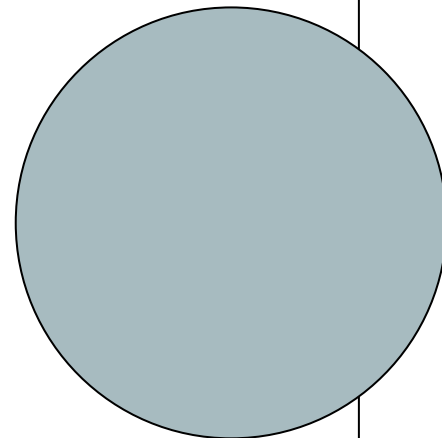


CONSISTENCY



How to Sound
Your Best

tonebase Trumpet



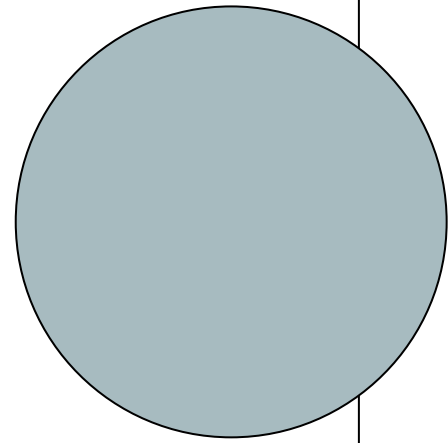
01 **DELIBERATE PRACTICE**

02 **TRIGGERING CONSISTENCY**

03 **SMART PRACTICE**

04 **INSIDE A PRACTICE SESSION**

What is consistency? How do we get it? What should we be practicing?



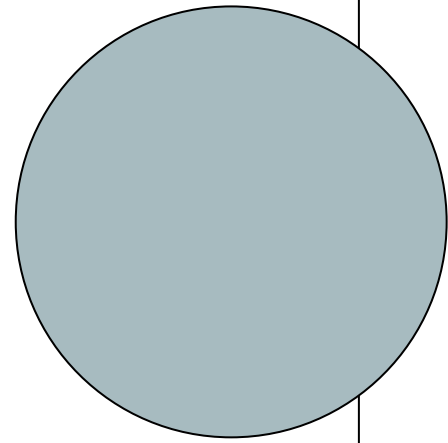
It's nothing you haven't heard before...

Consistency is just the ability to play what you intend, the way you intend, with extremely high accuracy, all of the time (not just on “good days”).

We must shorten the distance between what we hear in our minds (or read on the page) and how we actually sound.

We become consistent players by developing our fundamentals and practicing for accuracy – like a basketball player taking three-pointers.

How do we build our fundamentals?



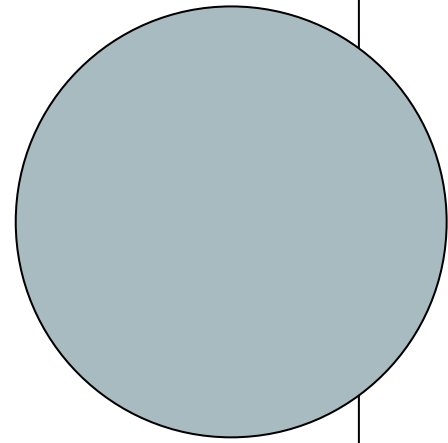
Stop asking “what” to practice and start asking “how”

What routine you use to warm up is certainly important, but it’s less important than how focused and engaged you are mentally when you’re warming up.

It isn’t enough to practice a lot. We have to engage in something called “deliberate” practice of our fundamentals.

This means, no practicing while distracted! We can’t just go through the motions, we have to use our time to create new habits.

Surely I can just practice a lot! What about the 10,000 hour rule?



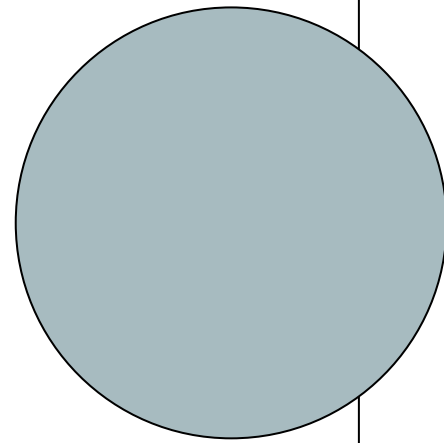
Sorry Malcolm Gladwell...

There is certainly truth to the idea that with 10k hours of practicing a thing, you'll be very good at that thing. But this is a bit of an oversimplification.

