

Lip Control and Flexibility

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These are specialized exercises designed to use an exact methodology to gain control of the inner lip muscles with the emphasis on becoming aware of and using the slight in and out movement, or rolling of the lips, as you change notes. Explanations of how to tighten and loosen the lips appropriate to range abound, but I feel this is the most concise, easiest to explain and physiologically sound methodology of all. When I think of a good methodology, it must meet these criteria: You must be able to explain it and demonstrate it easily; it needs to be in line with actual bodily processes and physiology; and it must work. By working I mean that it creates the result you are looking for without disrupting or downgrading anything else you are doing- like getting a good sound.

In recent discussions on a horn forum, much scepticism was raised about any rolling of the lips. Fears of inferior sound and disconnected ranges were expressed, often in very harsh terms. The question of rolling the lips in for the high register was raised by an amateur player who had been reading material from and consulting with a trumpet teacher. The image of trumpet players in bugle corps screeching out high notes with their lips rolled over their teeth seemed to be on everyone's mind. There were other side issues in the discussion, but the part that intrigued me was the downright hostile attitude towards rolling the lips in and out for the different ranges. I did jump in to defend the idea, as I do recommend it in my book, mostly for the upper register. My only regret now, after researching this at length, is that I didn't emphasize it enough.

Since we need a way to bring the lips closer together and compact the upper lip as we go higher, thinking of rolling the lip in slightly as we tighten it will help achieve this goal. Pedagogy about creating a smaller aperture as you go higher varies as exactly how to do that. Yes, we do want to bring the lips together and tighten them as well to go higher, but what are the actual muscles and muscle moves that will accomplish this? After all, when you suggest to a student that they tighten their upper lip or make the "aperture" smaller, how can you be sure they will do the right thing without specific instructions. There is more than one way to *attempt* to do these things. Some of them are going to be ineffectual and it is hard to tell what is going on inside the mouthpiece. Has anyone in the horn pedagogy field actually given an accurate and comprehensive explanation of this? My answer to this question is no- and that includes myself.

I was approached at an IHS Symposium a few years ago by a doctor/horn player as I sat at my table selling books. He thumbed through my book for a while and then turned to leave. As he walked away he turned and said, "You know, Mr. Rider, I am a doctor, and I can assure you that you don't use twenty odd facial muscles to tighten and loosen your lips. There are only two muscles that do that." As he said that he traced a large U shaped "clown smile" that reached down from one cheekbone through the lower lip and then back up on the other side. This was followed by a similar frown running through the upper lip. I smiled and said something like "Well, I'm sure it isn't that simple." He just smiled and walked out of the room. I never ran into him again.

For some reason, his comments had haunted me ever since. I had studied the facial muscle chart in the Farkas books and Phil's explanation seemed reasonable. It looked to me like there were, in fact, a lot of muscles right around the lips. I had experimented with the lip muscles myself, tried out many things on students, talked to other players and had developed the suggestions you can read in my book. Fortunately for me, everything I said there I still believe to be accurate in some helpful way. My problem was that I didn't have one of my simple, elegant, "Natural Process of Horn Playing" type of solutions. ("Balance and The Natural Process of Horn Playing" is the first chapter in my book and is the cornerstone of what I do as a teacher.) I was beginning to believe that it just didn't exist. Well, you can't win them all, right?

Enter the discussion about rolling the lips. My curiosity finally got the better of me and I decided to delve deeper into what I had started in my book. I was going to buy the trumpet method involved in the dispute, but I wanted to see if I could continue where I had left off in my book and research and develop my own methodology so I went ahead without it. I tested the theory on myself and all of my students, playing closest attention to the ones who didn't seem to be getting the upper register as fast as others. The results were amazing. *Every student* had significant improvement in a very short time. Why?

First of all, the movement itself is very easy for students to understand. They can all make "chicken lips" by rolling their lips in and they can all pout out. We can easily demonstrate it ourselves. This is key. You can have them do the movements without the horn and it is a very familiar movement for most people. So the first of our methodology criteria has been met.

