# Tips for Band Directors

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During my career as a band director I have accumulated various tips from fellow musicians, band directors, students, and even non-musicians. These tips have helped me overcome certain situations that could have caused some problems. They aren't the kind of tips that one would learn in University method courses, all the various 'How to Be the World's Greatest Band Director' books etc.

I would like to share these tips. I would like to ask of you: If you have any tips, please send them to me and I will list them here for others to view. Please include your name, position, location, and perhaps E-mail address so I can properly credit you for the tip(s).

My career as a band director spans 34 years. 6 years - bands grades 5 - high school; 3 years junior high - high school; 23 years - high school. My education consists of a B.A., M.M.

**Tip #1 - Pitch –**

So often when tuning you'll see students plugging one ear in order to "hear" better. On first sight this seems to make sense. However, for most players this is the worst thing to do. Approximately ten percent of players will perceive the pitch as being higher using one ear instead of two; eighty percent will perceive the pitch as being lower using one ear instead of two, while the remaining ten percent will notice no change in pitch using one or both ears. This is easily pointed out by sounding a steady pitch and having students hear the pitch with both ears, then plugging one, using both ears, plugging one and so on ... Carry this further by having a student tune to a given pitch using one ear, being careful not to hear the pitch with both ears until the tuning is completed. Then have the student produce his/her pitch (using both ears) along with the given pitch. The result is obvious.

**Tip #2 - Tuning Slide Grease –**

Commercial tuning slide grease. vaseline, cold cream, cork grease, STP, etc. all work reasonably well on tuning slides but I've found the very best is anhydrous lanolin. This must be obtained from a pharmacist as it doesn't appear on the shelves. There are basically two types - a light tan-cream color and an orange color. Both are fine, however, I recommend the orange. The tan has an odor that is offensive to some people. Use very little when applying it to the tuning slides. On the main tuning slide I add a very small drop of valve oil to the lanolin and then spend about five minutes working it into a smooth moving slide. I use lanolin only on the second valve tuning slide and valve oil only on the first and third valve tuning slides. My horn has a first and third valve slide lock. If your horn doesn’t have these locks, don’t use just valve oil. I might add that the lanolin is very inexpensive and one small jar will last for years. It can also be used on tenon corks, the cork on the neck of saxophones, and timpani heads where the head slides back and forth under the ring.

**Tip #3 - Clarinet Embouchure –**

This is probably one of the most difficult embouchures for students to execute correctly. Getting the "pointed" chin can be done very easily by having the clarinet student produce a note on the trumpet. More often than not the student will have the correct chin formation before the mouthpiece even touches the lips. The next step is to curl the bottom lip over the teeth and then the player is on the correct path from square one. I know some clarinet teachers that carry a trumpet mouthpiece in their clarinet case for this very reason. The trumpet mouthpiece should be introduced to the beginner within a few days after his first "thrill" of producing a sound on the clarinet.

**Tip #4 - 'Grease' –**

There is the odd time when a woodwind player must slide back and forth between two keys using the same little finger. If the finger is dry this presents certain problems. Rubbing the little finger on the side of the nose or behind the ear will acquire enough 'grease' to make this sliding easier. This is particularly true when the player is on stage under the lights or when there is a degree of nervousness.

**Tip #5 - Stuck Mouthpieces –**

Brass mouthpieces that are stuck are a common problem to all directors. Having a good mouthpiece puller is obviously recommended but there are times when it isn't handy. I've found that during the winter season (if you live in the type of climate where it gets cold) sending a student outside with the instrument for about five minutes and returning inside provides a certain amount of contraction of the metals which allows the mouthpiece to be removed by hand easily in about three out of four cases. This also works with foot joints on flutes.

**Tip #6 - Sticking Pads –**

Nothing is more annoying than a sticking pad, not only to the player but to the listener as well. I keep a small jar of ordinary baking flour in the band room to use on these pads. By sprinkling flour on these pads, closing and opening the pad over the hole and then blowing off excess flour, will usually stop the sticking. Baking soda, talcum powder or other similar soft substances will work easily as well. This remedy can be long lasting or temporary. I've heard currency is better. Place the bill between the sticking pad and the hole. Close the key on the bill several times. Don't slide the bill out with the key depressed. If you happen to live in Canada, I've heard Canadian Tire money works just as well.

