

# HELP! MY INSTRUMENT DOESN'T WORK!!

1) Check this sheet first and read it all the way through!

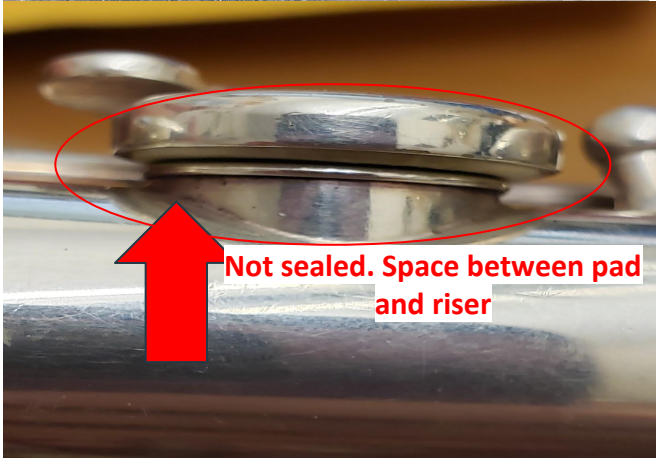
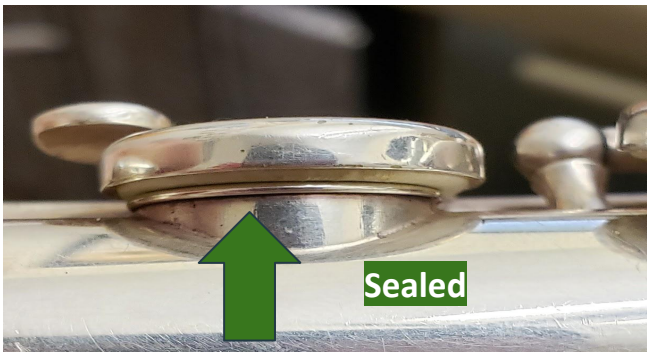
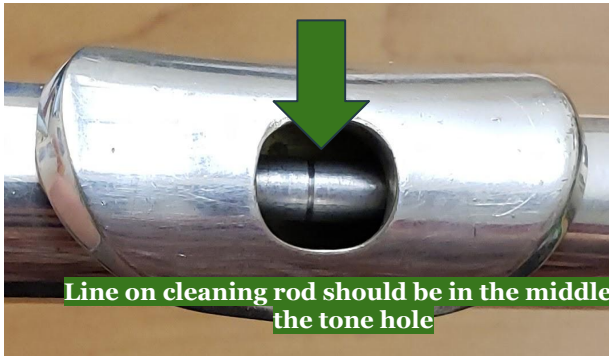
2) Ask 3 before me

## **QUICK CHECK**

- **Woodwinds:**
  - Check the reed - soaked, dry, too wet, chipped, too high, too low?
  - Have someone else already playing put their mouthpiece on your instrument and play it. Does it work? Yes? It's your reed or your embouchure.
  - Embouchure - lips/teeth biting the reed, too relaxed
  - Does it look like any screws or springs look odd/out of place?
- **Brass**
  - Oil the valves/slide
  - No air/too hard to blow? Take valve out, replace and turn until the "click" sound to line up valves
  - Air not coming out? Check valve numbers!

# Detailed Check - FLUTE

- Check your springs and make sure they look correct. If one is out of place, it needs to be put back. replace the spring to its rightful place
  - I don't know if it is right! ---Ask to see another person's instrument to compare. Ask them if they see anything wrong
  - Don't want to fix it yourself? Wait until the end of class.
- Check that pads are sealing all the way when you push them down. If D, Eb, E, and F are not playing, one of your pads is not sealing. Why? You bent a key, the alignment is off or a screw is loose. Wait until class is over to have it fixed
- Check the crown. Make sure it is screwed in and check it's alignment with your cleaning rod. Find the notch (by the eye or on the end) and make sure it is centered in your tone hole. No? Wait until end of class
- I can't get the note out!
  - Check embouchure first - the higher, smaller opening and cold air / the lower the note, warm air and think "frowny" corners
  - Still not doing it - have a friend play your flute, and then wait until the end of class to ask
- Fingers!
  - Are your fingers on the right keys? Ask a friend!
  - If you have an open-holed flute, make sure your fingers are completely covering the holes.
  - Check your hand shape and make sure it isn't flat/collapsed. Fingers should have a nice curve and not flat. Your right thumb should be between your first and second finger.