- Not all types of learning or practice are equally helpful for someone.
- The number of hours you practice is arbitrary.
- Two people practicing one hour will not make equivalent gains.

Deliberate practice, or bringing awareness to our sessions

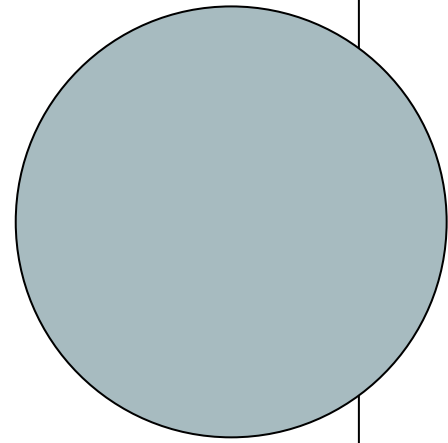
Via James Clear, author of *Atomic Habits*



Deliberate practice is purposeful, systematic, and extremely focused effort applied to creating new habits

The greatest challenge of deliberate practice is to remain focused. In the beginning, showing up and putting in your reps is the most important thing. But after a while we begin to carelessly overlook small errors and miss daily opportunities for improvement.

Our brain turns repeated behaviors into automatic habits



We are what we repeat

You don't have to think about tying your shoes anymore because it's an automatic habit. But if you wanted to tie them in a new way, you'd have to be very focused.

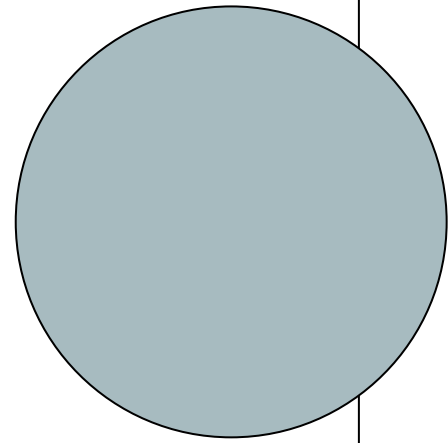
We all accumulate error as we practice. If we mindlessly repeat without noticing and correcting the error, we build error-filled habits that stifle our playing.

If we let errors become habits, we're not improving, we're sabotaging ourselves.

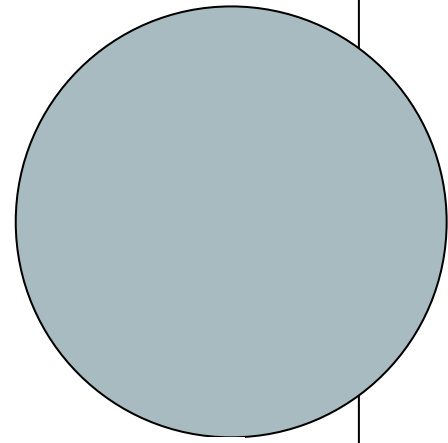
What does deliberate practice look like? Examples from other fields.

When he was a teenager, Benjamin Franklin was criticized by his father for his poor writing abilities. Unlike most teenagers, young Ben took his father's advice seriously and vowed to improve his writing skills.

He began by finding a publication written by some of the best authors of his day. Then, Franklin went through each article line by line and wrote down the meaning of every sentence. Next, he rewrote each article in his own words and then compared his version to the original. Each time, "I discovered some of my faults, and corrected them." Eventually, Franklin realized his vocabulary held him back from better writing, and so he focused intensely on that area.

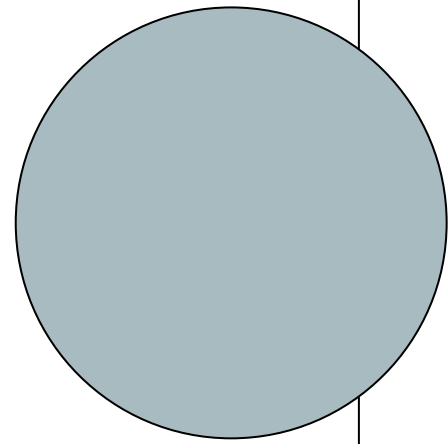


What does deliberate practice look like? Examples from other fields.



