. In each lesson I teach, I have to figure out what approach works best for that student. Over more than 30 years of teaching, no two students have been alike but certain types emerge.

- **The Know-it-All.**

This is the student-type who is frankly surprised that any comment coming from the teacher isn't effusive praise. They are sometimes combative and will sometimes counter your ideas with, "Well [famous person] says you should do it this way..."

- **The Worthless Wretch**

This is the opposite of the Know-it-All and is how some students see themselves. Dig a little deeper and you often find that they believe criticism is the only valid comment. Any attempt at praise is immediately batted away. Actually, I think this is a defense mechanism. If they are first and quickest to tear themselves down, nobody else can do it.

- **The Pile of Frustration**

This is the student, similar to the Worthless Wretch, who is quick to put down their horn because it didn't go well on the first try. They are usually the quickest to give up and announce that they can't do it. Sometimes tears are just around the corner. It's important not to discount the internal struggles they are fighting. Everyone walks a different road.

- **The Questioner**

In their eagerness to learn, some students ask question after question. They seem

to want all the answers before they pick up the horn. It's hard to say, "keep plugging away at it and let your body learn." Trial and error (always the best way to learn skills) seems not to have any validity.

- The Evader (Darth Evader)
This is the student, usually younger, who uses gamesmanship to evade their assignments. It is likely they didn't practice much (or at all) and come with ready-made tactics to run out the clock until the lesson is over. Possibly similar to the Questioner since asking a ton of questions is also a great stalling tactic; especially if the teacher likes to talk!
- The Therapy Patient
It is possible that, as the teacher, you are the only adult with whom the student has an ongoing 1-1 relationship besides their parents. It's important to be empathetic to their needs and they may have a strong urge to spill out all their problems but it is very important to realize that you are not a trained therapist.

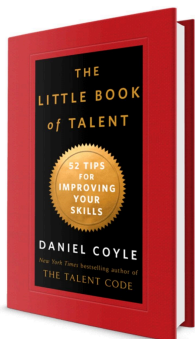
Please remember, I do not go into lessons seeking to typecast my students. It is always my goal to work with the individual in front of me. Still, if I start to see symptoms of one of these "types," I can remember what tactics have served me in working with previous students.

A student needs to come into a lesson with a teachable spirit. A receptiveness to new ideas and some grit to accept that this can be a frustrating process (it takes as long as it takes). They want constant affirmation or constant criticism. Neither mindset is truly representative of a teachable spirit.

It is a form of synergy. Some teachers are more receptive to answering lots of questions. Others are more reliant on direct imitation ("Just sound like me.") Sometimes, especially with an older student, stepping out for a cup of coffee might actually be the best approach. Other times, pressuring the student to deliver the goods *right now* under pressure is the best approach. When to nurture? When to deliver a kick in the butt? When to apply more pressure? When to back off? As a teacher, I'm observing students, more carefully than they may realize, and constantly adapting my approach to the moment. Sometimes I get it right. Sometimes I fail and flail.

The student and teacher are (hopefully) working together as a team pursuing a common goal.

The Good Stuff - Trombone Pedagogy *Daniel Coyle, The Little Book of Talent*



I first came across the writing of Dan Coyle when I read [The Talent Code](#). This book fundamentally changed the way I practice and teach. Highly recommended. This book is a follow-on, I think. Each concise half-page tip is an attempt to encapsulate and put into practice the larger principles in the original book.

Tip #22 Pay attention immediately after you make a mistake

Most of us are allergic to mistakes. When we make one, our every instinct urges us to look away, ignore it, and pretend it didn't happen. This is not good, because as we've seen, mistakes are our guide posts for improvement. Brain scan studies reveal a vital instant, 0.25 seconds after a mistake is made, in which people do one of two things - they look hard for the mistake or they ignore it. People who pay deeper attention to an error learn significantly more than those who ignore it.

Coyle, Daniel. The little book of talent: 52 tips for improving your skills. Bantam, 2012. p.57

