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A Guide to Warm-ups and Daily Routines for the Horn

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We are what we repeatedly do. Excellence, then, is not an act, but a habit.

~Aristotle

A daily routine should form the core of our playing, establishing a solid foundation for additional practicing and performing throughout the day. Although we can and should create our own personalized routines, there are a number of high quality published materials available. These publications can serve as complete routines by themselves, or better yet, as starting points for creative modification.

Choosing a Routine

- At the student level, consult with a teacher, and stick with a routine for at least several days or longer before deciding if it is the right one.
- Take some time to learn it thoroughly before considering a change or modification, except in the case of passages which go beyond a comfortable range. In this case either omit those pitches or play a suitable alternative.
- If text is included, *read* it.
- Unless specified, avoid repeating difficult passages within a single session, instead slow down tempos as necessary.
- For both students and professionals, it is a good idea to reevaluate the daily routine at least every year.

Important Questions

- How does the embouchure feel after playing the entire routine? Are chops tired, or fresh and ready to continue playing (after a short rest)?
- Following a strenuous day of playing, does my routine the next day help put things back together, or does it make things worse?
- Is the routine adaptable to different time constraints? Can the player be ready to play in a shorter amount of time than it takes to complete the entire routine?
- How well does it prepare players for the types of playing they normally do?
- How well does it fit with the current work or school schedule?
- Does it instill confidence in the player's abilities, or cause frustration?
- Is it too difficult/too easy for the player's current ability level?
- Does it continue to remind players why they play the horn, or has it become boring and mind numbing?

Components of a Warm-Up

Essential

- Breathing
- Lip/Mouthpiece Buzzing
- Long tones
- Scales/Arpeggios

Optional

- Range development
- Double/Triple tonguing
- Lip trills
- Stopped Horn
- Transposition
- Flexibility exercises
- Improvisation

Recommended Materials

Beginner

- David Bushouse, *Practical Hints on Playing the French Horn*, Belwin Mills, 1983.
- John Ericson, *Introducing the Horn: Essentials for New Hornists and their Teachers*, Horn Notes Edition, 2007.
- Marian Hesse, *Daily Routines for the Student Horn Player*, Mountain Peak Music, 2011.
- William C. Robinson, *An Illustrated Method for French Horn Playing*, Wind Music, Inc., 1968.

Intermediate to Advanced

- Paul Basler, *Horn Warm-Up*, RM Williams, 2001.
- Carmine Caruso, *Musical Calisthenics for Brass*, Almo/Irving Music, 1979.
- Richard Deane, *The Efficient Approach: Accelerated Development on the Horn*, Atlanta Brass Society Press, 2009.
- Marian Hesse, *Daily Routines for Horn*, Mountain Peak Music, 2011.
- James Decker, *The Master Class Series for Horn*, Interactive Video Audition Systems International, 1990.
- Louis Dufrasne, *Dufrasne Routine* edited by Thomas Bacon, Southern Music Company, 2005.
- Eli Epstein, *Power Warm-up for Horn*, Self-Published, 1999.
- Philip Farkas, *The Art of French Horn Playing*, Summy-Birchard, 1956.
- Douglas Hill, *Warm-ups and Maintenance Sessions for the Horn Player*, Really Good Music, LLC, 2001.
- Michael Hoeltzel, *Mastery of the French Horn: Technique and Musical Expression*, Schott, 2006.
- Ifor James, *Warming Up*, Editions Marc Reift, 1999.
- Sam Pilafian and Patrick Sheridan, *The Brass Gym: A Comprehensive Daily Workout for Brass Players* edited for Horn by John Ericson, Focus on Music, LLC, 2007.
- Max. P. Pottag, *Daily Exercises for French Horn*, Belwin Mills, 1941, 1969.
- Verne Reynolds, *The Horn Handbook*, Amadeus Press, 1997.
- Wendell Rider, *Real World Horn Playing*, Wendell Rider Publications, 2006.
- Gunther Schuller, *Horn Technique*, Oxford University Press, 1962, 1992.
- Joseph Singer, *Embouchure Building for French Horn* compiled and edited by Richard E. Ballou, Belwin, 1956.
- James Stamp, *Warm-ups and Studies: Trumpet and Other Brass Instruments*, Editions Bim, 1978, 1981, 1998, 2005.
- Forrest Standley, *Standley Routine for Horn in F* edited by Gene Standley and H. Stephen Hager, Southern Music Company, 2002.
- David B. Thompson, *Daily Warm-up and Workout for Horn*, Thompson Edition, 1994.
- Barry Tuckwell, *Playing the Horn: A Practical Guide*, Oxford University Press, 1978.
- Frøydis Ree Wekre, *Thoughts on Playing the Horn Well*, Norhornpress, 1994.
- Milan Yancich, *A Practical Guide to French Horn Playing*, Wind Music, Inc., 1970.