**Tip #7 - Cleaning Rods and Snakes –**

When purchasing cleaning snakes for brass instruments, get the type that is coated with plastic or rubber as the bare wrapped wire type will scratch the inside tubing. For straight cleaning rods such as for trombone that are bare, aquarium tubing can be slid over the rod. Putting the tubing into boiling water first will make the process much easier. This can also be done with flute cleaning rods keeping in mind not to cover the tuning 'notch' on the end.

**Tip #8 - Flute Section Vibrato –**

Many times one will have a good flute section sound terrible and not know the reason why. The problem might be that too many players are using vibrato and not using the same speed or that their pitch variations are directly opposite each other creating sound cancellation. You can get a section effect of vibrato by having only one player using vibrato. If the section is large you could use two on vibrato providing they can get their speed and pitch together.

**Tip #9 - A Cheap Flugelhorn –**

Not all schools have an abundance of flugelhorns or perhaps even one. A fair amount of music will call for a whole trumpet section to switch to Flugelhorn. You can simulate a "flugel" sound by using a french horn mouthpiece on the trumpet in place of the regular mouthpiece. This works surprisingly well particularly in the low registers. Don't be discouraged if at the trying of the first mouthpiece you aren't successful. Some horn mouthpieces work very well while others are totally useless. Obviously switching mouthpieces creates pitch problems and the players must be reasonably good players.

**Tip #10 - "French" Pitch –**

In buying an instrument (particularly used), one has to be careful to make sure it has been tuned to A440. I've seen musicians get a "good" deal, particularly on saxophones, later to discover they have been tuned to A435 and they are almost useless in most situations. Check on the back of the bell seam to see if "low pitch" is stamped on it. If so, don't buy it.

**Tip #11 - Snare Drum Position –**

The concert snare drum should be played standing up. It should be high enough so that the player's forearms are approximately parallel to the floor. The snare strainer 'lever' should be directly in front of the player's waist. This serves two good purposes: it is easily accessible for turning the snares on and off and also places the snares running to and from the player. This positions the drum so that the player is always playing over the snares as he moves from the center to the edge of the drum head.

**Tip #12 - Valve Slide "Popping" –**

It is very annoying to hear a valve slide 'pop' during a rehearsal or performance. To avoid this, simply have the player depress the corresponding valve of the slide to be removed and then remove the slide. This releases the compression which causes the 'pop'.

**Tip #13 - Top Line Horns –**

So often students will go all the way through high school without having the experience of playing a top line horn. I blame this on the director. Most dealers are more than happy to supply these horns for the students to try. In many cases once the student realizes the difference in horns he will buy the top line. This can have a 'snowball' effect throughout a band which makes things better for everyone.

**Tip #14 - Trumpet Stands –**

Give second thoughts to buying these small trumpet stands with the five or six inch base. Though they are handy and take up little space they also tip over easily. Get the wide base stand. Even though they are more expensive it is worth it in the long run.

**Tip #15 - Clarinet Case Covers –**

If a student is playing a wooden clarinet it is a good idea to obtain a case cover to protect the instrument from temperature changes. These can be purchased from music stores or homemade. Obviously these also protect the case itself.

**Tip #16 - Buying Cymbals –**

Do not buy the first cymbal that you find that is the size and weight that you want. Try out as many as you can as no two cymbals are alike. Also, be sure and remove the price tag as it affects the sound of the cymbal a great deal. Experiment with placing strips of masking tape on the underneath side of the cymbal. In many cases this can turn an average cymbal into an excellent one.

**Tip #17 - Triangle Holders –**

One of the common types of triangle holders is the kind that clamps onto a music stand with string supporting the triangle. Do not take one long string wrapped three times to hold the triangle. Use three separate short strings. If one breaks there are still two left holding the triangle and the broken string can be easily replaced at a convenient time.

**Tip #18 - Neatsfoot –**

Neatsfoot is an oil that is used on leather to soften and waterproof it. Over a period of time saxophone pads become hard and dry. In some cases these pads can be softened for a period of time applying Neatsfoot to the pad. Some pads may beyond the point of softening and must be replaced.

**Tip #19 - Falling Mutes –**

We've all seen and heard a mute fall out of a trumpet or trombone. To help prevent this, blow into the bell of the horn just before inserting the mute. The blowing should be done in the same manner one would use in cleaning eyeglasses. Licking the corks on the mute also works but not very sanitary and is rather unappealing to watch.

