

Collegiate Trombone Cliff Notes

“If you know the Way broadly you will see it in everything. Men must polish their particular Way.”
Miyamoto Musashi

“If one is the master of one thing and understands one thing well, one has at the same time insight into and understanding of many things.”
Vincent van Gogh

“World class players do not just happen... their talents are forged in the dual furnaces of determination and diligence.”
Edward Kleinhammer

“Talent alone won’t make you a success. Neither will being in the right place at the right time, unless you are ready. The most important question is always: ‘Are you ready?’”
Johnny Carson

Take a moment to consider the common threads running through these words of wisdom. People who are masters of their fields make things look easy, but to get to that point takes a lot of hard, intelligent work. Here we have a swordsman, an artist, a bass trombonist, and a TV host all making nearly the same point: prepare to succeed. It doesn’t matter what your chosen field is; the only difference is in the fine details. The path to success looks the same: good practice.

As applied to the trombone, here are what I consider the vital fundamentals and a brief listing of published and unpublished exercises you can use to work on them:

- **Tone** (sound, timbre, tone quality, characteristic sound, etc): Your sound is “you,” musically. You should always strive for a world-class sound.
 - Mouthpiece buzzing (tunes or specific exercises, alone or with piano/drone/other pitch reference)
 - Buzzing into slide tube with outer slide removed
 - Schlossberg: Daily Drills, particularly the introduction and first section
 - Long tones, both Remington and with pitch reference (Colley Tune-Up System, other drones)
- **Tune** (intonation, pitch accuracy, tuning, etc): Your world-class sound must fit into some recognizable harmonic system! There’s good news and bad news, and it’s the same: you’re holding the world’s longest tuning slide 100% of the time you’re playing the trombone.
 - Colley Tune-Up System
 - Playing intervals with drones in general, both artificially generated and playing duets
 - ATTEND YOUR EAR TRAINING CLASS AND PAY ATTENTION (too subtle?)
- **Time** (rhythm, pocket, subdivision, etc): Time can be perfect. It’s simple math, when you look at it. Of course, it’s seldom that simple.
 - Coordinate all aspects of playing – breathe and move slide in rhythm, practice with metronome/drum loops
 - Schlossberg: Daily Drills, particularly later in the book
 - Arban

A daily warmup/fundamentals session is crucial. Use this session to focus in on areas for improvement. In the rest of your playing day, be aware of areas to improve tomorrow.

Be sure that your daily diet includes plenty of **listening** as well! Listening is how you develop style. The current availability of quality recordings is unparalleled in history. This also means there are plenty of bad recordings out there. Listen to the best recordings you can of the best trombonists you can, but don’t stop there. Listen to singers, cellists, other brass players, orchestras, bands, choirs, jazz bands, whales... maybe not whales.

Items you should own for serious trombone study, other than a trombone and method books: cutaway mouthpiece/rim, Brass Buzzer/Buzzerella, quality audio recording device, smartphone or other convenient video recording device, good speakers/headphones.