

Cleaning and Maintaining Brass Instruments

Perry E. Holmes

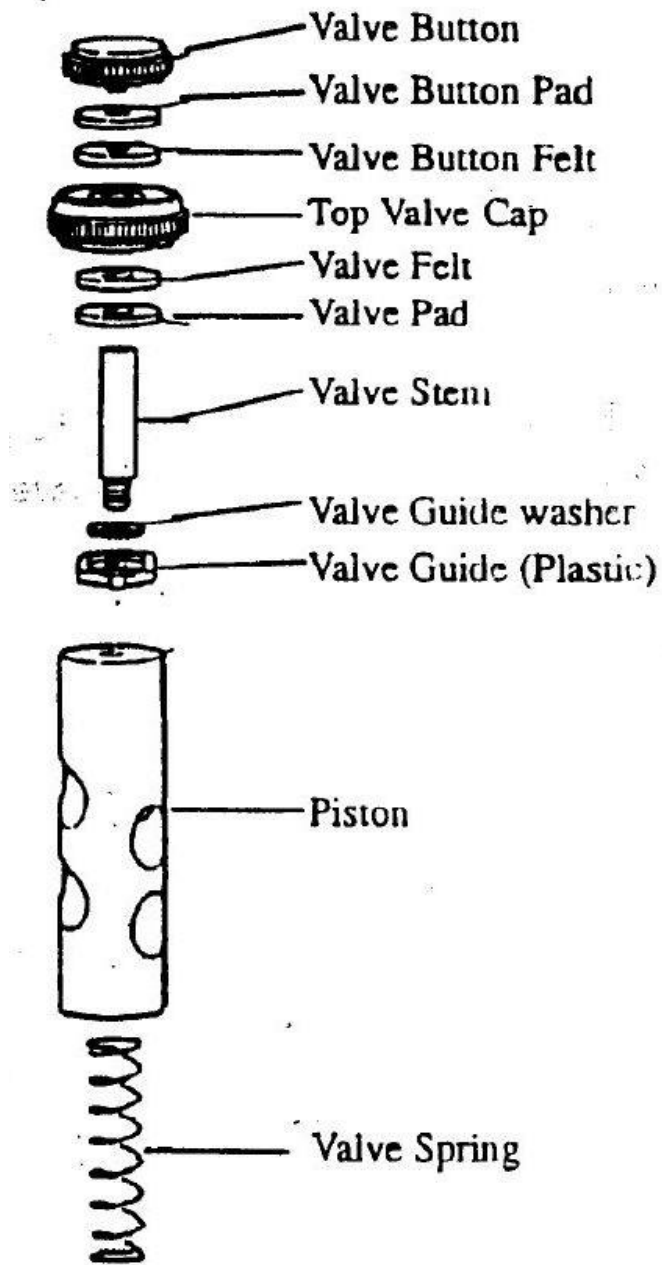
Equipment

- Mouthpieces
 - o 7C or 5C Bach or Yamaha mouthpiece (cornet/trumpet; beg./int.), 3c or 1.5c (int./adv.)
 - o Yamaha 30C4 (French horn; beg./int.), Laskey or Stork mouthpieces (adv.)
 - o 12C Bach mouthpiece (beg.) 7C Bach mouthpiece (trombone; int.adv.)
 - o 6.5 Bach mouthpiece or 6.5 AL mouthpiece (baritone/euphonium)
 - o Blessing 18 or Conn Helleberg 7B (tuba; beg.), Vincent Megatone (int./adv.)
- Mouthpiece brush
- Herco Spitballs, removes blockage and dirt in a pinch
- Mouthpiece puller
- Snake brush
- Brasso, Liquid Multi-Purpose Metal Polish
- Low-fiber cloth (for cleaning)
- Polishing cloth (for polishing instrument)
- Valve oils and slide greases (Amazon prices; band directors often get discounts at music stores)
 - o Blue Juice (petroleum), \$4.49 for one 2.4oz bottle
 - Can help cut oil and dirt build-up, anti-corrosive
 - o Al Cass (petroleum), \$19.79 for three 2oz bottles
 - Odorless, no separation, thinner oil good for piston valves (not trombone slides), great for playing in various weather conditions
 - o Yamaha Valve Oil (synthetic), \$9.01 for one 2oz bottle
 - Stable and smooth in different temperatures, works particularly well with Xeno trumpets
 - o Monster (synthetic), \$7.95 for one 1.44oz bottle
 - Can help cut oil and dirt build-up, anti-corrosive
 - o Selmer Holton Rotary Oil (petroleum; French horn, rotary trumpets), \$9.79 for one 1.6oz bottle
 - Can help cut oil and dirt build-up, anti-corrosive
 - o Yamaha Trombone Slide Lubricant (synthetic), \$7.99 for one 1.6oz bottle
 - Liquid slide cream, easy application (end of each slide)
 - o Superslick Slide Sprayer, Cream, and Lube (petroleum), \$6.99 for one 1.6oz bottle
 - Multi-purpose use, can use lube on all brass tuning slides, sprayer is good for quick application in a pinch