Second, it follows the physiology of our body- in this case our facial muscles- because the only two muscles capable of tightening and loosening the lips are, you guessed it, the "clown muscles." All the other little ones have minimal effect. If you are going to make a definite, controllable change in the tightness in your lips, the effective movements are of rolling the lips in or out with these two muscles. Look it up. Simple, elegant- but I am getting

ahead of myself. Criteria number two, however, is satisfied.

Does it work? Does it do what we want without ruining other aspects of our playing? It is pretty simple to test. I'm sure most of us, maybe all of us, who have had success playing up high already do this to some extent or other. It is probably the reason the really great players, the ones who can get all over the horn with hardly any discernible movement have the success they do, without even realizing it. This is one of those things that you "may" get if you practice certain exercises, get some sort of clue from a teacher or perhaps it just comes naturally to some people. This is just exactly the type of thing that bothers me the most about our horn pedagogy- it just isn't specific enough in terms of a good explanation.

From my experiments with my own playing and that of my students I have to say the third criteria is satisfied- it works. In fact, I believe it can improve the sound and efficiency of movement into the lower register by decreasing jaw movement. More on that later. In the upper register it decreases pressure by being an alternative to pressure and gives one incredible control over producing good vibrations that produce good tone.

The fact is, these movements are very small- not even noticeable except in the extreme low register. It all goes on inside the mouthpiece. *It is simply the act of doing the movement itself that brings the results.* I have sat next to a student and, as they went for a high note, I just said, "in." That simple cue focusses their attention on using the proper movement and they immediately use less pressure and actually get notes they have never gotten before. The tone is also *improved* because of less pressure and less tightening of other muscles that have no positive role to play. In other words, it is easier. Easier is more efficient, usually produces better tone and increases endurance. Not a bad grouping of desirable results! I love that kind of methodology. And because this movement is as natural as making faces, it qualifies as part of the "Natural Process of Horn Playing."

How does it "Balance" with other elements of playing? In the lower register, balancing a slight outward roll with jaw movement (and less tension- especially in the upper lip)- will result in *less jaw movement*, since it is now helped by the roll. Less jaw movement equals better, smoother, less intrusive movement during range changes. The tone can also be "focussed" by the roll by bringing just a tiny bit more of the fleshy part of the lip (from the inside surface) into play. This can be used to effect subtle tone changes *in all registers*. Remember, these are very small movements, and *the jaw should support the lower lip at all times*. You may find yourself moving the jaw more forward and back rather than just up and down. Just find the right balance for best results in all ranges.

Balance the increase or decrease in tension with the amount of rolling in or out (more in the upper lip) as you go up and down. That is the short summary.

The most wonderful thing about all this that your mouthpiece setting does not have to move at all during any of this, which is one of our primary goals. Easier leaps, better control of soft, high notes, many other small improvements that depend on lip control- these are the types of things that all of us want, but may never find using hit and miss teaching methods. It is all about knowing specifically what to do and where to focus your attention. The body does the rest.

These exercises are also an extension of what I was talking about in the embouchure section of the book in terms of rolling the lips. Like I said there, if your lips are set up properly, you won't be able to roll them too far in, anyway. Remember, these are very small movements. The exercises are especially effective for those who are trying to get their upper lip in the mouthpiece and gain control over the upper lip muscle. If you are pinning (setting into) your upper lip with the mouthpiece, you will not get the full benefit of these exercises- nowhere near it. Your lips need to be lined up evenly as I have specified in the Embouchure chapter of my book. If you find yourself having to exert pressure with the left hand to make these slurs you may need to evaluate your embouchure. Try the rolling exercises for a while (a couple of weeks) before you decide about changing anything in your embouchure.

As we go down we can roll the lips out a bit, **without losing contact with the teeth**, to get a softer tension for the lower notes without moving the actual mouthpiece position. You can also lessen jaw movement by combining the rolling out of the lips in the lower register. A side benefit of this is a better vibration with better tone. Sometimes, excess jaw movement for really low notes can open the mouth too much, especially at loud volumes, separating the lips and producing an airy sound.

