Breathing

Stamina is the product of good habits

Posture

Sit towards the front edge of the seat with a straight back as relaxed as possible

You may find you can balance your body better with one foot flat on the floor in front of you and the other leg back to the side of the chair

(a singer on one of our chairs!)

Good posture allows unrestricted breath

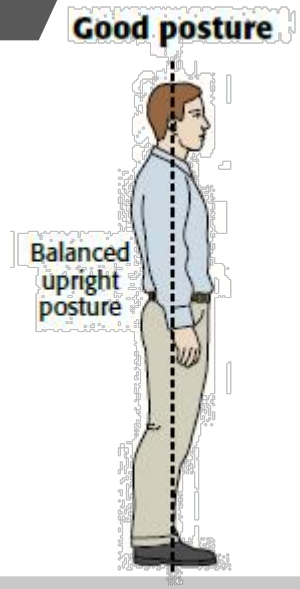
Hence good posture allows good breathing

Allow this to become habit – but not a strain or stress

Museum chairs don't help!

Posture

Imagine you are a puppet suspended on a rope from the hair on the crown of your head
Standing straight means that
your ears, shoulders, hips, knees are aligned.



feet are hip-distance apart but
you may prefer one foot slightly forward simply for balance as your body should not be rigid

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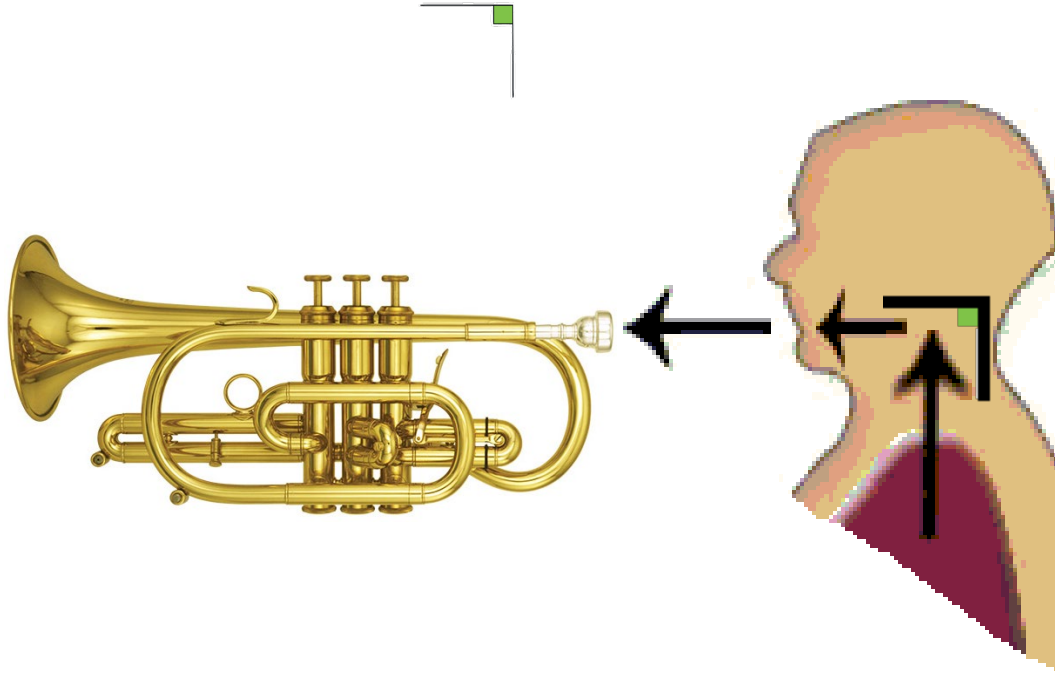
Lips and tongue