# Detailed Check - OBOE

- Check your springs and screws and make sure they look correct. If one is out of place, it needs to be put back. If you can't get it back in, wait. Don't mess with the screws if you don't know!
  - I don't know if it is right! ---Ask to see another person's instrument, if available, to compare. Ask them if they see anything wrong
  - Don't want to fix it yourself? Wait until the end of class.
- Check your reed
  - if it is too closed, chipped or too open. Wait until the end of class, airplay OR use a different reed. You should have 4 working reeds at all times
  - Be sure it is pushed ALL the way in.
  - Thread crossing should be facing the back of the oboe/your chin
- Check that your hands are in a relaxed "C" shape so that you aren't bumping other keys.
- Check to make sure you aren't coming off the half hole for more than just D/Db/Eb.
- Check pads - make sure they are sealing all the way down then wait until the end of class
- Check for bent keys - this can affect whether pads seal down completely

# Detailed Check - BASSOON

- Check your springs and screws and make sure they look correct. If one is out of place, it needs to be put back. If you can't get it back in, wait. Don't mess with it if you don't know!
  - I don't know if it is right! ---Ask to see another person's instrument, if available, to compare. Ask them if they see anything wrong
  - Don't want to fix it yourself? Wait until the end of class.
- Check your reed
  - if it is too closed, chipped or too open. Wait until the end of class, airplay OR use a different reed. You should have 4 working reeds at all times
  - You should have more contact on your upper lip than lower. Check your seat strap and adjust as needed. Think the drawstring on a hoodie instead of flat lips but still remaining relaxed
- Check the bridge key on the bell and be sure it is lined up. The key on the bell should be over the top of the bridge key on the base joint. Check other keys to make sure they are not bent or bumping other keys.
- Check the hole in the bocal is aligned with the whisper key so that the hole is being sealed
- Fingers!
  - Check to make sure you are covering holes completely
  - Check your thumb fingerings to be sure you are holding the correct keys

# Detailed Check - CLARINET

- Check your springs and screws and make sure they look correct. If one is out of place, it needs to be put back. If you can't get it back in, wait. Don't mess with the "A key" screw. Ask after class.
  - I don't know if it is right! ---Ask to see another person's instrument to compare. Ask them if they see anything wrong
  - Don't want to fix it yourself? Wait until the end of class.
- Check your reed and ligature
  - Chipped, cracked? Throw away and use another. Don't have one? Throw your bad reed out and airplay. Remember, you should have 5 working reeds at all times
  - Tip of the reed should be matched up with the curve of the mouthpiece.
  - Too soft reeds with squeak a lot and are too easy to play. Reeds that are too hard will make an airy sound. Wait until after class.
  - Ligature below the 1st line on mouthpiece or the cut of the reed. Make sure it is only snug and not tight/loose. Screws should be on the right.
- Embouchure Check
  - Corners in, like you say "ew" or you are having a thick milkshake
  - Too little mouthpiece will make an airy or choked sound, too much will squeak and have a loud, spread out sound.
  - Teeth on top of the mouthpiece, bottom lip curled over teeth. Your lip should be around where the reed meets the mouthpiece (do the paper trick).
  - Make sure you are using enough air
- Fingers!
  - Relaxed C shape, not bumping other keys
  - Check thumb position under the thumb rest - thumb rest should be resting by the cuticle of your nail
  - All fingers seal the holes
  - Upper register - make sure F hole is covered completely while using the register key