**Tip #20 - Freezing Valves and Slides –**

Playing outside in below zero temperatures presents the problem of valves and slides freezing. I've had this happen to me on several occasions and though I have not personally tried the following, I'm told it works. Try using mouthwash such as Listerine or Scope in place of valve oil, slide oil, cold cream and water etc.. At least it will smell better. However, moisture in the breath will wash out the mouthwash during a period of playing.

**Tip #21 - Beginners - Open Hole Flutes –**

Up until a few years ago open hole flutes cost a great deal more than student plateau flutes. Consequently when a student stepped up to an open hole flute he had to go through the frustration of finger adjustment. Today, manufactures are producing open hole flutes in student models. Start beginners from day one on open hole flutes. This demands the student to have correct hand and finger position from the beginning and eliminates adjustment later on, not to mention other problems.

**Tip #22 - Trombone Lyres –**

There are times when it is hard to find a lyre that will fit large bore trombones. Without a lyre the trombonist either holds the music in his left hand against the bell or lays the music on his lap. This produces tone and pitch problems as well as conductor-sight problems. A simple solution is to purchase a long handle toilet plunger and tape any conventional lyre to the top part of the handle. Then stick the plunger on the seat in front of the player. This will ease tone and pitch problems and improve the eyes' view of the conductor as the player will be forced to read the music from the "side" or "under" the horn. Obviously not applicable to marching.

**Tip #23 - Clarinet Barrels –**

As directors we are well aware of pitch problems with clarinet players. The first thought that comes to mind is a poor embouchure and lack of practice which is most often the case. However, there could be a player with an unusually long or short barrel. Take five minutes to line up all the players' barrels to see if this might be the case. Keep in mind to place them in order so they don't get mixed up.

**Tip #24 - Saxophone G# Key –**

Upon pressing the G# key on saxophones the appropriate pad is released from the tone hole by pressure of a needle spring. Sometimes spit will collect on the pad and dry, causing the pad to stick shut and produce G natural. Many young players are confused by this along with a discerning look from the conductor. Before each rehearsal/performance the player should check this pad and free it by hand if it is stuck.

**Tip # 25 - Posture in Flute Playing –**

Due to the fact that the right arm of young flute players becomes tired they can develop bad posture in their playing. It is just too convenient to rest the right arm over the back of the chair. It goes without saying the effect this has on all aspects of playing. To remedy this "rest" position have the players turn their chairs so they are sitting on them diagonally with the back of the chair behind their left arm. This makes good posture more comfortable than bad and soon becomes a habit.

**Tip # 26 - Missing Oboe Players –**

It is quite common to see bands without an oboe in them. The oboe part is very frequently cued into the first trumpet part. If the trumpet player is to cover the oboe line he should use a straight mute.
Another substitute 'oboe' that I have used on occasions has been the soprano sax. I have usually required my first chair alto sax player to play the oboe line on the soprano as to make sure it comes off right calls for a good player. If this doesn't work for you, score the oboe line into another soprano woodwind.

**Tip # 27 - Good Balance Within a Section –**

So often you hear a band that has a strong first part coming through but the second and third parts are weak. Spread your good players throughout the section. The weaker players will definitely play better with the support of the stronger players. Some rehearsals I have one of my first players playing second and third on a rotating basis. I don't do this in every rehearsal as I don't want the weaker players to become dependent on the firsts.

**Tip #28 - Pencil Rehearsal –**

You might try taking one rehearsal or perhaps half of a rehearsal a month to use just pencils - no horns. Take a piece or two that you are working on and go through it measure by measure with the students. Have them mark on their music various things as time changes, dynamics, key signatures, tempo changes, etc. One thing to check on is that all students have pencils, not pens.

**Tip #29 - Breath Support - Recorders –**

Have each of your woodwind players purchase a soprano recorder. These are very inexpensive and easy to get. Playing a recorder gives students a conscious awareness of breathing and how it affects phrasing and pitch. This applies to brass players as well as woodwind players. I find woodwind players adapt quite quickly to the recorder due to the similarity in fingerings. By trying recorders you may find interest high enough which could result in recorder ensembles.

**Tip #30 - Reed Holders –**

How a player stores or carries a reed can have a great deal of effect on how the reed responds and lasts. I'm familiar with several types of these holders i.e.. cardboard, plastic, metal and glass. The glass is the best holder to use. All one needs is a piece of glass approximately 1/8"-1/4" x 2" x 4" or 5" and a rubber band. Lay reeds flat on the glass and secure them with the rubber band.