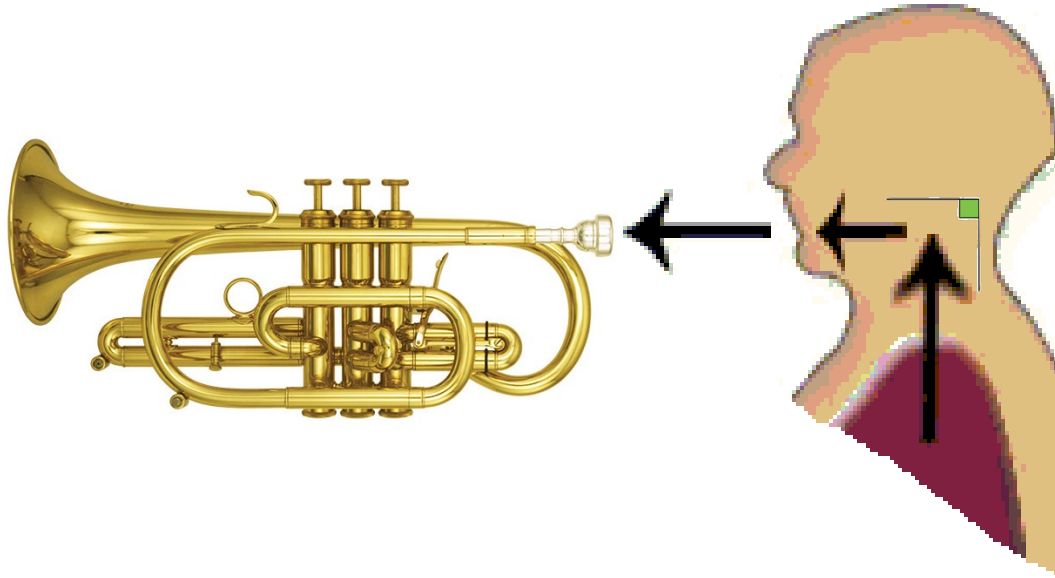
unrestricted breath will support the embouchure's resilience at the lips.

Allow the breath to take the strain

The position of the tongue controls the speed of the air stream:
"ah" position for low notes
"ee" position for high

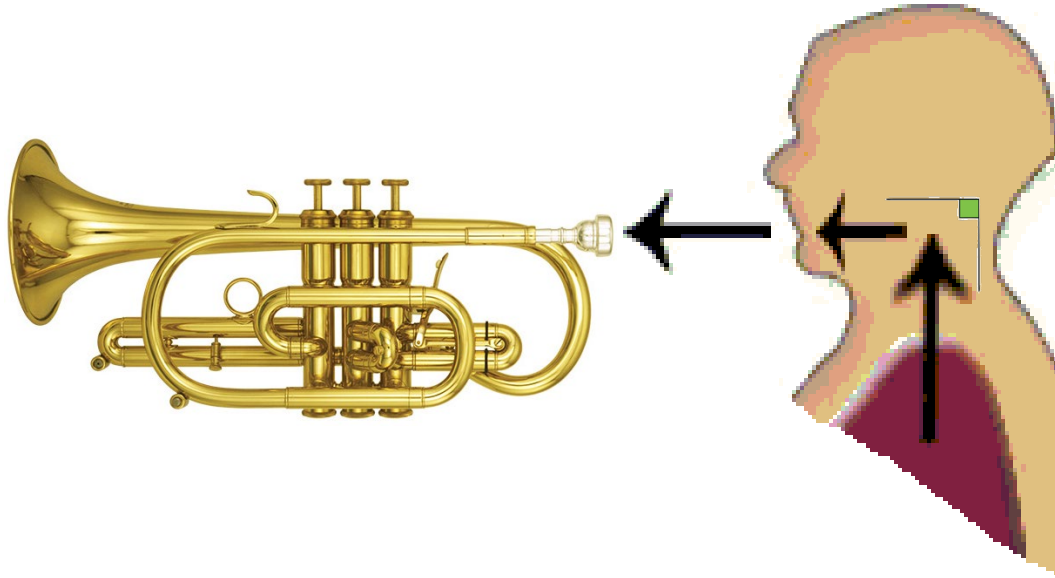
Head held straight
so that the right-angle gives the best line
as a head angled down restricts the airflow
in the throat

Head & Throat



i.e. mouth, mouthpiece and lead pipe in the same horizontal line

Head & Throat



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Shoulders

Are ALWAYS RELAXED and down

Raised shoulders cause tension and restricts the breath

When you tell children to take a deep breath, their shoulders go up.
NO!