# Detailed Check - SAXOPHONE

- Check your springs and screws and make sure they look correct. If one is out of place, it needs to be put back. If you can't get it back in, wait. Don't mess with it if you don't know. Ask after class and airplay.
  - I don't know if it is right! ---Ask to see another person's instrument to compare. Ask them if they see anything wrong
  - Don't want to fix it yourself? Wait until the end of class.
- Check your reed and ligature
  - Chipped, cracked? Throw away and use another. Don't have one? Throw your bad reed out and airplay. Remember, you should have 5 working reeds at all times
  - Tip of the reed should be matched up with the curve of the mouthpiece
  - Too soft reeds with squeak a lot and are too easy to play. Reeds that are too hard will make an airy sound. Wait until after class.
  - Ligature below the 1st line on mouthpiece or the cut of the reed. Make sure it is only snug and not tight/loose. Screws should be on the right.
- Embouchure Check
  - Corners in, like you say "ew" or you are having a thick milkshake
  - Too little mouthpiece will make an airy or choked sound, too much will squeak and have a loud, spread out sound.
  - Teeth on top of the mouthpiece, bottom lip curled over teeth. Your lip should be around where the reed meets the mouthpiece (do the paper trick).
  - Make sure you are using enough air
- Check the neck piece and keys.
  - Make sure the octave key post is UNDER the curve, not on top!
  - Check to see that the octave key opens the pad when you finger above high G. No? Wait until after class and airplay.
  - Check for bent keys and if they are rubbing on something. This will affect your pads and if they seal all the way down. Wait for a fix after class. Airplay and continue to participate!

# Detailed Check - TRUMPET

- Embouchure
  - Make sure you have a relaxed but firm band face. No puffy cheeks
  - Avoid the “red” - do you have the red part of your lips showing? If so, make sure your lips are in the mouthpiece and not pouting out into the mouthpiece
  - Make sure your mouthpiece has 50/50 with top and bottom lip and in the middle of your mouth. This will be a little different depending on your mouth/teeth shape but avoid too high or too low. Avoid too far off to one side.
- Check your water keys
  - They should seal completely and let no air out when they are closed
  - If missing one or it is not sealing, wait until pack up time. Airplay through rehearsal
- Sound is gurgling
  - Open water keys and gently blow to get your condensation out
  - Push down all valves and take out slides to dump out condensation. You may have condensation trapped in a slide somewhere
  - A wavering sound could also mean you don't have a focused buzz. Make sure you know exactly what note you want with the correct fingering.
  - Still does it? Wait until pack up time and participate your best through class.
- I feel like I can't blow through it or it's hard
  - Is there anything in the bell or shaft of your trumpet? Check. If you can't get it out, wait. Don't force it out or you may damage your instrument. Airplay and participate
  - Turn the tops of your valves without unscrewing them clockwise. If they are not moving, they are “locked in.” If they twist, turn until you feel them “lock in.” If they continue to spin, loosen the cap to pull out your valve slightly, turn until it “locks.”
  - Loosen your valve screws and slightly pull out the valves to see the numbers. Make sure they are in the right casing. Valve one should be closest to your mouthpiece, two in the middle and three closest to the bell. If incorrect, move them to the correct casing.
  - Make sure the button of your valve is connected to your actual valve. If the stem and button wiggle a lot, carefully undo the cap and reattach it to the valve
  - Check the plastic piece on your valve. If it looks out of place, wait until pack up time and airplay
- My valves/slide won't move
  - Don't force it!
  - If the valve won't come out, wait until pack up. Airplay if needed.
  - Before reaching for the oil/grease again, wipe off all the oil/grease with a paper towel/cloth that won't leave debris. You may have too much. Then, oil each valve with only a couple drops and use very little grease.
  - Make sure your fingers are in a gentle curve and you are pressing the valves straight down. If you are pushing at an angle, this may cause a valve to stick.