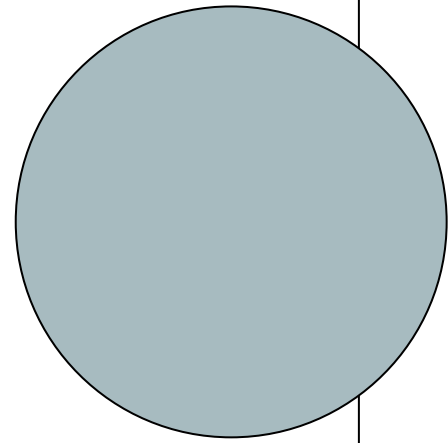
Cooking: Jiro Ono, the subject of the documentary Jiro Dreams of Sushi, is a chef and owner of an award-winning sushi restaurant in Tokyo. Jiro has dedicated his life to perfecting the art of making sushi and he expects the same of his apprentices. Each apprentice must master one tiny part of the sushi-making process at a time—how to wring a towel, how to use a knife, how to cut the fish, and so on. One apprentice trained under Jiro for ten years before being allowed to cook the eggs. Each step of the process is taught with the utmost care.

What does deliberate practice look like? Examples from other fields.



Music: Many great musicians recommend repeating the most challenging sections of a song until you master them. Virtuoso violinist Nathan Milstein says, “Practice as much as you feel you can accomplish with concentration. Once when I became concerned because others around me practiced all day long, I asked [my professor] how many hours I should practice, and he said, ‘It really doesn’t matter how long. If you practice with your fingers, no amount is enough. If you practice with your head, two hours is plenty.’” ⁴

How to Know if We're Making Errors?



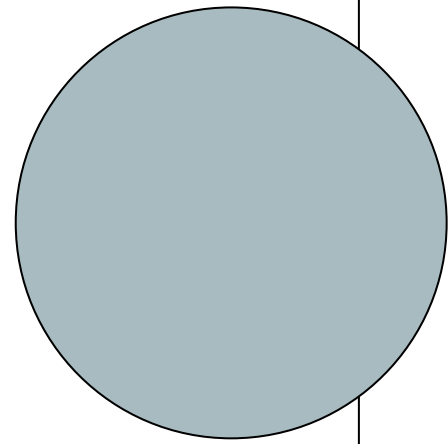
Simple: if you're not getting the desired result

If you can play everything you try to play perfectly, there's no need to change anything. Most of us know when something isn't up to our standards.

It starts with being honest. Ask good questions.

- What doesn't sound right? Why does this not sound the way I want it to? Do I feel any pain or tension in the body? What patterns do I notice with this issue over time?

How to Implement Change / What to Address?



What to do about it? Break the problem into chunks...

Virtually all trumpet playing issues fall into two categories:

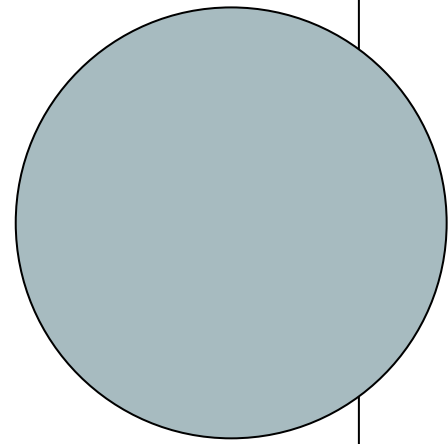
- Coordination
- Balance

And they have to do with four areas of trumpet playing

- Air, Chops, Tongue, Fingers

We need to receive expert instruction on each chunk! More on this later.