**Tip #31 - Dresses –**

Being a girl and wearing a skirt is just fine until it comes to playing the clarinet. To maintain dignity, girls will place the bell of the clarinet off to one side or the other of the knees. This creates terrible embouchure problems which doesn't help intonation any. It can also cause the player to turn the head to the side which makes sight of the conductor difficult. A simple solution to this problem is to have the girl sit far forward on the seat of the chair and extend one foot forward and place the other foot back under the chair as far as is comfortable. This procedure will lower the level of the skirt and will allow for the clarinet to be played straight in the normal manner. This will work for most girls. This also creates good posture. If this doesn't work, don't wear skirts.

**Tip #32 - Oiling Trumpet Valves Fast –**

Just about all of us trumpet players have had valves stick at one time or another during a performance. There is seldom a rest in the music long enough to oil the valves in the traditional manner so we must find another way of solving the problem. It is common to see young players putting oil into the bottom of the valve caps. This is great if you want to fill the inside of the valve full of oil and then later drip the oil onto your pants. The best way to get the job done quickly is to remove the first valve slide (holding the first valve down while doing so to avoid "popping'). Then hold the horn with the bell down and place a few drops of oil in the first valve receiver holes, moving the valves up and down while doing so. Replace the valve slide and blow out excessive oil through the spit valves. This method will usually get one through the performance until there is time to oil the valves properly.

**Tip #33 - Plateau System –**

There may be a time when you will have a beginner who has their heart set on playing clarinet but has very small fingers. There is a plateau key setup that will clamp onto a regular clarinet that will cover the holes with pads the same as on a saxophone. This can be used until the student's fingers grow enough to remove the setup. If the fingers are still too small for the plateau system you can start the student on the E Flat clarinet and then switch to the B Flat clarinet when the fingers have reached the proper length.

**Tip #34 – Oiling Wooden Clarinets –**

To prevent getting oil on pads when oiling wooden clarinets, place a piece of cigarette paper between the pad and the hole. In a dry climate it might be a good idea to oil instruments a little more frequently than factory recommendations.

**Tip #35 – Old Horns –**

If a student is buying a top line horn, try to encourage him to keep his old horn if he can afford to do so. He can use his old horn for pep band, marching etc. and save wear and tear on the good horn.

**Tip #36 – Squeaks –**

The cause of squeaks on clarinets can be attributed to many different things. I've found that by having the student simply take the reed off and then put it back on will often solve the problem.

**Tip #37 – Strobe Tuning of Electric Guitars and Basses –**

If you have a certain type of strobe tuner your students can tune their guitars and basses by plugging the patch cord of the instrument into the microphone jack of the tuner. Following this they can tune the instrument harmonically.

**Tip #38 – Increasing Practice Time –**

Tell your students to leave their instruments assembled at home after their practice session. As the day progresses they may find a few minutes now and then with time on their hands. If the instrument had been put away they probably wouldn't be bothered to re-assemble it but if it is laying there ready to go they would pick it up and get in a few additional minutes of playing. Some care must be taken with wooden instruments when using this idea. Also if there are little brothers and sisters around that shouldn't be handling it.

**Tip #39 – Ear Training –**

Suggest to your students when singing along with the radio, CD player etc., that they do not sing/hum the melody but the harmony. This will help them to recognize the moving line of chord progressions.

**Tip #40 – Cleaning Reeds –**

Reeds become "dead" over a period of time due to use. Such things as grease, dirt, lipstick, saliva etc. clog the pores of the cane. A "dead" reed can often be restored by soaking it in peroxide or white vinegar for about five minutes. I hear buttermilk also works but I haven't tried this.

**Tip #41 – Sharp Notes On Saxophones –**

The G, A, and B on saxophones are sharp on most saxes. Take a piece of cellophane tape and cover half the octave key hole. Start with the top hole first and then try the bottom octave key hole. You'll have to experiment with which half of the hole to cover. e.g. the top half, bottom half, left half, right half. On some saxes this method will also drop the C# and D down into tune.

**Tip #42 – Tuning Slides –**

Have your brass players get in the habit of closing all tuning slides at the end of a playing session. This keeps the slides from getting dirty and difficult to move. This habit can also save the cost of a repairman freeing the "frozen" slides of horns that have set for a long period of time over the summer months etc.