# Detailed Check - FRENCH HORN

- **Embouchure**
  - Make sure you have a relaxed but firm band face. No puffy cheeks
  - Avoid the “red” - do you have the red part of your lips showing? If so, make sure your lips are in the mouthpiece and not pouting out into the mouthpiece
  - Make sure your mouthpiece has 50/50 with top and bottom lip and in the middle of your mouth. This will be a little different depending on your mouth/teeth shape but avoid too high or too low. Avoid too far off to one side.
  - Don't smash the mouthpiece into your face to go higher. Keep everything relaxed, don't tighten up your throat or chest. Be sure not to clench your teeth as well.
- **Sound is gurgling**
  - Remove mouthpiece and rotate counterclockwise (if your right hand is on the bell, start moving that hand up) to dump any condensation out. Keep turning a couple times.
  - Push down all valves and take out slides to dump out condensation. You may have condensation trapped in a slide somewhere. Rotate the horn counterclockwise a couple times.
  - A wavering sound could also mean you don't have a focused buzz. Make sure you know exactly what note you want with the correct fingering.
  - Still does it? Wait until pack up time and participate your best through class.
- **I feel like I can't blow through it or it's hard**
  - Is there anything in the bell or shaft of your trumpet? Check. If you can't get it out, wait. Don't force it out or you may damage your instrument. Airplay and participate
  - Check your hand position in your bell! Make sure your hand isn't closing off air
- **My slide is stuck**
  - Don't force it! Wait until after class and leave it alone.
  - Before reaching for the grease again, wipe off all the grease with a paper towel/cloth that won't leave debris. You may have too much. Then, use very little grease.
- **Key won't move**
  - When was the last time you oiled your rotary valves? Remember, all you need is one or two drops.
  - Check your strings or connectors.
  - Check to make sure your keys aren't bent
  - If something still doesn't work, participate to your best ability by airplaying and wait until pack up time.

# Detailed Check - TROMBONE

- **Embouchure**
  - See if someone else can play your trumpet with their own mouthpiece. If they can, it's you. If they can't, see other solutions below. Participate your best and wait until after class.
  - Make sure you have a relaxed but firm band face. No puffy cheeks
  - Avoid the "red" - do you have the red part of your lips showing? If so, make sure your lips are in the mouthpiece and not pouting out into the mouthpiece
  - Make sure your mouthpiece has 50/50 with top and bottom lip and in the middle of your mouth. This will be a little different depending on your mouth/teeth shape but avoid too high or too low. Avoid too far off to one side.
  - Don't smash the mouthpiece into your face to go higher. Keep everything relaxed, don't tighten up your throat or chest. Be sure not to clench your teeth as well.
- **Sound is gurgling**
  - Open water key and gently blow to get your condensation out.
  - A wavering sound could also mean you don't have a focused buzz. Make sure you know exactly what note you want with the correct fingering.
  - Still does it? Wait until pack up time and participate your best through class.
- **I feel like I can't blow through it or it's hard**
  - Is there anything in the bell or shaft of your trombone? Check. If you can't get it out, wait. Don't force it out or you may damage your instrument. Airplay and participate
- **My slide is stuck**
  - Before reaching for the slide oil again, wipe off all the oil with a paper towel/cloth that won't leave debris. You may have too much. Then, use very little oil: two to three drops on each fork of the slide.
  - If your slide sticks in a particular place it either needs a bath (ask director) or something is bent/dented which will need professional repair. Discuss after class and participate your best.
  - Tuning slides - don't force it! Leave it be until after class and continue to participate.
- **Key won't move**
  - When was the last time you oiled your rotary valves? Remember, all you need is one or two drops.
  - Check your strings or connectors.
  - Check to make sure your keys aren't bent
  - If something still doesn't work, participate to your best ability by airplaying and wait until pack up time.