The difference between these exercises and the lip trills is that here we are trying to center the notes rather than just going between them. It's a very similar movement but not *exactly* the same. I think that this rolling movement *is* at the heart of *all lip flexing*, but we must choose how to fit that in with different skills and situations. Here again- "Balance" for results. You may find yourself falling into a lip trill- especially if you know how to do them already- but resist temptation for these drills. You may, however, discover that using this concept may help you get a lip trill. Practice that separately.

Keep in mind that by saying that we are "rolling the lips," we actually mean the inside of the lips, in the center of

the mouthpiece. The concept of “rolling” has to be taken in context and it really isn’t a large, even visible, movement, except in the low register. Please read all the text before you start doing things that will be contrary to what I am suggesting. I don’t claim to have discovered this. I am only identifying this concept as a *very* important one- for the reasons stated.

Now the rules:

1. Do not roll either lip over the teeth. This is just a good basic embouchure rule. Do not roll either lip in such a manner that it negatively effects the tone. These are small movements we are talking about. These movements are aimed at **the muscles inside the mouthpiece**. Just making the small rolling/tightening movements is the key to success. I am NOT advocating rolling the lips under themselves or anything like that.

2. The built in repetitions are **VERY** important. You will find that your body will adjust as you go along and find the right things to do. Don’t stop if it isn’t perfect at first- keep going. Start very slowly just to get the feeling of the movement. Make sure you feel the “in and out” rolling before going faster. Feed in the air and just let yourself adjust to the intervals.

3. Keep control at the corners and the chin should stay down. Feel the continuity or similarity between the notes. It is not necessary, however, to over-flex the chin itself in any range. The chin flex should be a result of flexing the lower lip- up in the higher range, and just being the strength of the embouchure in all ranges.

4. **Find the least amount of jaw movement that is necessary for each interval.** This is very important. You want to stay in contact with your teeth (behind BOTH lips) throughout the range, so you don’t want to be making unnecessarily large jaw movements. As you try to go faster, you may be tempted to use more jaw to help out, but resist the temptation- find the best balance. Use the “inside the mouthpiece” muscle movement and air speed instead.

5. As you go faster, the movements get smaller, not larger. So the smallest movements will be when you are playing higher notes and going fast. Speed the air up as you go faster (even at relatively slow tempos).

6. Rolling the lips in while tightening them should bring the lips closer together and compact them to some degree. This gives a higher vibration. Use the feeling of a **glissando** to smooth it out and find the least movement necessary. Using the glissando principle with the in/out movement will find you the most efficient combination of air and tension for the high register, especially.

7. Don’t forget the air! If you get too preoccupied with the lips and forget to use the air, none of this will work. **Keep the air speed at the level of the higher note.**

8. As always, what we are trying to achieve is a set of mechanics that will become second nature and controlled only by your natural feel for the notes. It is not desirable to try and control the exact tension for each note as you go along. Do what works for a good tone and the results you want in terms of range and speed. The exercises are designed to get the **feel** of the movements or mechanics in the different ranges. It is sort of a training process. You are training yourself to respond to interval changes with the rolling moves rather than pressure.

9. Keep track of your pitch at all times. Learn where these notes center in tune and lock in on that.

10. As in the lip trills, look for the shortest distance between the notes. Feel the similarities between the notes, keep control on the corners and **slide** up and down, using the in and out movement. Start with a slow tempo and concentrate on the “in and out feeling” while making sure not to overdo it. Let it find its own way during the course of the drill.

11. Last but not least: Play in rhythm. Do the relative speeds of the rhythmic patterns. Think in groups of notes.

Play the pattern on more than one transposition. I have supplied the notes to use between the basic harmonics. These are in small print.

Do not play these too fast to begin with. This isn’t about speed. It’s about learning the proper lip and jaw movement. It is basically developing a habit- an instinctual movement for use as we play.

We are NOT trying to trill here. We are going for a centered tone with the least amount of effort.

Very Important! Keep the air speed at the level of the higher note.

