

Mouthpiece Placement

For Trumpet, Trombone, Euphonium and Tuba players the ideal placement of the mouthpiece is centered both horizontally and vertically on the face, 50% on the upper lip and 50% on the lower lip. For Horn players the best placement is with 2/3 of the mouthpiece on the upper lip and 1/3 on the lower lip.

What these guidelines don't take into consideration are a variety of factors that I refer to as "Dento Facial" features. These features include but are not limited to protruding and chipped teeth the location of your teeth in your mouth cavity, the size of your teeth as well as a host of other dental abnormalities such as overbite (or under bite) that could and usually do affect mouthpiece placement.

Rule of Thumb "Always strive to find a mouthpiece location that feels comfortable and exerts the least amount of uneven pressure onto the vibrating surface (the upper and lower lips)."

If you find that your mouthpiece placement is a bit off center and it promotes "Good Vibration" (pardon the pun) as well as even pressure on the vibrating surface don't worry. The rim of the mouthpiece optimally will lie on either the flat of the tooth or the grooves between the teeth. What you're trying to avoid is the rim of the mouthpiece pinching the lips against a protruding tooth or exerting an uneven pressure on either the upper or lower lip.

If your mouthpiece placement is "Out of the Norm" but feels comfortable and promotes the proper vibration it's best to leave well enough alone.

Another factor to consider in your mouthpiece placement is the size of your lips. Lips come in a variety of sizes (thicknesses & width) and since Mother Nature doesn't always create "all things equal" both lips could be different sizes. If your mouthpiece placement restricts the vibration of either lip your sound will be fuzzy and unfocused. The vertical position of your mouthpiece must be adjusted to give both lips the opportunity to vibrate freely and evenly. Simply stated the rim of the mouthpiece shouldn't restrict a large portion of either lip from vibrating due to poor placement.

As always you must use your tone as your guide for success. If the quality of sound improves with a mouthpiece placement change but it looks ugly "don't worry, be happy" (Yikes, another bad joke.)

Lastly it's also important to make sure that your centering your mouthpiece over your aperture. The mouthpiece must be centered over the aperture to ensure even vibration of the vibrating surface (both lips) but also to maximize control of your air column as it relates to it's size and direction. Symptoms of a mouthpiece not being centered over the aperture usually include stuffy tone, playing sharp and limited range. An embouchure visualizer, which you can buy at most high-end music stores, can best aid in the diagnosis of that placement problem.

As you can see there are many factors for you to consider when it comes to proper mouthpiece placement. What's right is what's right for you and only you!!! Please consider the guidelines and suggestions above placing an emphasis on what feels right and what sounds best for you.

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