

Low Register Exercises

Learning to play well in the lower register of the horn can be just as difficult and frustrating as playing up high. It helps to work gradually from a range that does feel good and works for you down to the lower notes. This is assuming that your embouchure is set up to be capable of playing in all registers. If you are not sure about this, see my material on embouchures and talk to a teacher who has experience (and success) working with embouchure placement.

Here we have exercises that take you from the middle register into the lower register gradually so that you can feel the connection. With the “harmonic” exercises, remember that even though the intervals between the harmonics are larger in this range, the notes are still only “one step” apart on the harmonic scale. Just slide to the next harmonic groove. Feel how much difference there really is. Probably not as much as you think.

Suggestions, or what I would recommend you do as you go lower and lower.

1. Drop your jaw a little. I have heard of players who can move all over the horn without moving their jaw— I just have never met one. Remember, I said a little.
2. Round out your embouchure a little. Think “oh.”
3. Expose more upper lip in the mouthpiece. Don’t change your placement. Don’t take your lower lip out of the mouthpiece. Just relax the upper lip.
4. Keep your corners under control. Anchor on the lower lip.
5. Don’t roll your lower lip out away from your jaw/teeth. Keep pressure against the lower lip equal to the upper lip. Feel the lower lip against the teeth.

The studies should be done with great attention to tone. Do not let it thin out down low.

Bring out the lowest notes in each of these studies at first. Try to cultivate some edge.

LR1

The idea with these scales is to work down gradually, keeping the tone the same. When you get to notes that are weak you need to go back to a good note and work it into the next note down. Think glissando.

LR2

The holds in the middle of the phrase are optional and are there to give you time to center the note. Remember, if you don’t fix these notes now you are just teaching yourself how to play them wrong. Think glissando.

LR3

mf

If you are doing the warm-ups, you know what to do here. Stabilize and bring out the lowest note.

LR4

Here we are adding the next harmonic down. Use the glissando principle to find the shortest way to the notes. If you can't get the lowest notes yet, try doing the pattern using the Bb horn, starting on a third space C.

LR5

Play with your best tone at all times. Keep the air moving and the buzz going between the notes.

LR6

LR7

Bb Horn harmonics: 0, 2, 1, 3, 23. Learn to play these in tune and with a good sound. They are wide slots and need to be centered in pitch. Don't let them "honk." You can continue down on F horn.

LR8

Connecting the middle range with the low. Do on all valve combinations. Tongue this also. Find a transposition that you can do (even if it is on Bb horn) and work down from there.

LR9

We are looking for efficiency here. That means getting from one note to the next with minimal movement. Use your air to support your lip and jaw activities. Get this going at a good clip with good tone.

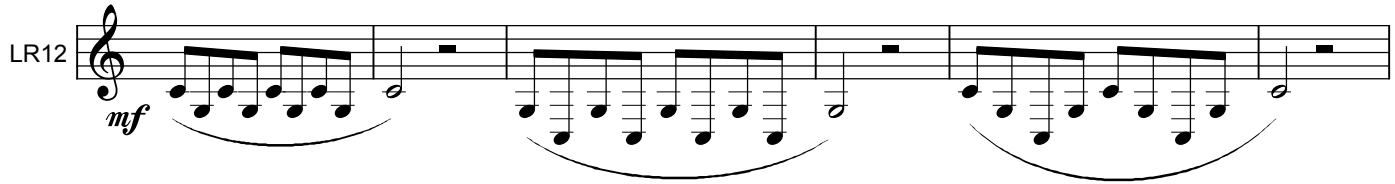
LR10

You may have to slow down a bit on this one at first. Just make sure you center the notes with the air.