4 Lip Control

This first low harmonic set on F horn will really give you an idea of the “in and out” movement of both lips. Let the upper lip relax more than the lower one. There is also potential for a lot of jaw movement here but try to keep it at a minimum by finding a balance between the lip movement and the jaw movement. You will also find that it takes a good deal of corner control and control of the lower lip to do this series. Don't let the lower lip float out away from the teeth. Keep the air flow going. When I am working with a student, I often say “in-out” “in-out” as they play the exercise. Think this as you play. **One thing that may help if you are having trouble with the lowest notes (or if you just want some variety) is to play the exercise upside down by starting on the upper note.** Actually, you might want to try this on all the intervals because it is a different feeling to start from the top note.



In the smaller print we have various note combinations to work on in this register. These will help if you can't do the lowest ones yet. The first two are on F horn and the rest are on Bb horn. Make the Bb horn notes sound good.



The next series works around the range that is an embouchure “break” for many people. If you have read my book, you will know that I really don't believe in embouchure breaks, just minor adjustments. Remember to use the proper air speed for the **upper note** for all the notes. **Do at least one example from each large print harmonic series each day. Do not play all 5 pages straight through. Use the small print options for variety.**



It is important to work all the combinations in this range. You don't need to do all of them each day, but if you are having trouble with flexibility in this range, this is the place to start. Remember, they are only one step apart on the harmonic scale. They are closer together than you think.



From this point on up it is important to **not** lip trill these notes. This exercise is aimed at actually centering the notes, but with the least amount of effort and movement. Use a slight “in and out” movement with a balance of jaw movement- which should be disappearing as you go higher- as opposed to the lip trill, which **may** have some jaw movement in all registers.



Lip slurs in this range can be difficult for many players. Using the principles of lip trills and just working “over the harmonic bump” can be a help here. You might want to master that first if you are having trouble. The first 4 are on F horn, the rest on Bb horn. Slide between the notes, don't search for them.



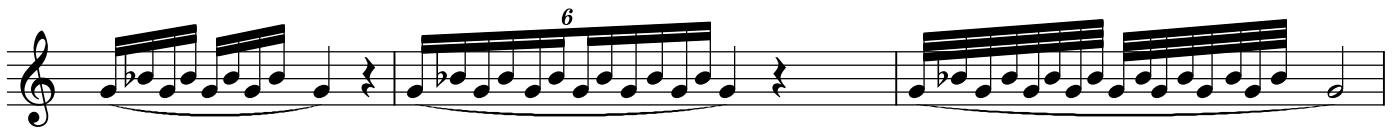
As the series' get higher, you will notice that the movement is really focused right in the middle of the embouchure, inside the mouthpiece. Using the “in and out” feeling, you can control the upper lip muscles.



The first three are on F horn and the rest on Bb horn.



Here we have a harmonic interval that is out of tune. Despite that, do the interval anyway and let the upper note be slightly flat, as it wants to be. It is right in this range that you will feel the lips getting closer together and the movements start to get smaller and more centered in the very middle of the embouchure. **Do not** try to hold an aperture open. If your lips are lined up properly, this will not be necessary or desirable. This goes for all the rest of the exercises.



Here we have two additional F horn groups and three that are to be played on Bb horn. Do play the Bb horn ones in tune.



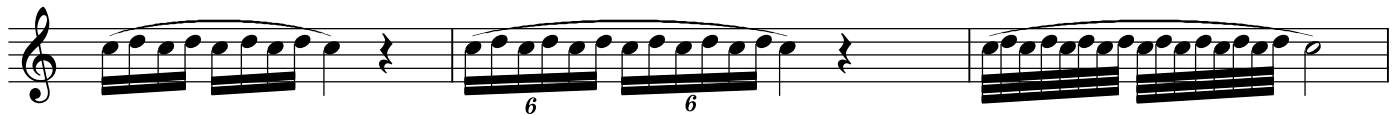
Same as above. Play the out of tune Bb on F horn and let the notes center that way. After you have done that, try it on F horn with first valve.



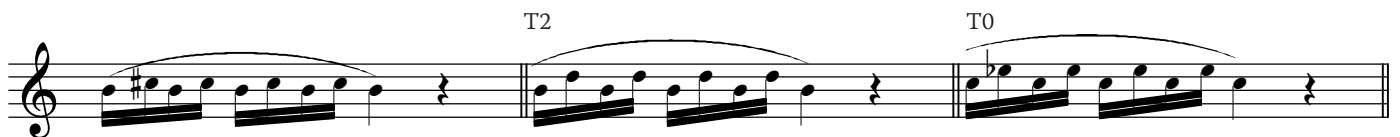
The first two groups are on F horn and the next three are on Bb horn (out of tune).