**Tip #43 – Tuning Mutes –**

Get your brass players into the habit of buying a mute and using it without doing some adjustments to the corks. Most mutes will cause the horns to play sharp and a little sanding of the corks will help this problem. Have the students use a tuner to check pitches as they sand the corks. Taking off too much cork will have the adverse effect and corks will have to be replaced. Incidentally, I get cork from the automotive shops in my school as they always have a bunch of gaskets that aren't being used. Some head gaskets are perfect for trumpet mutes.

**Tip #44 – TV Commercials –**

Have your students play along with the music that goes with TV commercials. This helps them to get to know their horn and develop their ear. We all know how much time is taken for commercials and it is amazing how much more playing a student will get by doing this. Also, this is a great aid in developing improvisation.

**Tip #45 – Timpani Dampeners –**

To keep unused timp heads from resonating, take a piece of lambs wool and cover a pad like the type that come with some cymbals (which most of us take off anyway) and sew a string to the pad roughly 20 inches long. Then loop the other end of the string over one of the tuning lugs of the timp. The pad is readily available to be placed on the head of the timp when not being used.

**Tip #46 – Tip Reeds –**

Sometimes a reed won't work correctly when put on the mouthpiece straight. Have your students tip the reed so that the butt is slightly crooked either to the left or right. This may make a poor reed work well as the weight of the heart of the reed may be off center. Also, never have your students throw away a reed that doesn't perform well as it might work great at a later time due to a change of climate, temperature etc.

**Tip #47 – Flute End Plug –**

Check the placement of the end plugs of your flute players at least once a month if not more. The cleaning rod that comes with the flute has a line on one end. I think it is 11mm from the end of the rod. Place the rod into the head joint of the flute so that it is against the end plug. As you look through the hole in the mouth plate this line should appear exactly in the middle. Don't move it around to correct pitches that are out of tune as what you may gain in the upper register of the flute you could lose in the lower register. Leave this to the professionals. I suppose all directors are aware of this end plug but I wasn't as a new teacher and I will never forget one of my students losing out in an audition for All State Band because of poor tone. Six months after the audition I became aware of the end plug and once we adjusted the student's flute her tone was great.

**Tip #48 – Exhale-Inhale –**

Quite often in playing we have to get a quick breath (catch breath). You can get in more air quickly by exhaling what little air you have left before inhaling. It sounds contradictory but it really works. It's sort of like "telegraphing" a punch. You get more leverage.

**Tip #49 – Trade Marks –**

On wooden instruments be sure your students assemble them so that the trade marks are in line. This puts the wood in line with the way it naturally grew. This affects the tone production of the instrument. I find this true with the clarinet and particularly with the bell.

**Tip #50 – Flute Tenon Joints –**

Be sure your students are putting Vaseline or some other grease on the tenon joints to make it easier to assemble their flute. Nothing should be put on these joints as they are exact when they come from the factory. If they get difficult to assemble take the flute to a repairman as this problem is easily solved.

**Tip #51 – Cases –**

Get your students in the habit of snapping the latches shut on their cases when they put their horn in it. If they are just going to leave the horn for a minute or so, teach them to leave the lid of the case open. This will prevent a case from being picked up and having the horn fly out onto the floor.

**Tip #52 – Easier Tuning –**

Sometimes it is hard for students to hear the "beat" in tuning when they are facing the same direction. Have them stand face to face so that the sound waves run into each other as this makes it a little easier for them to hear the "beat". No matter which octave their instruments are pitched in have them listen for the beat occurring on the third line B flat of the treble clef (assuming they are tuning to concert B flat). The beat is more prominent on this harmonic.

**Tip #53 – Split Flute Section –**

Hearing the second flute part is often a problem in most bands. I have twelve flute players this year of which I have four on first flute and eight on second. One would think that this ratio would make the second part heard - perhaps not. One day I placed the first flutes on the outside and four of the second flutes on the inside all in the same row. The other four second flutes I placed in a row directly behind the first flutes. This produced quite a unique "U" shaped sound and the second part could be heard. I might add that the eight flutes in one row were on the floor while the other four seconds were on an 8 inch riser.

**Tip #54 – Braces –**

So many young players are wearing braces now days and I feel that most directors think only of the fact that the student is having problems playing as he did before the braces. I think we should go a little further than this and think about what direction the orthodontist is trying to move the teeth and what is happening to the movement of the student's teeth caused by the instrument he is playing i.e. Clarinet will push the top teeth out and the bottom in. I've talked to several Doctors about this and some are very receptive and others couldn't care less. The latter just said they would compensate. At any rate it some thing to think about.