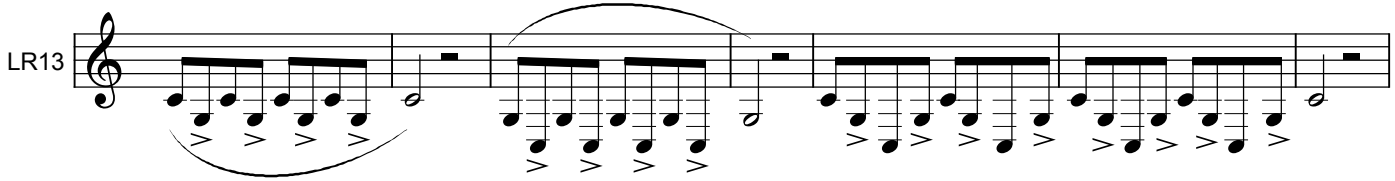
LR11

152 Low Register Exercises

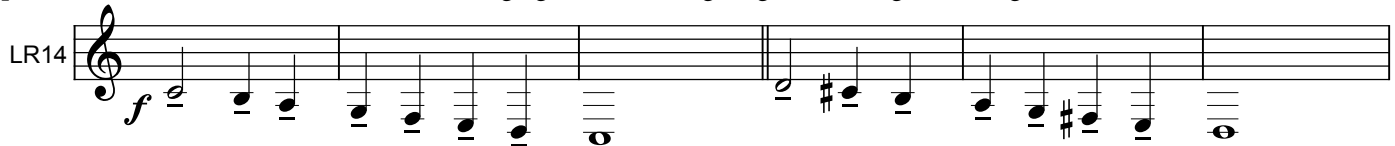
This is the basic low harmonic connection series. I use this with students who have that classic embouchure break somewhere around low g. Find a transposition that you can do and then work across the “break.” Do in all keys. Feel the connection between the notes. Use the harmonic “speed bumps” to help you, and glissando.

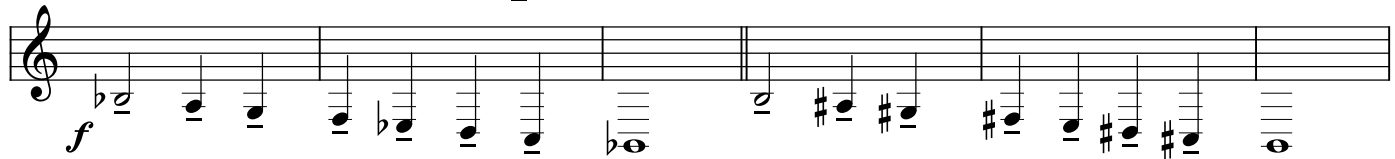
LR12 

A variation is to accent the weakest note. It may not be the lowest note. Start with a small accent and then make it bigger. Once you feel that you have mastered the slurs, start doing them with a legato tongue that feels just as connected.

LR13 

Get a good start on the first note. Control with the corners of your embouchure. Slur first—lots of air. Use the scale patterns. You will feel the muscles holding against the tonguing. This is a good thing and builds control.

LR14 

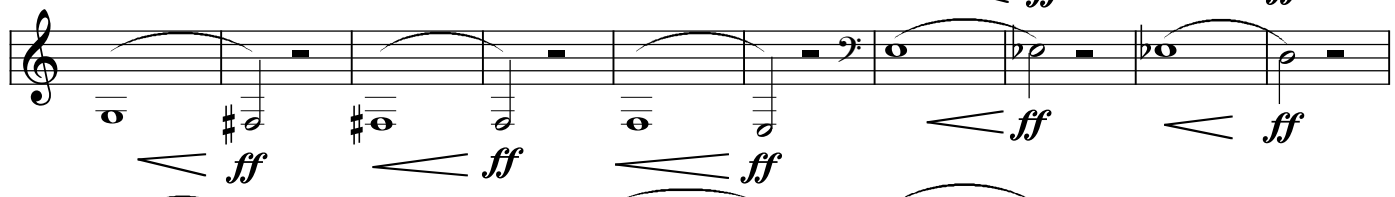


Don't underestimate the power of using the scale patterns.