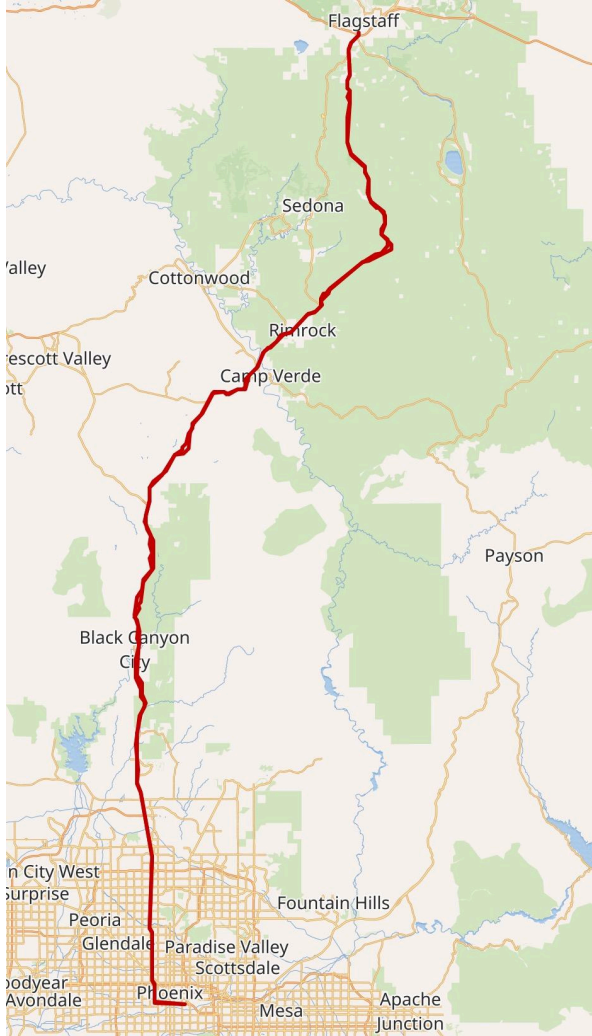
Have you ever noticed when a younger player is attempting to play something for you? When they make a mistake, they will quickly say, "Wait" and then try it again right away without much pause. I can never know what is going on in their minds but it seems as if a quick repeat, done correctly, will erase the mistake as if it never happened. It is the wiser student who, upon making a mistake, pauses to reflect why the mistake happened in the first place.

So, to expand on Coyle's tip, in that first instant after the mistake, don't just look for the mistake but pause a moment to consider why it happened.

The usual culprits:

- Tensing up.
- Not taking a relaxed breath
- Not knowing what it's actually supposed to sound like
- Being distracted by outside thoughts
- Inefficiency in the body (bad posture, moving too much, resetting the embouchure, etc).

A Random Thought: I-17 and Embouchure



Over Christmas, we drove 11 hours up to Colorado to see my daughter who works through the holidays as a ski instructor at Aspen/Snowmass. On the way back, the only efficient route from Flagstaff down to Phoenix is I-17.

This trip involves a descent of almost 6,000 feet and the highway does have some perilous curves on the way down.

This apparently brings out the Mario Kart mindset in many drivers as they attack those curves with reckless abandon.

The result: accidents, lots of accidents.

On our way home there were two accidents at the same time, one on the descent and an earlier car fire. The result: the highway was simply closed for a while.

So, there we are, sitting motionless in our car, looking at the bleak Google navigation predictions and facing the same question on the minds of every car in that traffic jam. Do we bail out and take a longer route?

Mind you, with this particular drive, any alternate route will be *much longer*! If you choose to bail out, the God of Irony will cause the jam to magically clear up once you've driven off into the desert. If you choose to stay, perhaps that same God of Irony will make sure you're stuck seemingly forever.



So, what's my point? I often compare a bad habit to driving down a dead-end road. This can be particularly true with *embouchure changes*. An embouchure change can feel like a painful diversion that takes forever. If you choose to head out on that diversion, you don't have all the answers.

- Is this the right path?
- It sounds terrible and I can't do anything.
- Have I made a mistake?

It's hard to be patient when you find yourself in a sort of "embouchure traffic jam." I recently taught a lesson where the student was placing the mouthpiece *very* low and allowing that spot just below the corners to puff out. It's something I've seen many times and I've never seen a student thrive using this approach.

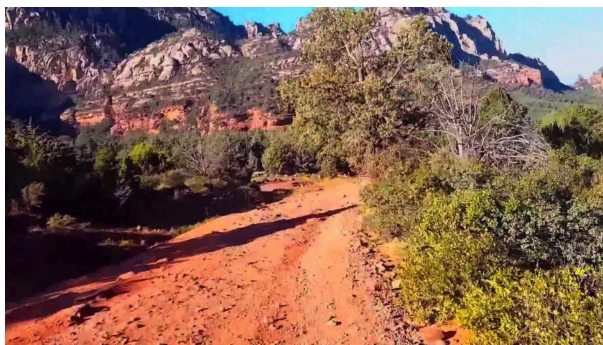
So I have to be that frustrating GPS announcement:

"This route leads to a dead end. Choose an alternate route."

(OK, maybe I-17 isn't a great example since it isn't literally a dead-end. I should have used 'bridge out' or something like that but I'm trying to relate this to something that recently happened to me. Roll with me on this one.)

Even for the teacher there can be uncertainty. I'm not a "*it must look a certain way to be right*" kind of teacher when it comes to embouchure. I always want to find some troubling aspect of their sound or technique that is likely caused by their embouchure.

Then I have to be careful to guide them on an alternate route that, even if necessary, will cause the least discomfort. Off of I-17, there is Schnebly Hill Road. Maybe fun for a Pink Jeep tour but *not* for a standard car!



(my spleen may never forgive me for that Pink Jeep jaunt)



We founded **The Trombone Tutors** in 2023 to offer top-notch instruction to all young trombone players! Our program includes eight live virtual masterclasses each month with Dr. Eric Henson and Dr. Justin Isenhour. Classes cover all the essential skills middle and high school students need to achieve their personal musical goals. Can't make a live session? No worries! Members enjoy unlimited archive access!

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