How to Know if We're Improving: Collecting Feedback

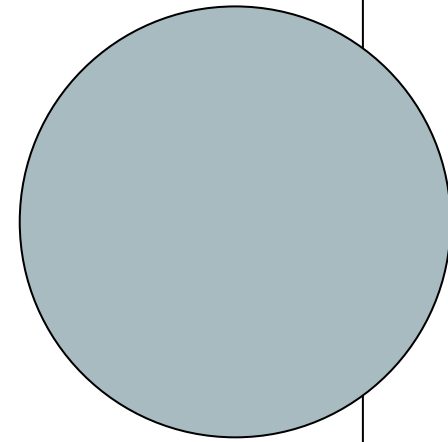
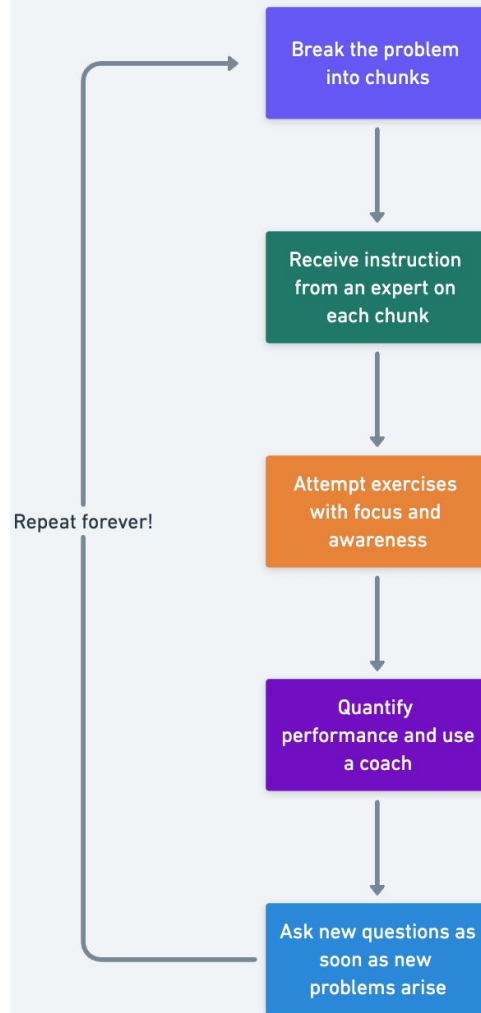


Staying on track

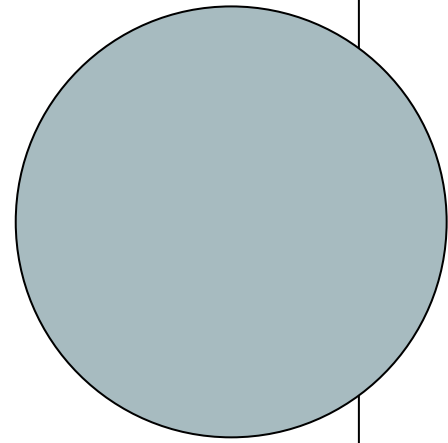
Measurement: Quantify our performance. Was that note tight and sharp? How accurate was your performance of that etude? At what tempo can you do the Gekker One-Minute Drill? Record yourself and keep a practice journal.

Coaching: When an external individual can measure our progress, hold us accountable, motivate us, and give suggestions when they notice errors, we're much more likely to sustain improvement. This is more than private lessons.

A Map of Deliberate Practice



Creating an environment where consistency can emerge



Garbage in, garbage out

Consistency is, in part, a function of routine. If you have no routine, you can have no sustained growth toward consistency. This applies to your whole life, but it doesn't mean to live like a monk.

Create cornerstones in your day that ground you and create predictability. It can be a cup of coffee, meditation, journaling, your commute to work, or a good book before bed.

We then apply this to our trumpet playing with visualization, affirmations, triggers, and routines.

Visualization as a practice tool

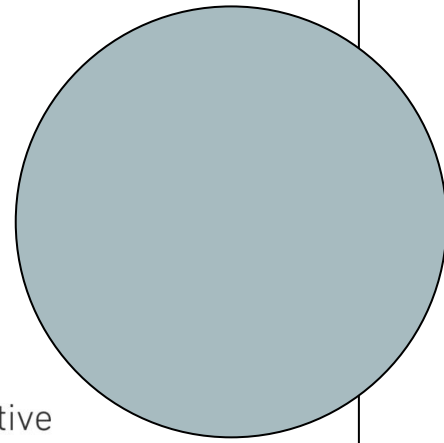
<https://www.ballispsych.com/post/visualization-the-power-of-the-movie-theater-in-your-mind>

In the 1950's at the University of Chicago, Dr. Biasiotto conducted a study on how effective visualization could be in enhancing performance- specifically for basketball players.

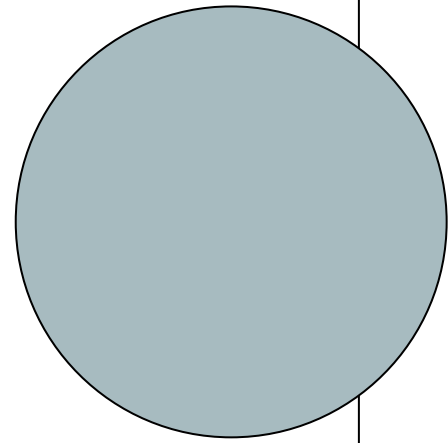
The players were split into 3 groups.

Over the course of a month, the first group was told to spend an hour a day practicing free throws. The second group was told to just visualize themselves making free throws every day. The third group was told to do nothing.

The third group saw no improvements. However, the second group shot 23% better, and the first group shot 24% better.



