

Brass Valve Cleaning and Oiling

by Mr. Ohlsen

An outline for brass maintenance for young musicians and their parents.

This is the way I maintain the valves on my instruments. There are other ways that may work equally as well. This maintenance should be done once a month or when normal oiling doesn't seem to be working as well.

READ THESE GUIDELINES

1. NEVER USE ANY SORT OF TOOL ON YOUR BRASS INSTRUMENT.

Take it to your director or a competent repair shop.

2. If the valve caps don't turn easily, THEY'RE CROSS-THREADED!

Turn them back to the left and try again.

3. Work on ONE valve at a time.

4. Do not submerge valves under water. It will destroy the felts.

5. Make sure the valve stems remain tight. Always turn valve clockwise (righty-tighty).

This is especially important for the low brass. These instruments normally have a plastic insert on top that will come loose and make the valve not work.

CLEANING AND OILING VALVES

Time: Once materials are gathered, you (meaning I) can clean and oil three valves in about 10 minutes. Beginners will take (and should take) longer.

Materials: valve oil, rags, towels, or cut up t-shirt, valve brush (optional) or mouthpiece brush. Access to running water is helpful, but a large bowl of rinse water works as well.

STEPS:

1. Loosen top valve cap, pull out valve & set aside.

2. Loosen bottom valve cap & set aside.

CAREFUL-Most baritones & tubas have springs that sit in the bottom of the valve casing. Set this aside, too.

3. If using a valve casing brush, wet brush & run it in & out of the valve casing a few times.

4. Take a small rag or cut up t-shirt & feed it through the valve casing.

Use the eraser end of a pencil for this.

5. Pull through far enough to be able to twist the rag. Take out rag, check for lint or small pieces of rag. Blow out if present.

6. Rinse/wipe off bottom valve cap & replace. An occasional thin layer of Vaseline on the threads keeps it lubricated. **DO NOT OVERTIGHTEN.**

7. Rinse off bottom part of valve. Wet & use the valve or mouthpiece brush on the valve holes. Rinse & wipe off the valve. Check for lint or small pieces of rag. Wipe or blow off if present.

8. Oil by placing valve on top of casing & putting the valve oil bottle at an angle directly against the valve. **DO NOT SQUEEZE** the bottle too much. Oil will come out very easily.

9. Rotate the valve to the right & push down into the casing as you apply oil.

10. Continue to rotate the valve to the right to distribute the oil. Line up the valve guide with the groove in the casing. Press the valve down a bit & tighten valve cap. Again, **DO NOT OVERTIGHTEN.**

11. Press down a few times to check for stickiness. Add more oil if valve is sticking.

12. Repeat for the other two valves.