# Detailed Check - EUPHONIUM/TUBA

- Embouchure
  - Make sure you have a relaxed but firm band face. No puffy cheeks
  - Avoid the “red” - do you have the red part of your lips showing? If so, make sure your lips are in the mouthpiece and not pouting out into the mouthpiece
  - Make sure your mouthpiece has 50/50 with top and bottom lip and in the middle of your mouth. This will be a little different depending on your mouth/teeth shape but avoid too high or too low. Avoid too far off to one side.
  - Don't smash the mouthpiece into your face to go higher. Keep your chest and throat relaxed and use lots of air.
- Check your water keys
  - They should seal completely and let no air out when they are closed
  - If missing one or it is not sealing, wait until pack up time. Airplay through rehearsal
- Sound is gurgling
  - Open water keys and gently blow to get your condensation out
  - Push down all valves and take out slides to dump out condensation. You may have condensation trapped in a slide somewhere.
  - A wavering sound could also mean you don't have a focused buzz. Make sure you know exactly what note you want with the correct fingering.
  - Still does it? Wait until pack up time and participate your best through class.
- I feel like I can't blow through it or it's hard
  - Is there anything in the bell? Check. If you can't get it out, wait. Don't force it out or you may damage your instrument. Airplay and participate
  - Loosen your valve screws and slightly pull out the valves to see the numbers. Make sure they are in the right casing. Valve one should be closest to your mouthpiece, two in the middle and three is your ring finger (four is your pinky). If incorrect, move them to the correct casing.
  - Make sure the button of your valve is connected to your actual valve. If the stem and button wiggle a lot, carefully undo the cap and reattach it to the valve
  - Check the plastic piece on your valve at the top. You should clearly see the number and it should be connected into a smaller hole. If not, wait until pack up time and participate to your fullest ability.
- My valves/slide won't move
  - Don't force it!
  - If the valve won't come out, wait until pack up. Airplay if needed.
  - Before reaching for the oil/grease again, wipe off all the oil/grease with a paper towel/cloth that won't leave debris. You may have too much. Then, oil each valve with only a couple drops and use very little grease.
  - Make sure your fingers are in a gentle curve and you are pressing the valves straight down. If you are pushing at an angle, this may cause a valve to stick.

# PERCUSSION CHECK

- Snare Drum
  - Check that the snares are free of where your snare stand holds the snare.
  - If the snare is “on” and not making a snare sound
    - Snares could be too tight and you need to loosen them
    - Snares could be too loose and not engaged on the bottom head
  - If the snare is “off” and not making the tom sound
    - Snares on bottom head are too tight and need to be loosened until it makes the tom sound
  - Drum head may need repair, to be tightened or loosened
  - If you can't figure it out, do your best and continue to participate. Let your director know during pack up or if asked.
- Mallet Instruments
  - Making a buzzing sound? A bar is touching something, string is too loose, or other. Make a quick check. Continue to participate and let your director know during pack up or if asked.
  - Bell kits - if the unit is unstable and wobbles, check to make sure you have locked it and placed to mallet keyboard correctly on top of its base.
  - Check to make sure the bars are not damaged. Avoid any damaged bars and let the director know immediately with a raised hand.
- Timpani
  - Pedal doesn't change pitch, stays up or down? Let your director know during pack up or when asked. The tension rod connecting the pedal to the adjusters needs repair.
  - Make sure you are using the correct mallets and you are striking the head within a dollar bill width of the edge and not the middle.
- Other equipment
  - If anything is damaged, let the director know immediately so you don't get blamed. If it was you, be honest! We can learn from mistakes if we are honest and your director won't be nearly as mad :-)
  - If you don't know how to use it, ASK AND DON'T PRETEND!
- Stick broke
  - Grab another one, if available, or borrow. Let your director know if asked or wait until pack up.

No matter what, keep participating to your full ability!