

# Endurance

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As a trumpet player, fatigue is often one of the primary obstacles to a successful performance. When you get tired your range, tone, flexibility, and focus can all be negatively affected. The solution to a fatigue problem is to work on improving your endurance. Just like an athlete, there are steps you can take to play longer without getting tired.

The first step in increasing endurance is to eliminate obstacles. Make sure that your breathing process is fluid and free of tension. Poor breathing habits will bring fatigue much faster than is necessary, and you can often see immediate improvements simply by developing a better breathing process. Secondly, make sure that you are playing with as little pressure as is possible. Quite simply, excessive mouthpiece pressure will cut off circulation to the muscles of your embouchure, preventing them from receiving the blood flow that brings energy and oxygen. Without those two ingredients, you will not be able to play for any extended periods. With any identified bad habits out of the way, you can then begin to work on conditioning your muscles for better endurance.

Conditioning muscles to perform with more stamina and endurance has long been a study of athletes and trainers. Muscle types, body chemistry, and aerobic processes all play a part, but for our purposes here I'll stick to a few general, trumpet-related concepts. First, make sure that you don't work your muscles past exhaustion. Any time you reach fatigue, simply put the horn down and take a break. This allows your muscles to "recharge" and allows you to maintain good technique throughout your routines. Next, focus on exercises that emphasize the fundamentals of tone production and embouchure control. You want to isolate the primary muscles that are in use without the complications that often come in etudes or solos. Long tones and lip slurs are excellent examples of exercises that strengthen your embouchure's muscles. As you play, you may feel your muscles begin to "burn." This burn is a good sign that indicates you are working your muscles beyond their comfort level as they build themselves up. Finally, schedule your routine to allow for your current level of embouchure fitness. If 15 minutes is the longest you can play, then schedule several 15-minute sessions throughout the day. You will see much faster progress than if you just practiced once each day for that length of time. When you are able to play for longer periods, lengthen your sessions accordingly.

Progress in the area of endurance will not happen overnight. There are no shortcuts in this area, and to play longer, you have to practice playing longer! Your endurance should slowly progress if you maintain a consistent schedule, gradually allowing you to get fatigued less often. Developing greater endurance will ultimately allow you to become a more efficient and productive trumpet player because you will be able to accomplish more without having to take as many breaks to rest.