

Warm Ups and Scales

Ok, now I know you are on a very extended break, and I know that scales are the last thing you want to be practicing right now. However, there are major benefits to practicing a few scales a day beyond just memorizing your key signatures and fingerings. When you practice your scales and do your warm ups, be very picky about the following topics. It is best to *pick one or two* to focus on per warm up exercise or scale. (These are also issues that have proved to be a struggle for all of us in class, so no one is exempt from these. :)

Air Support/Direction - Everything you play is either heading toward something or pulling away from something. You decide what the case is, but give direction to even your warm ups. Regardless of whether you are crescendoing or decrescendoing, keep your core engaged and your shoulders relaxed to support the pitch and keep the air speed up.

Finger Flubs - We all know this is a struggle, especially with alternate fingerings. Practice slowly at first, and then bump the tempo when you feel confident. Eddie Daniels has a great video about the reason behind this.

[Mastering Speed and Agility](#)

Clean Articulations/Quick Response - Remember #12 in the Habits book? You can apply all sorts of articulation patterns to scales and warm ups. No matter what pattern you use, listen for each note to start with full volume as soon as you release your tongue. If you hear air first, your air support is not strong enough to allow you to play fast later.

Intonation - This is a struggle for the entirety of anyone's playing career. Every instrument has different tuning tendencies, and yours may be different than the player that sits next to you. It is your responsibility to know which notes are extremely sharp or flat on your instrument. The following exercises from McGill Music (when used with a tuner) are great for finding those notes, and experimenting with how to fix them. [5 Long Tone Exercises](#)

Embouchure Changes/Good Tone - This is a bit more of an advanced skill, but it makes a huge difference when applied. Every register (about an octave+ on each instrument) uses a slightly different embouchure and vowel shape to achieve the best tone quality. For example, flutes play with a richer tone when using an "e" vowel and a loose embouchure in the lowest register; however, they

play with a much fuller, rounded sound in the highest register when using an “ah” vowel and a firmer embouchure. Experiment on your instrument with different vowel shapes and embouchure changes to see how flexible you can be with your tone in different registers. This can also majorly affect intonation.

Remember, you don’t always have to sound good when you’re practicing. So much practice is figuring out what not to do, so don’t hold back pushing the boundaries of your abilities.

Have fun experimenting!

-Ms. Singletary