Here the intervals are strong and should be played in tune. Avoid going into a lip trill to get the feeling of the “in and out” movement and true centering. If you can’t do this one yet, do the first of the optional ones below. Go as high as you can easily. You should push it a little each day, but strengthen the ones you can do first.



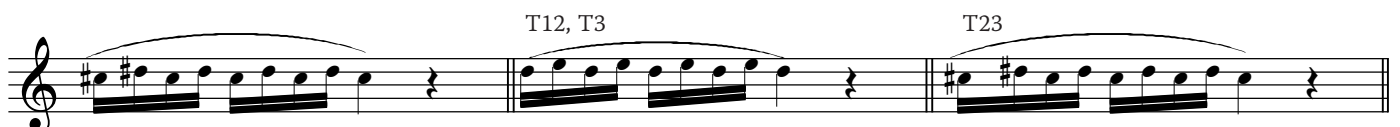
The first is F horn and should be used if you can’t do the one above. The others are Bb horn (out of tune).



Use F horn and center the notes in tune. Notice how the rolling movement has gotten smaller and is in the very center of the embouchure, inside the mouthpiece. The rolling movement should be very distinct, however. If you can’t do this group yet, do the first optional one below.



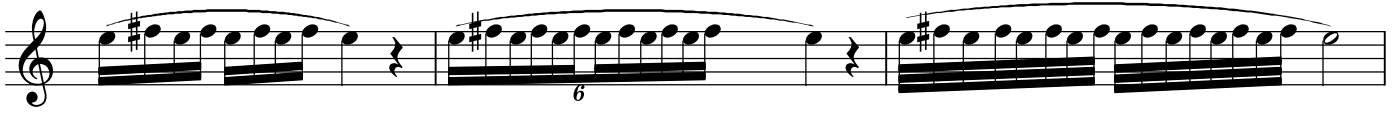
F horn in the first, then Bb horn. All of these should be centered in tune. These fingerings are all handy as alternates and lip trill fingerings.



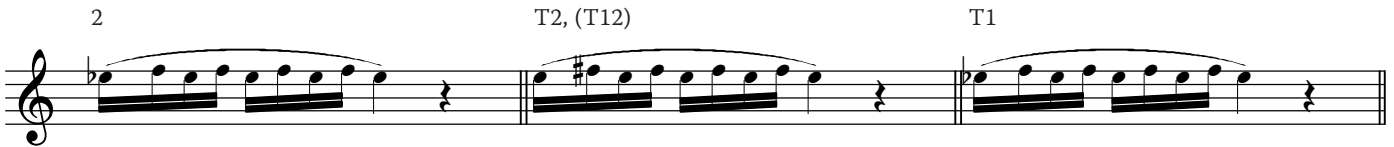
This is a good point to evaluate how you are doing with these exercises. It is important that you be sure you are getting the concept and have mastered these intervals. The higher range depends on your success up to here.

6 Lip Control

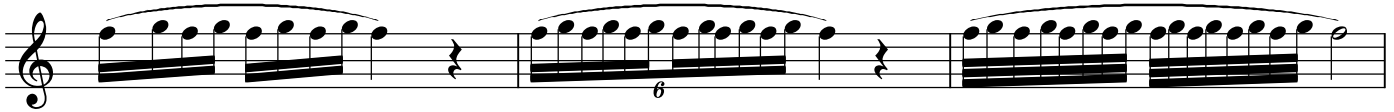
Play this open on F horn even though it is out of tune. Learning to find these small intervals is one of the most important things about playing up high. Getting the rolling “in and out” movement to work with these intervals is very important.



The first should be done with second valve on F horn. The others are for Bb horn. Notice the difference in size of the slots for these harmonics on the two horns.



