

Maintaining the Valves and Slides on your Brass Instrument (Trumpet, Cornet, Tenor Horn, Baritone, Euphonium & Tuba)

In order to keep your brass instrument working well, it is very important that you regularly apply oil to the valves and grease to the slides.

This guide will show you how to do this correctly.



Oiling Valves

Valves can become stuck if they are not oiled regularly and pupils are often put off doing this themselves as taking them out and putting them back in can be a tricky process. If they are put back in wrongly then no sound will come out of the instrument!

You will find that your valves move more slowly over time and the oil dries up. If your instrument is left to sit for a week or more, you may find that they become completely stuck. It is important to regularly oil your valves in order to prevent this happening and to avoid any damage that may be caused to the valves by forcing them down without any oil.

When you are first starting lessons and aren't yet confident in taking out and putting the valves back in, then it is easy to oil them without having to remove them - simply turn your instrument over and put a little oil in the hole at the bottom of each valve. Give the valve a wiggle and you should feel it start to move more freely.



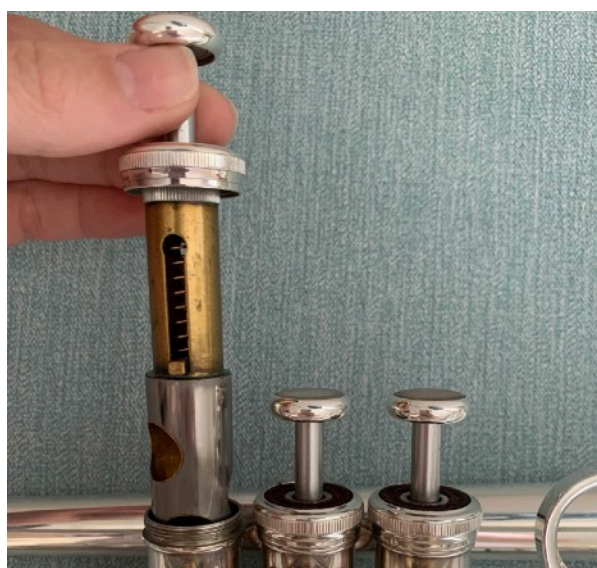
If your valves are particularly sticky or if you are cleaning your instrument then it will be necessary to remove them completely.

You will find that most instruments have their valves numbered 1, 2 and 3. This is designed to help you put them back in correctly. Number 1 sits closest to the mouthpiece and on a trumpet or cornet, number 3 sits closest to the bell. You will notice the same numbers stamped on the casings of the valves.



If your instrument doesn't have these numbers then it is really important that you don't take all the valves out at the same time. If you do, there is a risk that you might mix them up - your instrument will not work if the valves are put back in the wrong order!

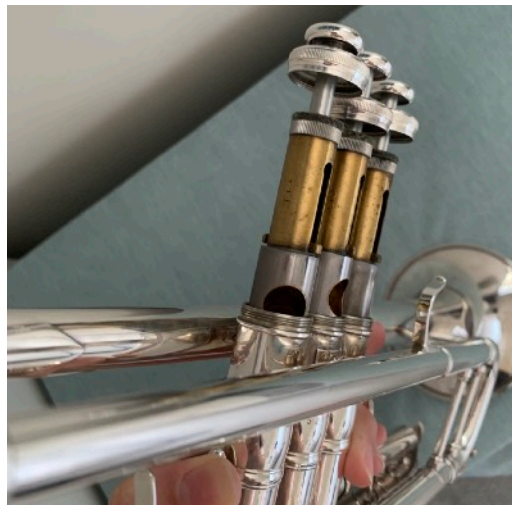
1. Remove the valves one at a time (unless you are cleaning your instrument) by unscrewing the cap at the top. Then slide the valve up to remove it. It is good practice to remove any old valve oil by simply wiping the valve with a soft cloth.



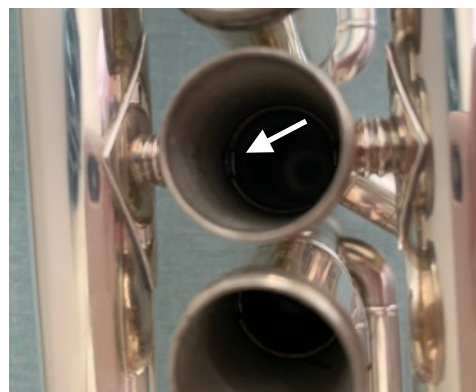
2. Apply oil to the lower part of the valve. You only need a small amount!



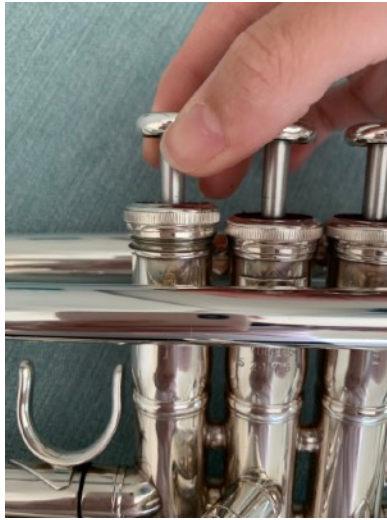
3. Slide the valve up and down a few times to work the oil around the valve.
4. Line up the valve correctly by ensuring the number is pointing towards the mouthpiece end of your instrument. If your valves are not stamped with numbers, skip this step.



5. Before you screw up the valve, ensure that it 'clicks' into position. Each of your valves has a plastic valve guide to ensure it stays pointing in the right direction (allowing all the holes to line up with the instrument's tubes), these slide into gaps on the inside the valve casing. If your instrument doesn't have numbers stamped onto the valves then you will need to use these as your guide as to which direction your valves need to face.



To ensure that your valves click into the correct position, push you valve down and gently turn it clockwise until it stops turning. Your valve should now be in the correct position but check by blowing some air into the instrument - if no air moves through the instrument it is in the wrong position! Slide it up and follow the above steps again, making sure the number is pointing towards the mouthpiece.



6. Screw up the valve cap. Double check your instrument is working correctly by playing a few notes.

Greasing Slides

The slides enable tuning of the instrument and should all be removable. Many beginner players won't touch the slides to start with, but it is important that you maintain them for future use. Without maintenance they will become stuck! They should slide freely, and they are easy to maintain - simply reapply slide grease every month or so.

Slide each slide out and apply a light layer of slide grease with your finger. Push the slide back in and wipe away any excess grease.

