

Ethan Chilton & tonebase Trumpet

Roadmap to Endurance



Play Longer, Sound Better

What is Endurance

Physiological adaptation to a specific task

Through stress and recovery, the body becomes better suited to the task

- The Absolute Basics
- Common Patterns
- Ten Steps to Increase Endurance

The Absolute Basics of Endurance: How Not To Get Tired

Practice consistently!

Take breaks to manage fatigue

Stay hydrated and get enough sleep

Don't play high notes in your warm up

If you're having major issues, it's probably one of these things

Common Problems

Underlying Poor Endurance

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

Common Problems

Underlying Poor Endurance

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

Ten Steps to Increase Endurance You've Probably Never Considered

#1: Keep a Practice Journal

1. We need to gradually build strength and efficiency
2. Keeping records = you can plan gradual improvement
3. Ask yourself: “What felt good/bad today”?

Ten Steps to Increase Endurance You've Probably Never Considered

2. Cultivate awareness

- When practicing, we tend to zone out OR forget to listen to our bodies
- Conduct a body scan when warming up, or when you notice an issue
- Awareness Statements: Non-judgemental, hyper-specific
 - “When I do THIS, I observe THIS, and it feels like THIS. “
 - “When I play a soft high G, I notice my lips get tense and my sound is thin, and it feels painful to my lips and ears!”

Ten Steps to Increase Endurance You've Probably Never Considered

3. Watch videos of amazing trumpet players

- Everyone's set up will be different, BUT this gives you a snapshot of what amazing players have in common
- *Wynton, Maurice Andre, Rafael Mendez, Malcolm McNab, Chris Coletti, Brandon Ridenour, Charlie Porter..*
- You're not copying ANYTHING.. you're just observing, gathering information. Don't try to APPLY anything or DO anything!

Ten Steps to Increase Endurance You've Probably Never Considered

4. For one week: stop thinking about your chops

- Obviously, still form an embouchure, but don't THINK about the lips. Just think about air and sound.
- Keep up your practice journal and your awareness statements.
- Don't introduce any crazy new ideas. Keep it SIMPLE!
- The point here is to let the body do the work / trust the body's intelligence / Inner Game of Tennis

Ten Steps to Increase Endurance You've Probably Never Considered

5. Design an experiment

- Be a stingy scientist
- We want MORE for LESS.
 1. More SOUND for less WORK
 2. More RANGE for less PAIN
 3. More COLOR for less SQUEEZING
 4. More FLEXIBILITY for less TONGUE MOVEMENT
- Try to get this in everything you do. More for MORE will never serve you

Ten Steps to Increase Endurance You've Probably Never Considered

5. Design an experiment

- Pick your target task:
 - Take a soft high G on top of the staff. Hold that for 8 beats soft, stable, and beautiful, without working too hard
 - Adjust this note so it's something JUST barely out of reach, where you can do it perfectly a half step lower
 - Perfect = when it feels practically effortless
 - Low C is ok!

Our experiment will be: how to get this target task more efficient?

Ten Steps to Increase Endurance You've Probably Never Considered

6. Identify Your Variables

- There are hundreds of variables in trumpet playing. Here are the biggest ones:
 - Inhale, exhale, throat (open vs. closed), middle of tongue, tip of tongue, lips, tautness / muscles of the face, jaw, shoulders, chest, lower body, back...

Find yours... with your newfound awareness, what parts of your body change when playing? What are all the different areas involved in making a sound? ANY of these could be a variable, we can move them in a myriad ways.

Ten Steps to Increase Endurance You've Probably Never Considered

7. Conduct Daily Experiments

- Take the normal warm-up you do / make it half as long
- Before you start: Thirty seconds of meditating with closed eyes: focus on your breath and body
- Long tones, 8 counts each, minor third below target note up to target note.. soft, stable, beautiful, as best you can
- After each note, do an awareness statement: ***When I do THIS, I observe THIS, and it feels like THIS.*** When I'm with a student, I ask them leading questions: "what was ___ doing?"

Ten Steps to Increase Endurance You've Probably Never Considered

7. Conduct Daily Experiments

Pick ONE variable and pose a question. You know what to do. Focus all your energy on that one.

- What is the perfect spot for my tongue? What do I do with my jaw to get this note out? What is my tongue doing? Is my back tightening up? Am I breathing in enough?

Focus your awareness on making the slightest of adjustments to that variable. Then do the next note... repeat the cycle with the same variable

Ten Steps to Increase Endurance You've Probably Never Considered

7. Conduct Daily Experiments

Optionally continue repeating with shorter long tones / further tweaks. Don't do it for more than 5-10 minutes.

Your goal: MORE for LESS, where it SIZZLES and SHINES!

Transfer this awareness of this variable into everything you play that day.

When to move to another variable? Up to you. That same day, or in a month. It has to be on your terms. It's about making small improvements. If you're ready to move on, then move on. But if you need more tweaking, keep tweaking.

Ten Steps to Increase Endurance You've Probably Never Considered

8. Distract Yourself to Stay Fresh

Ever notice your endurance is so much better during a rehearsal than when you practice? Or when you practice daily that you suddenly get insanely tired? It's because you're over playing.

Do the experiment, be mindful and aware, but then do something else. Cook dinner, watch TV, go for a walk, or... gasp... check your phone! Then come back and do it again. That's the key. Stay as fresh as possible.

Ten Steps to Increase Endurance You've Probably Never Considered

9. Play with People

- When you're alone, you play out of context: too much, too loud, too high.
- Playing with people = we have to negotiate our environment: talk to people, play musically (not too much), LISTEN to other people play, you have to let go of thinking and just PLAY
- It's much easier to play longer when excited!

Ten Steps to Increase Endurance You've Probably Never Considered

10. Expand our Experiments

- Concentric circles visual: push this circle outward when you notice growth
- Once this process is working, we can make our experiments more difficult. Play a Maggio exercise. Follow all the rules. Stay extremely aware.
- When you take days off, you may have to step back a bit. That's ok! You're reinforcing your foundation! Muscles may atrophy, but they remember...