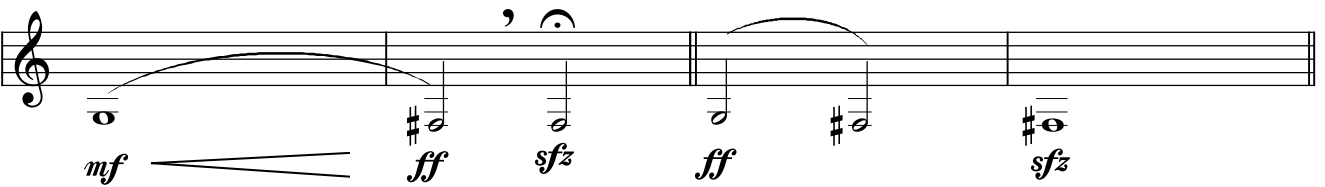
This is a classic exercise to develop power in the low register. (c.f. Philip Farkas “The Art of Horn Playing”) Crescendo on each note and time the loudest point for the beginning of the next bar where the note changes. What makes a louder vibration? The amplitude or size of the vibration must get larger. How do we get amplitude? The lips, especially the upper lip, must relax so that the vibration can get bigger. Lowering the jaw slightly as you get louder also helps. Don't be afraid to put some “shine” or “edge” on the sound. As a matter of fact, you should put a lot of “shine” on these loudest notes. This means that the lip is vibrating freely. Keep the corners under control and don't float the lower lip away from the teeth.

LR15 

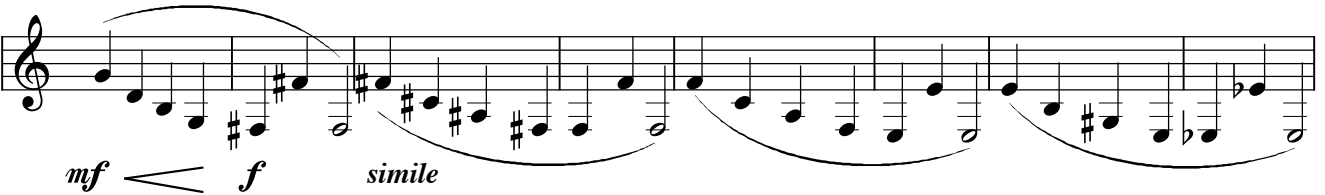


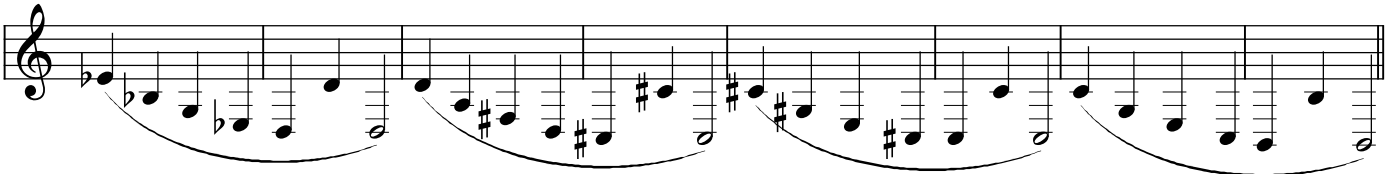


Making loud attacks down low. The next step would be to reattack the last note played at the same volume, first with a breath and then without one. Then just speed up the process until you can make the loud attack by itself. Just like any loud attack, you need to fill your whole body with air and “shout” the note.

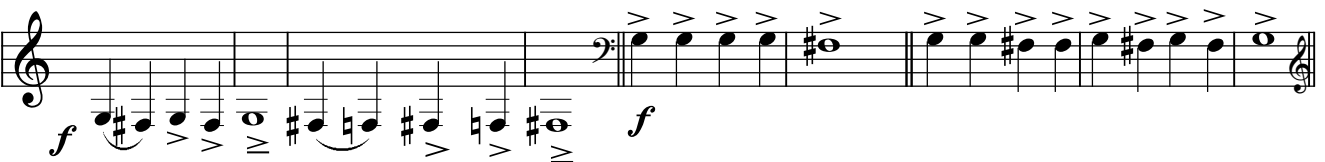
LR16 

Here we use the glissando principle to “reach” for longer intervals. Once you get the loud vibration energy going, you will find that the notes feel pretty close together. Put some “shine” on the octaves.

LR17 



Now we are going to make some loud attacks at a faster tempo. Keep the air and the vibration going and hit the notes hard with the tongue and add a little extra puff of air for the accent..

LR18 

Start stretching out the intervals by adding a half-step at a time. Take this pattern as far as you can. Feel the similarities and the differences in the notes. Use the air for continuity.



Here are some octave jumps to test your ability to keep a steady dynamic and a great tone as you leap about the low register. Play this at different dynamics, all the same or alternating each measure. Compare the feel of the slurs with the legato tonguing. Notice the accents on the lowest notes.

LR19 