

100 Things
You Can Do to Improve Your Trombone Playing
That Require Absolutely No Talent
(in no particular order)

1. Practice daily.
2. Go to live concerts of great performers (not just trombonists).
3. Listen to recordings of great performers (not just trombonists).
4. Buy a new piece of music, play it.
5. Practice more than you play games.
6. Read a book (or chapter) about trombone history.
7. Read a book (or chapter) about trombone playing.
8. Read a book (or chapter) about trombone literature.
9. Take several short rest periods during practice sessions
10. Buy a new etude book, play it.
11. Record your practice – complete sessions and portions
12. Listen/watch back, sometimes with metronome.
13. Listen back at half-speed – there’s an app for that.
14. Play duets, quartets, excerpts, etc. with friends.
15. Buy a trombone recording.
16. Listen to many different kinds of music.
17. Clean your mouthpiece.
18. Clean your instrument.
19. Get a yearly tune-up of your instrument – slide alignment, valve alignment, etc.
20. Practice slowly, thoughtfully with complete concentration
21. Lightly mark problem passages, work them alone, put back in context.
22. Do some breathing exercises.
23. Know the meaning of all foreign terms in your music.
24. Plan and mark all breathing places in your music.
25. Practice slower. Practice smarter.
26. Sing, hum, whistle – make music go out of you.
27. Turn on a tuner, use it.
28. Use a metronome lots.
29. Read an old ITA Journal.
30. Find and read anything your teacher has written.
31. Make up a new lip slur.
32. Make up a melody.
33. Peruse a jazz trombonist’s website.
34. Be musically curious.
35. Practice some with your mutes.
36. Join ITA.
37. Peruse an orchestral player’s website
38. Sight-read something.
39. Talk “shop” with your colleagues.
40. Record your lessons, listen/watch back.

41. Take notes after your lesson.
42. Learn all you can about the composer of your piece.
43. Be early to rehearsals/gigs.
44. Listen to all the symphonies by composer X (including those without trombones.)
45. Listen to many recordings by jazz trombonist X.
46. Read about historical trombonists/teachers.
47. Practice often in front of a mirror to check basic posture, breathing, embouchure, etc.
48. Video-record a close-up of your embouchure while playing (articulation, lip slurs, etc.)
49. Video-record your breathing while playing.
50. Listen to some music you hate – determine and articulate clearly what you hate about it.
51. Maintain great dental hygiene.
52. Practice correct, efficient slide technique.
53. Take a list of questions to your lesson.
54. Carve out some alone, quiet time.
55. Visualize your future.
56. Maintain your physical health – exercise.
57. Monitor hand positions while holding the instrument.
58. Practice both standing and sitting.
59. Practice/perform a piece that has not been recorded.
60. Practice, very slowly and correctly, a scale you do not know until you know it.
61. Keep your slide in great shape – lubricate often.
62. Lubricate your valve(s).
63. Lubricate your tuning slides.
64. Always have a pencil handy.
65. Go to a trombone workshop/festival.
66. Make a list of questions.
67. Search for the answers.
68. Then, ask your teacher.
69. Read an ITG/IHS/ITEA Journal.
70. Read an old Brass Bulletin or Brass Quarterly magazine.
71. Peruse a sheet-music dealer website (Hickeys, Just for Brass).
72. Organize your orchestral excerpts.
73. Determine all the key centers in the piece/etude/excerpt you are practicing
74. Peruse another trombone teacher's website
75. Download their materials.
76. Schedule your practice times.
77. If taking lessons, complete the assignments. If not taking lessons, make assignments, complete them.
78. Update your resume/vita.
79. Maintain a file of recordings of your playing - wide variety of styles.
80. Write a generic cover letter for an orchestral audition.
81. Write a generic cover letter for a teaching position.

82. Plan your practice/preparation strategies.
83. Create new practice/preparation strategies – determine if they work.
83. Practice lots of ear-training exercises.
84. When listening to another trombonist, listen at least as much to the music as you do to how they play.
85. Play duets with a trumpet or saxophone player – keep up.
86. Do some aerobic exercise.
87. Play along some with recordings – solos, orchestral , jazz solos.
88. Be patient.
89. Strive for greatness/excellence, not perfection.
90. Enjoy the progress/improvements you are making.
91. Note the tempi of many different versions of the same orchestral excerpt.
92. Play everything you practice at half speed for an entire week.
93. Don't touch the bell.
94. Figure out what your heroes did to get where they are (do that – thank you PE).
95. Read a book on sports psychology.
96. Read a book about acting.
97. Imagine the greatest trombone sound – play.
98. Monitor your body for any unneeded or excessive tension.
99. Listen to music with others. Talk about it.
100. Add to this list.