

Trombone Legato

Trombone players can play with beautiful, refined legato style, and yes – they *can* slur! Legato style on the trombone is a combination of three distinct techniques: **lip slurs**, **legato tonguing** and **natural slurs**. The challenge for trombonists is to seamlessly incorporate all three techniques into one style; ideally, the listener will have no idea that there is a difference in the type of articulation being used from one note to the next. *Any legato passage that is performed on trombone requires the player to use continuous air flow, great slide technique and critical listening to match the sounds of the various articulation techniques employed.*

Lip Slurs:

This is a technique shared among all the brass instruments and tends to be the most familiar to teachers and ensemble directors. A continual effort should be made to produce lip slurs with the smoothest connection between notes so they can be incorporated into a gentle, lyrical legato style of playing.

Legato Tonguing:

The best consonant sound to use in legato tonguing is a gentle “d” or a flipped, Italianate “r.” Tonguing too softly (i.e. an “l” consonant) will result in an articulation that doesn’t match the sound of a slur and will likely produce a slight smear or gliss between notes. It is important that the slide moves quickly in rhythm and stops for the duration of each pitch. Try the following exercises to get a feel for legato tonguing on trombone:

The first exercise is on a bass clef staff in 4/4 time with a key signature of one flat (Bb). It consists of three measures, each with a slur over it. The first measure contains a half note Bb, a quarter note Bb, and a half note Bb. The second measure contains a quarter note Bb, a quarter note Bb, a quarter note Bb, and a half note Bb. The third measure contains a quarter note Bb, a quarter note Bb, a quarter note Bb, and a half note Bb. The second exercise is on a bass clef staff in 4/4 time with a key signature of one flat (Bb). It consists of three measures, each with a slur over it. The first measure contains a quarter note Bb, a quarter note Bb, a quarter note Bb, and a half note Bb. The second measure contains a quarter note Bb, a quarter note Bb, a quarter note Bb, and a half note Bb. The third measure contains a quarter note Bb, a quarter note Bb, a quarter note Bb, and a half note Bb.

Natural Slurs:

Natural slurs are lip slurs (no tongue required) with a moving slide. Natural slurs can be used any time the two notes being played are on different partials, regardless of slide direction. Knowing your harmonic series is the key to understanding natural slurs. The quickest way for a player to check a passage for slurs is to perform the passage with **no tongue** – if the player has good slide technique and air flow, notes that smear (same partial) and notes that slur (different partials) will be easy to identify. Use the following exercises to work on understanding and matching the sounds of legato tonguing and natural slurs:

The first exercise is on a bass clef staff in 4/4 time with a key signature of one flat (Bb). It consists of three measures, each with a slur over it. The first measure contains a half note Bb, a quarter note Bb, and a half note Bb. The second measure contains a quarter note Bb, a quarter note Bb, and a half note Bb. The third measure contains a quarter note Bb, a quarter note Bb, and a half note Bb. Below the staff are the fingering numbers: 1 4 1, 6 4 6, 1 4 6 4 1. The second exercise is on a bass clef staff in 4/4 time with a key signature of one flat (Bb). It consists of three measures, each with a slur over it. The first measure contains a quarter note Bb, a quarter note Bb, and a half note Bb. The second measure contains a quarter note Bb, a quarter note Bb, and a half note Bb. The third measure contains a quarter note Bb, a quarter note Bb, and a half note Bb. Below the staff are the fingering numbers: 3 1 3, 3 5 3, 3 1 3 5 3.