

Trumpet Truisms: A List in Progress

Traci Nelson

1. ALWAYS THINK MUSIC.
2. In the words of Bud Herseth, “Never practice, always perform.”
3. When coming in on a soft and/or exposed entrance, hear the note in your head and simply join what is already happening.
4. There are no technical passages, *only musical ones* that are more or less technical.
5. When practicing, quality over quantity.
6. Traci’s 4 P’s: PASSION, PATIENCE, PLANNING and PERSISTENCE.
7. Absorb what your teacher says while always striving for autonomy.
8. Problem-solving is a skill learned in studying music that transfers to all areas of life.
9. Practice long tones in all registers and volumes.
10. Know the importance of tone in lyrical as well as technical passages.
11. If you encounter a musical plateau while working on a solo or excerpt, put words and a story behind the music.
12. Music making is essentially communicating stories.
13. ALWAYS SAY SOMETHING.
14. Slur all technical passages first focusing on tone and musicality.
15. A quick turn-around of the air is not only essential but the most natural way to play.
16. Play with boldness: make mistakes with pride, but learn from these mistakes immediately. This is the difference between a mediocre and great musician.
17. High range and low range should not be thought of vertically but horizontally, as on a piano.
18. *Listen* to as much music as you play.
19. Restore yourself with active listening. Remind yourself why you want/need to be a musician and use this to inspire yourself and others. Avoid burn-outs this way.
20. Use piccolo trumpet axioms with big trumpets.
21. To play in tune, find the fullest center of the note.
22. Warming up with a tuner *is a good idea*.
23. Trumpet playing is not necessarily always “fun” but your overall fulfillment and joy should be found through dedicated practice and growth in this that you love.
24. Don’t become one-minded. Read good literature, look at and create art, listen to varied musical styles, form relationships with people. Everything can influence your art.
25. Rhythm, intonation and style are equally necessary, especially in auditions.
26. Vibrato should never call attention to itself and should be employed naturally and easily.
27. An ideal warm up “warms up” the physical AND mental sides of playing.
28. The trumpet should sing; listen to singers for inspiration.
29. It is the eternal struggle of a trumpet player to always be searching for a more efficient and relaxed way of playing; the least necessary effort.
30. Never forget the importance of autonomy: YOU are the only teacher you will ever always have.
31. General health is important: adequate amounts of sleep, physical and emotional well-being, a nutritious diet.
32. Always seek out criticism/analysis of your playing. Do this without letting it affect your self-esteem. Also be careful to keep ego in check.
33. Know your place when playing in an ensemble/section. If there is not an appropriate way to say something, or if it will not benefit the group, it is best to remain silent. There are times to be a leader and times to put all focus on contributing to the whole.
34. Knowledge of style is necessary before practicing/performing standard repertoire.
35. Adaptability cannot be understated, especially when playing a part other than principal.
36. Take Lysine daily to prevent mouth sores.
37. To be a successful trumpet player, one must focus on being two simultaneously: athlete and musician.
38. ALWAYS THINK MUSIC.

