

French Horn: The basics

- ***The size of the instrument does matter:*** The instrument is heavy: As in the trumpet, be sure to consistently check and correct hand position, posture and the ease of finger action. The horn is fingered with the left hand and basically supported by both hands; left hand pinkie; right hand inserted into the bell with the weight supported by the back of the right-hand fingers, placed in the upper opening of the bell throat (beginning flare). This right-hand position will assist in shaping the sound and controlling intonation as the student progresses. (Maybe controversial, but for smaller students it *is acceptable and recommended* for young students to *rest* the bell rim on their leg as long as the mouthpiece remains in the proper position. (lead pipe following the jaw-line)
- The posture is set by straddling the left corner of the chair.
- The most common form of the modern French horn today is known as the 'Double Horn' having 'two sides'; pitched in both Bb and F.
- the shorter/higher side being pitched in Bb and the longer/lower side pitched in F. The instrument is set to play in F and then moved into Bb via the depressing of the thumb valve, operated by the left-hand thumb.
- The main advantage of the Bb side of the horn is improved intonation and accuracy of pitching. It is recommended that from 2nd space 'A' that the instrument should be played on the Bb side.
- Embouchure formation, once again starts with either the letter "M" or "P": firm, set corners, flat chin and relaxed centre;
- For more information on embouchure formation check this site:
<http://hornmatters.com/2010/08/hornmasters-on-mouthpiece-placement/>
- The mouthpiece placement is quite different from the trumpet. Top lip portion is between 2/3, and 3/4, and bottom lip placement is between 1/3 and 1/4. The bottom edge of the mouthpiece rim should be placed in the red of the lip. The mouthpiece is placed as close to the centre of the mouth as possible.
An all-round mouth piece for starters is a Yamaha 30 C4
- The instrument is held at an angle, bell pointing towards the right 'off side', accommodating a natural right hand/left hand juxtaposition. A picture is worth a thousand words! Be sure to check the site below!!!
- The valves and slides must be lubricated, just as in the trumpets on the same sort of schedule. Weekly/monthly
- For further information check out these sites:
<http://www.public.asu.edu/~jqerics/beginners.html>
<https://www.musicarts.com/Student-Resources---A-Beginners-Guide-to-French-Horn-g29315t0.mac>
<http://hornmatters.com/2010/05/hornmasters-farkas-on-right-hand-position/>
<https://switchtohorn.weebly.com/holding-the-horn.html>
<https://banddirectorstalkshop.com/2018/09/27/posture-developing-horn-player/>

A good reference book is "The Art of French Horn Playing" by Philip Farkas