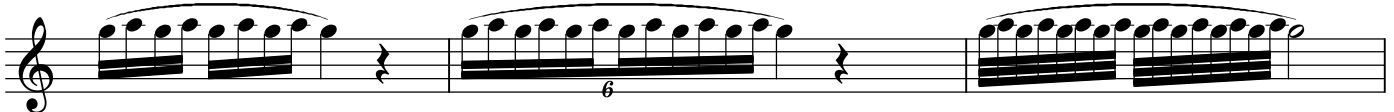
Now we are moving to Bb horn. These will be larger slots and will take a little more energy in the “flick of the lip” to make the slurs. Keep that air speed going.



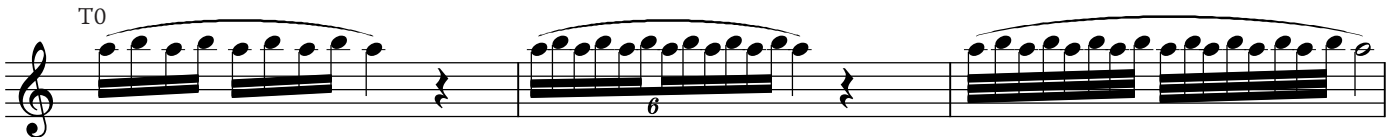
The first two are Bb horn and the third is back on F horn- just for comparison.



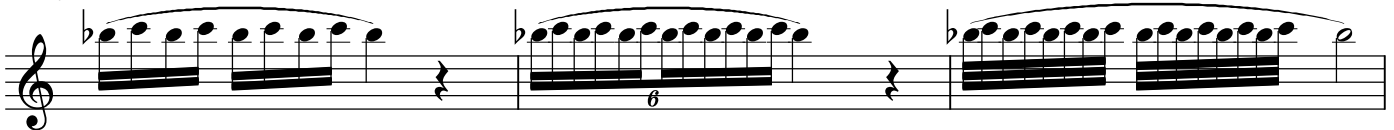
Make sure you can still feel the in and out movement in this register. It will make these a lot easier. Once you have mastered these, try fingering them as you normally would. I like T0 on the A anyway.



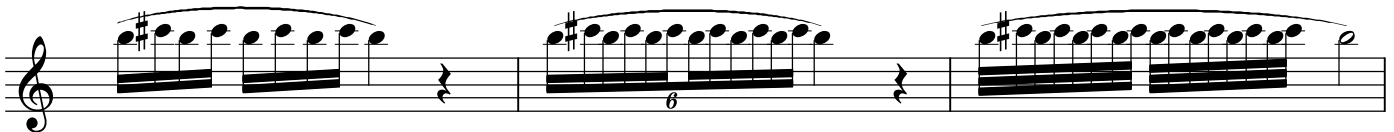
Here we want to play the out of tune harmonics as is.



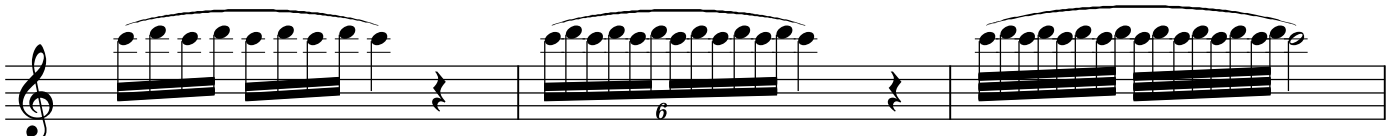
We are playing on the High C Harmonic now, just with a different fingering on a different “horn.” If you can do this one, you can do the next two.



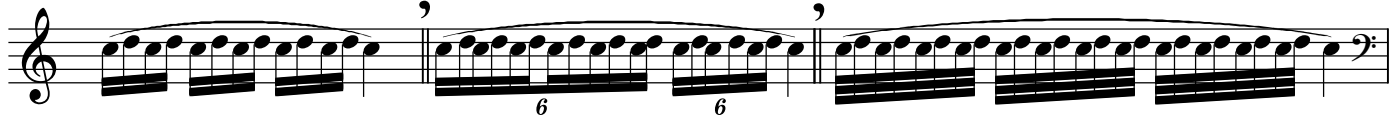
Keep checking the amount of pressure you are using and make sure the air speed is right for the top note.



