

# The Importance of a Daily Warm-up

“5 minutes or an hour—a warm-up routine is a necessary fundamental.”

A warm-up can fulfill different roles for horn players. If the purpose is to just get the blood flowing and “wake-up” the lip, then a brief 10-15 minute warm-up will suffice. Long tones, scales, and arpeggios would do the job. On the other hand, the warm-up can also be a way to improve technique and increase endurance if approached the right way.

A serious student of the horn should develop a meaningful warm-up routine that goes beyond the function of getting the lip ready to play. Some people may reference this as their technical routine. That is exactly what it is! 30-60 minutes of daily work on the core technique of horn playing effectively improves solo and ensemble rehearsals and performances. The content of this warm-up session should be tailored to the individual’s needs, thus making it unique to each player. No matter what exercises are selected, the session should incorporate three aspects of horn playing:

1. Tone
2. Flexibility (Horn Yoga)
3. Technical Finesse

There are an abundance of technical books available for purchase, containing a variety of exercises for each of these categories. Some of my favorites are by Brophy, Little, Singer, Höltzel, Frøydis, Clarke, Sullivan, and Barranco. Each book offers exercises to master an array of techniques for the instrument.

It is a good idea to schedule the warm-up session first thing in the morning. I recommend students plan a warm-up session before classes begin. This prepares the horn player to tackle anything immediately. Begin the session with breathing exercises to get the body relaxed and focused. Start easy and increase in range and difficulty. For example:

1. Middle range long tones within an easy dynamic range, moving down in to the low register, then up into the higher register.
2. Natural horn exercises on both F and Bb horn that gradually increase in range
3. Scales and Arpeggios beginning in the low register, moving chromatically through the keys. For example C M/m, C# M/m, D M/m, etc.

Finally, your warm-up should include exercises tailored to your individual needs. These may be high range, low range, lip trills, articulation, multiple tonguing, stopped horn, finger patterns in

all keys (i.e. Clarke), and/or sightreading. If there is a specific area your technique is weak or “rusty,” tackle it during your warm-up.

Key tools to use during the warm-up are a tuner, metronome and a mirror. Ever heard an out of tune performance? Not an enjoyable experience, no matter how perfectly played. The metronome teaches rhythmic discipline and a sense of internal beat. Finally, the mirror is a key tool that could teach an individual more in a week than a semester of lessons.

Horn players of all ages benefit from a daily warm-up session. However, students, in particular, will benefit from the discipline of the routine and from the consistency gained through diligent thoughtful practice on the fundamentals of horn playing. Make sure that you cover the three aspects of playing – tone, flexibility, and technical finesse. Mold the warm-up session to your individual needs and make sure it changes as you grow and mature as a horn player and musician.