How can we visualize on the trumpet?

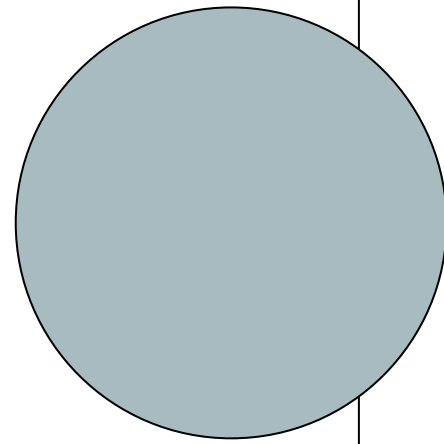


Come with me and you'll be in a world of pure imagination!

Seems like pseudoscience? When we vividly imagine an activity with a certain outcome, we light up the same neural pathways as if we were actually experiencing it, strengthening the pathways associated with success.

Before you play an exercise on trumpet, focus on what habit you want to correct or improve. Visualize the tongue in the right spot, or the chops not getting tense, or your air doing the work, and extremely vividly, imagine the entire experience before you actually try it.

What about affirmations? How do they help us?



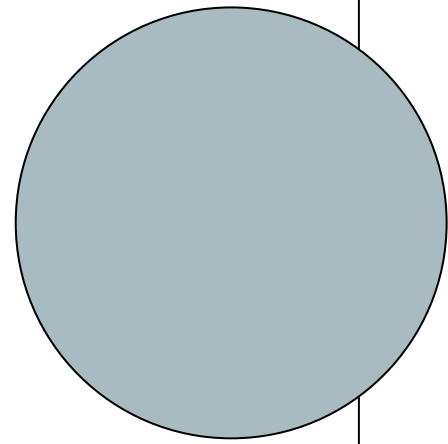
They influence our beliefs!

Beliefs and behavior influence one another. Beliefs can drive behavior, but behavior can also drive beliefs. We can use affirmations, or carefully crafted positive statements, to drive up the likelihood of a positive result.

An example: “I love my sound” (Say it and mean it!) “I have all the technique in the world.” “I can play anything beautifully.”

Even if you don’t like your sound, practice compassion and acceptance reduces the negative emotions associated with practicing, creating a calmer environment for growth

What are triggers? How do we use them to help our playing?



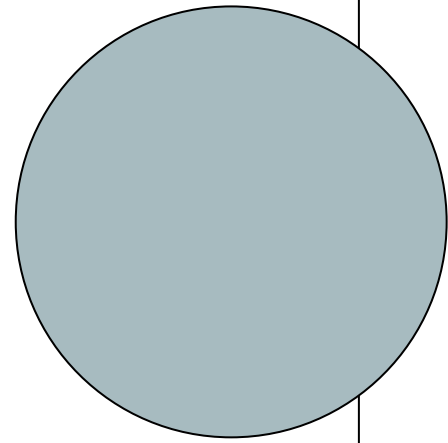
Triggers are sensory experiences that, through conditioning, lead to a desired response

The famous Classical Conditioning experiment involves dogs salivating when they hear a bell

An affirmation or visualization could be a trigger! So could meditating, taking a deep breath, locking the practice room door, or anything else that tells your mind: “It’s time to get to work!”

Practice doing the trigger and then committing to a session of deliberate practice. Over time, you’ll find that the trigger makes it easier and easier to get into the “zone” because your mind anticipates that deliberate practice is coming. Make sure the trigger isn’t something you do all the time, so it can be reserved for practicing.

Finally... routines! Let's look at some



Having a routine is the surest way to growth on any instrument

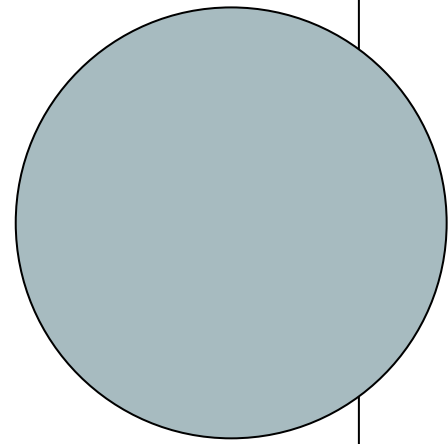
A consistent output is best established with a consistent input

The more you can standardize your daily warm-up and routine, the better

Each day: mental preparation (triggers, affirmations, etc.), stretching, breathing, buzzing, tone and flow, articulation, flexibility, any other skills you need

Keep a practice log!!!!