Lungs

Each is almost pear shaped:
narrower at the top
wider at the bottom

and like elastic, they always want to return to a resting position

Both when you are resting and
when you are running hard,
you tend to use only the narrow upper part

You need to think and get into the habit of using the wider lower part

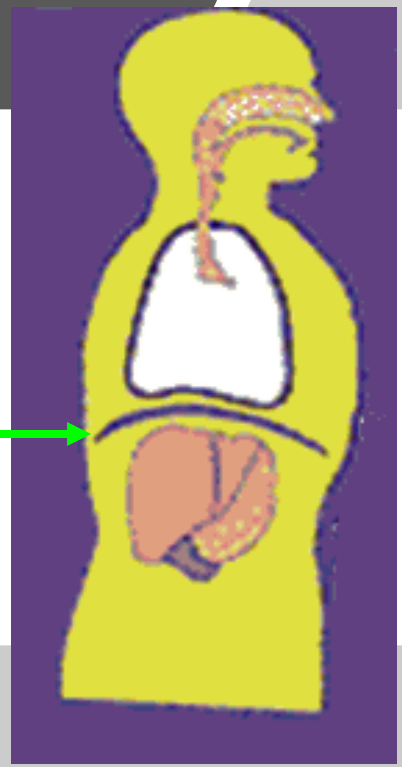
Rib cage

needs to lift to provide
extra space for your lungs to expand

This is the important muscle

We don't have to use it to live
- maybe when you are "puffed out"
- but you do to sing and play

Diaphragm



It is the layer of muscle that stops your lungs falling into your intestines

Resting, it is dome-shaped like a bowler hat or upturned bowl

It can go as high as the nipple

This muscle itself cannot be seen or felt but the result can be seen in your tummy

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but the result can be seen in your tummy

Diaphragm

When you breath in the dome flattens
downward and out a little,
which pushes your tummy out

Breathe out until empty (it never is completely)
Then cough the last air out you can

Just open your mouth and automatically you will fill the bottom of your lungs, as your diaphragm springs back up

Activate the muscles when you cough
(don't do towards others !)

Place each thumb on your bottom rib
close your fist except your index finger
which points towards your belly button

Breathe in through your mouth but
imagine you are “filling up from your feet”
as your tummy expands
and is then “supported” by pulling it back in

In breath

When your tummy has filled to full, raise your rib cage filling upwards but *only to what is comfortable*.

Then imagine you are told to breath in to get tight trousers on - or through a tight space

Don’t allow your shoulders to rise,
try imaging you are carrying two heavy shopping bags

Never overfill, as it causes tensions
in the neck and shoulders

As you exhale through your mouth try to keep your tummy extended –
push in with your two fingers but try to resist with your tummy muscles -
the tummy will win

As you exhale through your mouth keep your ribs extended –

Out breath

The pressure is from the same as the coughing action only gentle and sustained
or
trying to blow birthday candles out – it has to be sustained

Keeping your rib cage up (easy)
and tummy extended if you can(difficult)

Both actions keep the space open for the next fast intake
concentrate on the ribs!

When breathing in neck shoulders mustn't move, the chest/rib cage only after the "tummy" is filled

It may in today's climate be unhealthy, but breath through the mouth. (although the nose warms and cleans the air before entering your lungs)

Practising

We normally breathe in slowly and out more quickly

We normally only use the upper part of our lungs

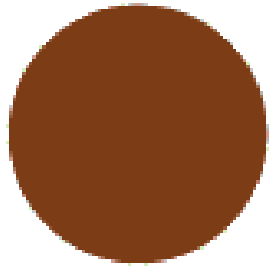
In playing, we do the opposite – so needs thought and practice – to breathe "from the diaphragm"

Farinelli exercise

to build up the strength under the diaphragm:

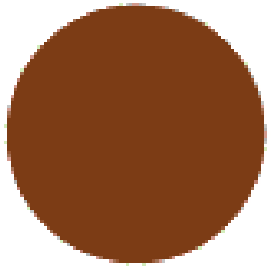
Breath in counting up to 4
Hold counting up to 6
Breath out counting up to 8

Repeat, extending each time until
In 8, hold 12 out 16.



Breathe in...

Breathing



Breathe in...

blow at a candle and keeping the flame steady
move the candle further away to improve next time

use a straw to build in some resistance to the out-breath
Imitate a fire engine or a ghost or a bee

Hold a constant note on a mouthpiece-buzz

Practising

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We normally only use the upper part of our lungs

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– to breath "from the diaphragm"

Use consonants to build resistance in the Farinelli:
(at the same time improving vocal resonance!)

unvoiced: sssss; shsh; ffffff; imitate the sea
voiced: mmmm; nnnn; vvvvv; zzzz

hold up a sheet of paper by finger and thumb
Try to maintain an angle away from you,
Increasing either
how far the paper is from you
or the angle
or the time to maintain the position