**Tip #55 – Piccolo Doubling –**

Have the piccolo double the second flute part instead of the usual first part. This produces a very nice colour change in the woodwind section.

**Tip #56 – Carrot –**

Getting the trombone players to move the slide in a straight direction can be trying to say the least. I like to think of the donkey and the carrot approach to the slide. Have the student think of the rubber bumper on the end of the slide as being the carrot and to constantly reach straight for it. The reverse direction is not quite as easy to get across as the slide moves up, but it works. We've all seen trombone players look as though they are doing the movie version of "Hold That Tiger".

**Tip #57 – VCR –**

Have your staff person that does the VCR work in your school come and tape your band. Perhaps you may have to do this yourself. At any rate, tape just the feet of your students as they play. You would be amazed at how many different concepts there are of the tempo. Replaying this to the students makes them aware of the fact that they have different opinions of where the time is. At least that is a beginning in helping to correct this. (See Tip #71 and 73)

**Tip #58 – Odd Places –**

Take a few rehearsals and mix up your band into strange seating arrangements. Have your second trumpets and third clarinets trade places or the second flutes trade with the third trombones etc. It is amazing to hear from the students that they didn't know all "that" was going on in a certain piece. They had been hearing it but not listening to it. Now that they have learned that it is there they can listen to it. Helps blend, tuning, time etc. Also do this within a section. Such as having a first and a third player trade places and so on.

**Tip #59 – Jazz Stands –**

Generally the Stage Band will be rehearsing on Concert Band stands. If you happen to have the low Dance Band stands, use them. If not have the sax section tip the tray of the Concert Band stand so that it is almost parallel to the floor. This will help the sound of the saxes project. Too often the tray is in a vertical position and the sound bounces back instead of forward.

**Tip #60 – Ligatures –**

Have your students try out each others' ligatures. Many students use the same ligature that came with the horn throughout their years in school bands. There are so many different types that the very amount of these should make one wonder if they make a difference or not. Whether or not the screws are on the top or underneath the mouthpiece the important thing to remember is that the part of the screw that you turn is on the right side of the player. I think it is generally accepted that having the screws on top is the best.

**Tip #61 – Locktight –**

If you haven't discovered this magnificent solution you are probably lucky. At least when it comes to musical instruments. A number of years ago I saw a girl's flute where her father had used Locktight on the adjustment screws as they were constantly coming lose. A small drop on each screw set them tight – forever. The head on the screws of a flute are so small that it is very easy to strip the slot.

**Tip #62 – Flute Focus –**

To see if your flute players are focusing the air across the mouthpiece plate, have them go outside taking the head joint with them for about five minutes. Obviously we're talking Winter time here. When they return have them move quickly and stand in front of a mirror and play a note on the head joint. The condensation of the breath on the mouthpiece plate will show whether the air is focusing or not. It should be a basic "V" shape past the hole. The student seeing this in the mirror will give him an idea as what to look for and think about when directing the air. When they are at home they can put the head joint in the freezer part of the refrigerator for about ten minutes to get the same effect as going outside.

**Tip #63 – Score –**

If a certain section of your band is having trouble playing their part, it might be a good idea to have them look at the conductor's score to see what else is going on at the same time. Perhaps they are playing out of meter due to an identical line in another part that starts sooner such as in a fugue situation. Having them see a full score also opens their eyes to what is going on throughout the whole band.

**Tip #64 – Neglect –**

The percussion section. Have you ever noticed that when the clarinet, trumpets or some other part of the winds play by themselves not everyone is paying that much attention to them but when the percussion section plays by themselves everyone is watching and listening. Try placing the percussion section in front of the band for a rehearsal or two. It is worth the time to move all the equipment. Not only does this make the winds aware of what the percussion section is doing but it also gives the percussion section a sense of importance.

**Tip #65 – Cracking –**

Most of us are aware that the cold weather in Alberta will cause wooden instruments to crack if exposed to rapid temperature change from cold to hot. What a lot of us don't think about is the affect of the sun on these instruments. Though there is not as much a temperature change from taking the instrument from outside to inside in the summer there is the danger of the instrument cracking due to the dryness-moisture change. Avoid taking a wooden instrument outside in the hot sun.