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PISTON VALVE GUIDE

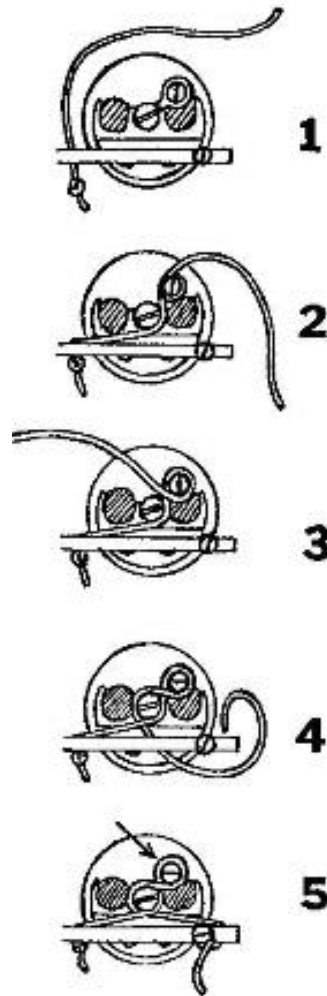


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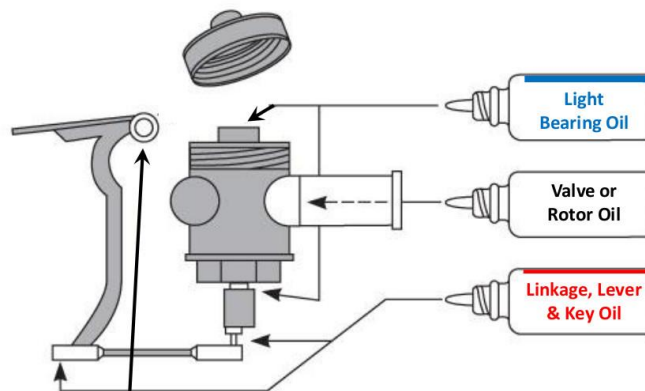
ROTARY VALVE GUIDE

Stringing valves:



Valve Guide:

Oiling Rotary Valves



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Cleaning (60-90 minutes)

Brass Instrument Bath, Deep Clean

1. Remove all slides.
2. Remove valves and all of its pieces. **Place all valve pieces in individual sandwich baggies and label them** (valve 1, 2, 3). Each valve has a number of small parts that are personalized to each position. See the diagrams.
3. Fill a tub with lukewarm water and mix in about 3-4 tablespoons of dish soap (I recommend Dawn as it's particularly tough on oils and grease). A bath tub with a towel on the floor works well.
 - a. **DO NOT** soak in hot water. It will strip the lacquer.
4. Soak slides and instrument in the tub for 20-30 minutes. You can also place the main part of the valve(s) and the valve caps into the tub but none of the small connecting pieces. Just keep those parts next to each other so you know which caps go with each valve.
5. After soaking, push a cleaning snake through the instrument and all of the slides. For trombone, you'll want to use a much longer snake to get to the end of the main slide.
6. Repeat Steps 4-7, but you can soak for just 10 minutes. You'll want fresh water, trust me!
7. After cleaning slides repeatedly, take them out and wipe them dry very well and air dry.
 - a. I normally leave the instrument in the tub while doing drying slides.
8. After slides are dry, put a **small amount** of Brasso onto a low-fiber/micro-fiber cloth. In a circular motion and lots of elbow grease, work the Brasso onto the slides. Keep working it in and wiping it off repeatedly until the slide looks new (and it will!). Wipe it down with a little bit of water.
 - a. Be careful not to get the Brasso on the lacquer as it will damage it.
9. Pull out the instrument from the tub and repeat Step 10 on the trombone slide, or 1st, 2nd, and 3rd valve slides. Also do this on the main piston of the valves.
10. Gently wipe down the small parts of the valves and put them back together. Lightly oil your valves, grease your slides.
 - a. **DO NOT** mix synthetic and petroleum oils. Mixing two different oil compositions is a primary reason for gummy, corroded valves and slides that can cause long-term damage and eventually lead to valve/slide replacement.

Maintenance

- Doing Steps 7-10 (using the snakes as well) 3-4 times a year should be good enough to keep the instrument functional. Once at the beginning of each semester and end of each semester.
- The instruments will be really dirty after marching season!
- I recommend the entire cleaning process a minimum of 1 time per year.