

Full Band Breathing Exercises
Dr. George Palton

Preliminary Setup

- Place the band into the “ready” position. Posture should be tall but relaxed. Avoid stiff upper bodies or raised shoulders.
- Begin with 1-2 minutes of stretching.
- **Make sure students are focused and reinforce the components of proper breathing during these exercises.** If students are “going through the motions” it will reinforce casual breathing during their playing!
- Set the metronome at quarter note= 80 for flow exercises

Talking Points

- **WIND** is necessary for adequate air pressure
- An **open throat** is a happy throat
- Adopt a “**WHOA**” **shape** in your mouth when inhaling
- Maintain a **constant and even** flow of wind
- Utilize an **even “cyclic” exchange** from inhalation to exhalation
- Always keep the **air in motion**
- Only **use the first 80%** of your lung capacity
- **Use good posture and stay relaxed**, don’t raise your shoulders
- Fill your lungs from the **bottom to the top**
- **Breathe to expand**, don’t expand to breathe
- Breathe from the **corners of your mouth**, not your nose
- Make your breath as silent as possible, **noise is resistance**
- Lower notes need **twice as much** air, higher notes require air to be **twice as fast**
- **Plan all breaths** to optimize the musical effect
- Breathe in time and **maintain a steady tempo** when breathing
- Keep the breathing **calm**, relax into the discomfort
- **INHALE=YAWN, EXHALE=BLOW WIND!**

The Basics of Your Body

- **Functions of the Respiratory System:** Exchange Gasses (O₂, CO₂), Isometric Opposition (Muscles become rigid), and Creating Pressure (Muscles bear down, throat closes).
- **The Diaphragm** is a piston that moves up and down. When the diaphragm descends the chest cavity enlarges which lowers air pressure and allows your lungs to fill up. The only nerves in the diaphragm sense pain, not its position.
- **Breath Support** is the blowing of breath. The volume of *wind* provides support, not the contraction of muscles. Breath support can be inhibited by closing the throat or by using pelvic pressure to keep the diaphragm activated. The abdominal muscles are capable of creating far more pressure than is needed to support a full breath.
- The most common cause of a constricted airflow is excess **pressurization**. Most often this is caused by constrictions in the throat or because the tongue is blocking the wind stream.
- You can move muscles throughout your body and get very little or no air in your body. These muscles move **naturally** as a result of filling up your lungs.
- We cannot change our **lung capacity**. It is based on age, height, gender, and health factors. However, we can do the most with what we have and work to improve the elasticity of our lungs.

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#1: Stretching

- Trunk twist
- Flop over
- Wrist behind back
- Elbow over head
- Two way stretch (w/o flop over)

#2: Training

- In-sip-sip, out-push-push
- Throw the ball
- Power breathing
- 5-15-5
- Suction drain (slight leak)
- Pop, double pop (w/o expansion)

#3 Therapy

- Tension and release (full body)
- EEE to OH

#4: Flow

- See below

#5: Relaxation

- In nose, out mouth

#6: Application

- Wind pattern music
- Mark time
- Dynamics
- Articulation
- Mental modeling

Flow Exercises

- In 2 Out 2
In 4 Out 4
In 6 Out 6
In 8 Out 8 (etc.)
- In 2 Out 2
In 2 Out 4
In 2 Out 6
In 2 Out 8 (etc.)
- In 6 Out 6
In 7 Out 7
In 8 Out 8 (etc.)
- In 8 Out 8
In 8 Out 4
In 8 Out 2
In 8 Out 1
- In 4 Out 4
In 2 Out 4 (like a preparatory breath)
In 1 Out 4
In 1/8 Out 4
- In 8 Out 8 (one time)
In 4 Out 4 (two times)
In 2 Out 2 (four times)
In 1 Out 1 (eight times)
- In 4 Out 4
In 3 Out 3
In 2 Out 2 (etc.)
- In 2 Hold 2 Out 2
In 4 Hold 4 Out 4
In 6 Hold 6 Out 6
In 8 Hold 8 Out 8

Modify the exercises to increase student focus

- Use horizontal and circular arm movements to gauge air flow
- Use a “monitor”
- Exhale onto a piece of paper
- Use “paper air plane” “dart” or “bow and arrow” (dynamics)
- Add extra rests to standard warm-ups to train students to support their breaths consistently
- Model exercises after desired improvements in repertoire (articulation, dynamics)