

Trombone Slides

1. Trombones should be treated in a similar way, except that after removing from the bath the outer tube should be cleaned with a Trombone snake. Clean one leg at a time and take care not to push the brush right around the bow as it may get stuck.
2. Clean the outside surface of the inner slide with a clean cloth – preferably cotton, and put slide cream onto the stocking – the slightly raised part of the bottom of the inner slide.
3. Replace the outer slide, squirt water onto the inner slide and work the slide up and down to spread the lubricant evenly.

Rotary Valves

Rotary Valves need very little maintenance apart from occasional lubrication.

PLEASE DO NOT ATTEMPT TO DISMANTLE THE VALVE - THIS WORK IS BEST UNDERTAKEN BY A TECHNICIAN

PLEASE NOTE

This guide is for basic and regular maintenance only, and if followed should help to prevent valves and tuning slide sticking. There will be occasions when basic maintenance regimes, however regularly and well they are carried out, will not solve the problem. If this is the case then the instrument should be inspected by a specialist instrument repair technician.

Recommended local instrument technician

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Please note that this document is designed as a guide only and West Midlands Brass Academy takes no responsibility for damage caused whilst maintaining any brass instrument.

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Musical Instrument Maintenance Guide



West Midlands Brass Academy

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Why Maintain an Instrument

Brass instruments are susceptible to changes in environment such as heat and humidity and to the warm moist air that players blow through them. Saliva contains enzymes and other minerals, plus sugars from food, which coat the inside of the instrument and can cause valves to stick, tuning slides to oxidize and eventually jam and in extreme cases corrode the instrument from the inside.

When to Clean

As a general rule brass instruments should be thoroughly cleaned about once a month, and valves or trombone slides, and tuning slides oiled or greased when necessary.

How to Clean

Valve Instruments

The best way to clean an instrument is to soak it in the bath, or if a trumpet or cornet in a large sink. Fill the bath or sink with enough **hand-hot** water with a small amount of detergent – eg Fairy liquid. Please make sure that the water is not too hot, particularly with gold lacquered instruments as it could damage the lacquer.

1. Remove the valves, ensuring that you know which valve came from where, most manufacturers number the valves, the one closest to the mouthpiece being number 1, middle one number 2 and the one closest to the bell number 3. If they are not numbered place them on a non-fluffy cloth in the right order.
2. Next remove all the tuning slides and soak the instrument and all parts in the bath for about 20 minutes to help dissolve any dried on residue on the inside of the instrument.
3. Drain all the parts and push a snake through as many of the tubes as possible – but not the valve chambers - and finally rinse them through with cold water.
4. Clean the legs on the tuning slides and lubricate with tuning slide grease before replacing them in the instrument. Use grease sparingly especially on moveable slides as it may make them difficult to operate. Also, on moveable slides, after the tuning slide grease has been applied use a little valve oil to thin the grease down to make it easier to move.



5. Wipe the valves with a lint free soft cloth, preferably cotton, as lint or fluffy cloths can leave residue in the valves causing them to stick.
6. Clean the inside of the valve casings with a valve cleaning brush.
7. Replace the valves one at a time, placing a couple of drops of valve oil on the valve, placing it in the top of the valve chamber and twisting the valve around to spread the oil over all the valve, then push in the valve whilst twisting until you can feel the guides locate in the channels. Repeat for valves 2 and 3.
8. Please note that on some instruments the valve guides may locate in 2 positions, 180 degrees apart. After the valves have been replaced play the instrument to ensure it plays properly, if air cannot be blown through the instrument when one or more valves are depressed then at least one of the valves will need to be turned by 180 degrees