These can all be done with less pressure than you think. Keep working on the lip movement and the air speed.



One variation that can help with all of these is to simply add more repetitions. Letting the lip find its way while you do the reps is a very important part of this. A good way to think of this is 3 groups of 4, 3 groups of 6 and 6 groups of 4. Don't guess at the number of notes you have done. Learn to hear and feel groups.



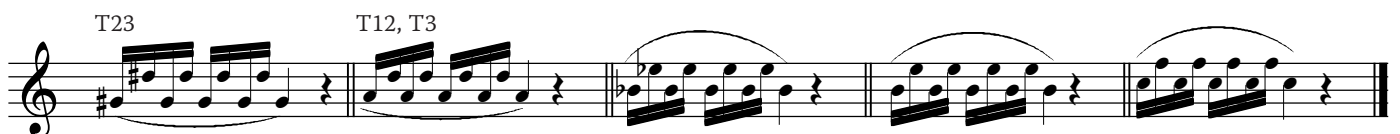
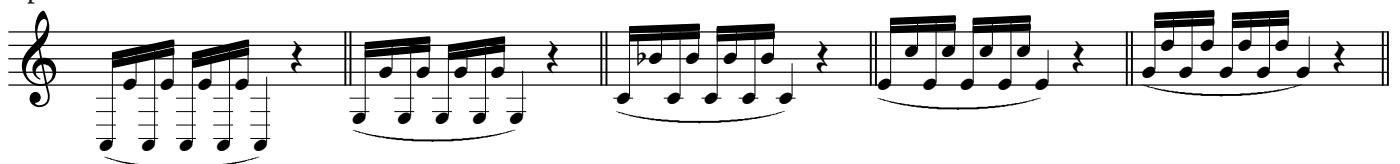
Now we are going to do some larger intervals. Here we are adding one harmonic to each interval and skipping over it. Think of the glissando principal as you do the jumps. Do not hop the slurs, "rip" them. Keep the vibration going. I have included a number of intervals but not all possibilities. Transpose to fill gaps. Do the ones you can do easily first and work up from there.



Remember that we are always working for ease and efficiency. Balance the air with the small movements.



Now we are going to skip 2 harmonics and then a few more one harmonic skips. These are common intervals that we want to be ready for. Center the top and bottom notes with the air and keep the air speed up to the level of the top note. Start on F horn. The second line is Bb horn.



8 Lip Control

This is where we are really going to tie in the rolling of the lips with the Glissando Principle (from my book). By utilizing a glissando on a slur (along with appropriate air speed), we find the least amount of pressure and tension that it takes to get the notes. By adding in the lip rolling movement, we now have the complete methodology for achieving our goal. The lip rolling or “in and out” movement is the actual physical method we will use to “tighten” the lips (especially the upper lip) as we go up in range. The lips are rolled in slightly as we go up, as we have been practicing. Now we are going to combine that with the glissando to maximize efficiency in long slurs (or not slurs for that matter) into the extreme registers. Of course the opposite is true as we go lower.

We are going to skip by the intermediate harmonics in these slurs but we will utilize the glissando to connect the notes and make sure the slurs don't hop. So, especially with the slow slurs, keep the air and the vibration going while you make the slur. Use the quick rolling movement to actually move the lip but let the slur rip instead of just jumping up. It is important to keep contact with your teeth through their support of both lips. And, as always, we must keep the air speed up to the level needed for the highest note.

If you have worked on the smaller intervals and have mastered the movement, all you need to do is extend it a bit to get these slurs. This line is all open F horn.

The first two are F horn and the rest Bb horn. Give a good air speed boost for the high notes.

Spend at least a week doing representative range parts of this each day but don't force it. Go as high as you can and then do some of the larger intervals within your range. After a week or more do the following things:

1. Go back and use your regular fingerings if they are different from the lip slurs.
2. Go to the glissando exercises and utilize what we have done here.
3. Start utilizing the “in and out” rolling movement in everything you do. After doing all this, it should be a pretty natural thing, now. That is the goal- for this to be the way you instinctively play.