

Valve Trills vs Lip Trills

When a trill is indicated in the music, the player must determine if the notes to be trilled are a half step or whole step apart. The main note of the trill will be the given note in the music. It will also be the bottom note of the trill. The player must check if there is an accidental above the trilled note. If there is not one, then the player must check the key signature. Would the note a step above the given note be a half step or whole step away based on the key signature? If the answer is a half step away, then the trill is a valve trill. If the answer is a whole step away, then the trill is a lip trill.

Valve trills are more commonly found in 20th and 21st century literature when composers were writing for the valve horn and were using an expanded harmonic palette. In the 18th and most of the 19th century, the hand horn was the horn of choice by players. It did not have valves and would have found trilling half steps challenging unless the half step was diatonic.

Recap:

- Half step trills are valve trills
- Whole step trills are lip trills