**Tip #66 – Tuner –**

It is flattering to see your students go to the strobe tuner and check their pitches. What is alarming is that the tuner should be tuned first. I'm speaking of the older tuners here. They don't realize that the tuner may be out of tune. Be sure that your students know how to calibrate the tuner. I know this sounds elementary but this happens all the time.

**Tip #66 – Seeing In Tune –**

Be careful that your students aren't using the tuner constantly. They will develop the ability to see in tune very well but listening for tuning can take a beating. I was a victim of this myself when electronic tuners first hit the market. I used the tuner all the time in tuning the band. My listening capacity had become lazy and it took awhile to get it back where it should be.

**Tip # 67 – Tuners – Never Wrong? –**

The tuner accepts the whole sound of the pitch. What I mean is it doesn't understand core or focus of the pitch. In my playing the focus of my tone is in the higher part of the overall sound. What happens when I tune to the tuner and adjust to its reading I will sit down and play sharp and will have to pull the slide and bring the core down.

**Tip #68 – Filter –**

When trumpet players have to play into the stand they will have a tendency to play too close or too far away from the stand. First get them to blow close to the stand. Then have them place their left hand over the bell so that the thumb is under the bell and the fingers pointing upward. Spread the fingers apart. This will split the air and create better intonation, articulation and tone. By experimenting with the distance from the stand using this method a quasi flugel horn sound can also be achieved.

**Tip #69 – Magazines –**

For years I had the school library carry the various music magazines. Occasionally they were read by the students. I decided to set up a magazine rack in the band room and the magazines were being looked at constantly. I'd find magazines laying all over the band room and I was generally the one who puts them back on the shelf but I can live with that.

**Tip #70 – Repair –**

If you live in a small town and you are the only one that can repair instruments it becomes quite a time consuming thing. Look for a student in the band that has some mechanical abilities that you could teach to do this for you. Not only does this save you time that you could use elsewhere but it also gives the student a role of importance, I've done this and have seen the student repairman become one of the best band members in the band, and more exciting yet, one of the best players. Opening the door to "acoustics" can be a real "turn-on" to the right student.

**Tip #71 – Time –**

I would set a tempo by saying 1,2,3,4 etc. and then stop talking. I told the students to keep counting in their heads and clap on 13. The first few times the students were pretty well together on 13. Tempo was 120. I told them not to tap feet, move anything that would suggest the tempo they were thinking to anyone else and not to telegraph the clap on 13. Then I'd set the tempo at 60. Somewhere between 10 and 15 the applause would begin. Sounded like the applause of an audience. Just goes to show how many different concepts of where the time is. This doesn't show drastically in their playing but without a doubt the focus is certainly not there. Then I would tell them to think of sub-dividing the beat - 1 & 2 & 3 etc and of course this put their thinking at 120. Almost perfect on the clap on 13. I also participated to show them where I thought the time was. And I was always right - of course, I was the teacher. This also shows how much easier it is to detect a change in fast tempo compared to hearing it in the slower tempos. (See Tip #57)

**Tip #72 – Note Target –**

It's not good enough just hitting the target – the right note. You should hit the target right in the center of the bull's-eye. Meaning, that is where the core of the pitch should be. Think of a horizontal line going right through the center of the target.

**Tip #73 – Time Target –**

It's not good enough just hitting the target – just being 'near' the beat. You should hit the target right in the center of the bull's-eye. Meaning, that is where the time should be. Think of a vertical line going right through the center of the target.

**Tip #74 – Note-Time – Target**

Note and Time, horizontal and vertical - should be thought of as the cross hairs of a gun sight being on the dead center of the target's bull's-eye.

**Tip #75 – Trumpet – Sticking Second Valve**

The second valve slide on most trumpets is set at an angle to the casing. Occasionally a student will have trouble with the second valve sticking and the first and third working fine. The probable cause of this is the student is laying his music on top of the trumpet in the case and then closing the lid. This puts pressure on the second slide putting a bind on the valve casing. This can be remedied by putting your fingers between the outer part of the slide and the valve casing and pulling it in an outward direction from the casing. Don't get carried away with too much pressure. This generally works.

**Tip #76 – Trumpet – Sticking Third Valve**

Problems with the third valve sticking can be caused by players hooking their right little finger on the finger hook on the lead pipe by the third valve. This can cause the fingers to lie over the valve too far and the downward pressing of the valve is being directed at an angle instead of straight down. Meaning – pressure on the top of one side of the valve and pressure on the bottom of the other side of the valve.