

Bassoon Basics

Breathing and Support

This is the process I want you all to engage in as you refine this element of bassoon performance. This is the beginning layer and is aimed at the elimination of rigid ab use and tension in the glottis or “back” of tongue. This is coming from a positive point of view – use the following concepts. Avoid “don’t” in your approach, when you feel tension with tongue or glottis it is because you were not proactive with air support and/or voicing.

Relaxation Prior

“Cleansing” Breath
Trigger: “Breath from the small of the back”
Shoulders are down and relaxed

Posture

Elongation of spine
Head is “floating”
Chest is up, shoulder blades compressing together
Over your center of gravity

Syllable for Air Intake

Drop jaw and open embouchure in a flexed way as much as comfortable
Use and hear a “Hoe” or “How” breath syllable with the air flowing into your body
Listen to air coming in – it should end as a tapered sound, not abruptly

Allow Expansion of Abdomen

Low expansion first - strive for a quick, relaxed motion
...then lateral chest expansion
Sense of 360 degree expansion – front, sides and back
Area just below breast bone – allow to expand
Flex ab/back muscles for support after full breath cycle
You should be attempting to discover what your body does in its most **athletic** way to get air in!
Feel warmth in your chest at the end of the air/ab expansion cycle

Please Note – Tense/Static/Rigid muscles at the end of the breath cycle is never needed and eliminates the fluid use of the support muscles

Engage/Flex

Ab/back muscles away from the body core all around the body as much possible
“out, away, around and down” not “in”
Engage the muscles in an aggressive but fluid way
Three layers of ab use – 1) breathing 2) basic support 3) room to flex out further for dynamic range/accents/vibrato...without rigidity
Understan/experiment with rebounding/releasing energy to the basic support level
Experiment with Sherman Walt’s low leg flex (push chair back) to engage the low ab muscles, so muscles above belly button can be more fluid/flexible
And
WITH THE ENAGING OF THE SUPPORT MUSCLES - ALLOW THE SUPPORTED AIR STREAM TO GO TO THE REED.
See the base of neck expand
Coordinate motion of support **with** tongue use **with** vowel shape **with** embouchure placement and engagement

Secondary Resistance is the enemy!

Sensitize/ become aware of the possibility you might be stopping the air with glottis engagement (“I’ve lost my keys”) or arched tongue.

Develop the above approach all the time until all elements can be incorporated in all settings.