How to repeat an exercise.... intelligently!



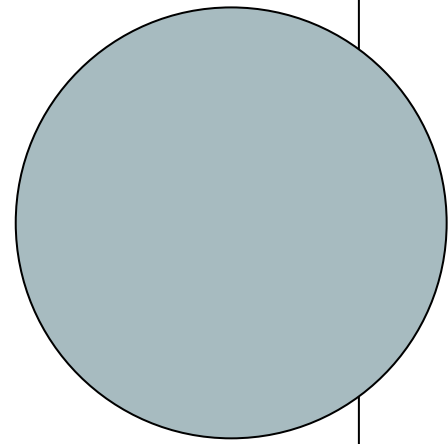
Work as hard as possible while staying as fresh as possible

We know what we want to practice. How do we do it without tiring ourselves out, which can lead to even worse habits? See my Roadmap to Endurance stream for much more.

- Rest 1:1 (or a similar ratio) even if you feel fresh
- 80% of your playing should be “bottom of the pyramid”: soft, low, slow
- Monitor for negative emotions like frustration: always remain calm and curious
- Apply mental focus on what isn't working
- Experiment and try manipulating variables
- Tension anywhere is tension everywhere. Keep your body aligned and relaxed.

What does this look like?

Practicing tonguing a high G

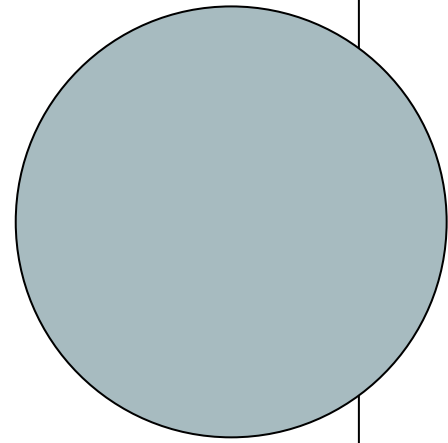


In this example, I work on consistently hitting a high G

1. Chunks: Air, Chops, Tongue, *Body Relaxation*
2. Develop a routine to work on these basics
3. Affirmation
4. Visualization
5. Trigger
6. Do it! Smart practice
7. Measure progress over time

What does this look like?

Practicing Arban



In this example, I work on a tricky Arban Characteristic Study passage

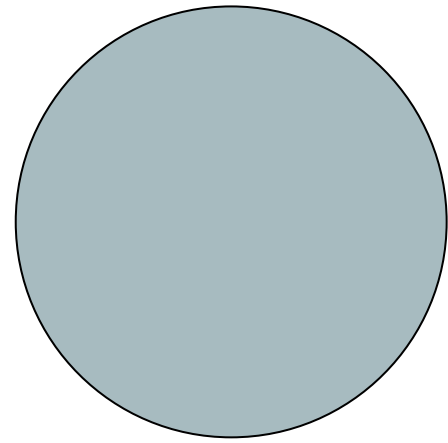
1. Chunks: Air, Chops, Tongue, Fingers
2. Develop a routine to work on these basics
3. Affirmation
4. Visualization
5. Trigger
6. Do it! Smart practice
7. Measure progress over time

Allegro moderato.

1.

Fine.

10 Common Endurance Issues



- You aren't using your tongue to navigate range
- The aperture is too small or too big
- Embouchure tautness/corners aren't working
- Not enough energized, gathered, air
- Body isn't aligned / posture is problematic
- Wrong equipment for the job
- Your shoes are uncomfortable
- Fundamentals are out of balance: do more soft legato articulation and less flexibility
- Do a facial massage / do not use ice
- Be careful with buzzing: if you don't do it, try it... if you do it a lot, try less
- Remember advice is not one-size-fits-all: If efficiency is the center, and two people are on opposite sides, they need opposite advice

Some Final Thoughts

- Growth at a skill is never a straight line. The best you can do is apply consistent effort over time.
- Think in concentric circles:
 - CORE: The things you can do perfectly 100% of the time
 - OUTER CORE: The things you can do most of the time
 - MANTLE: The things you can do sometimes
 - CRUST: The boundary / the things you can almost do
 - ATMOSPHERE: The things you can't do at all
- Know what you need in a routine. If you need an hour to warm up, take an hour! Don't expect yourself to be "one of those cats" who can do it in ten minutes if you're not.
- Remember that music drives everything. If you have a strong musical concept, the body will usually follow!

