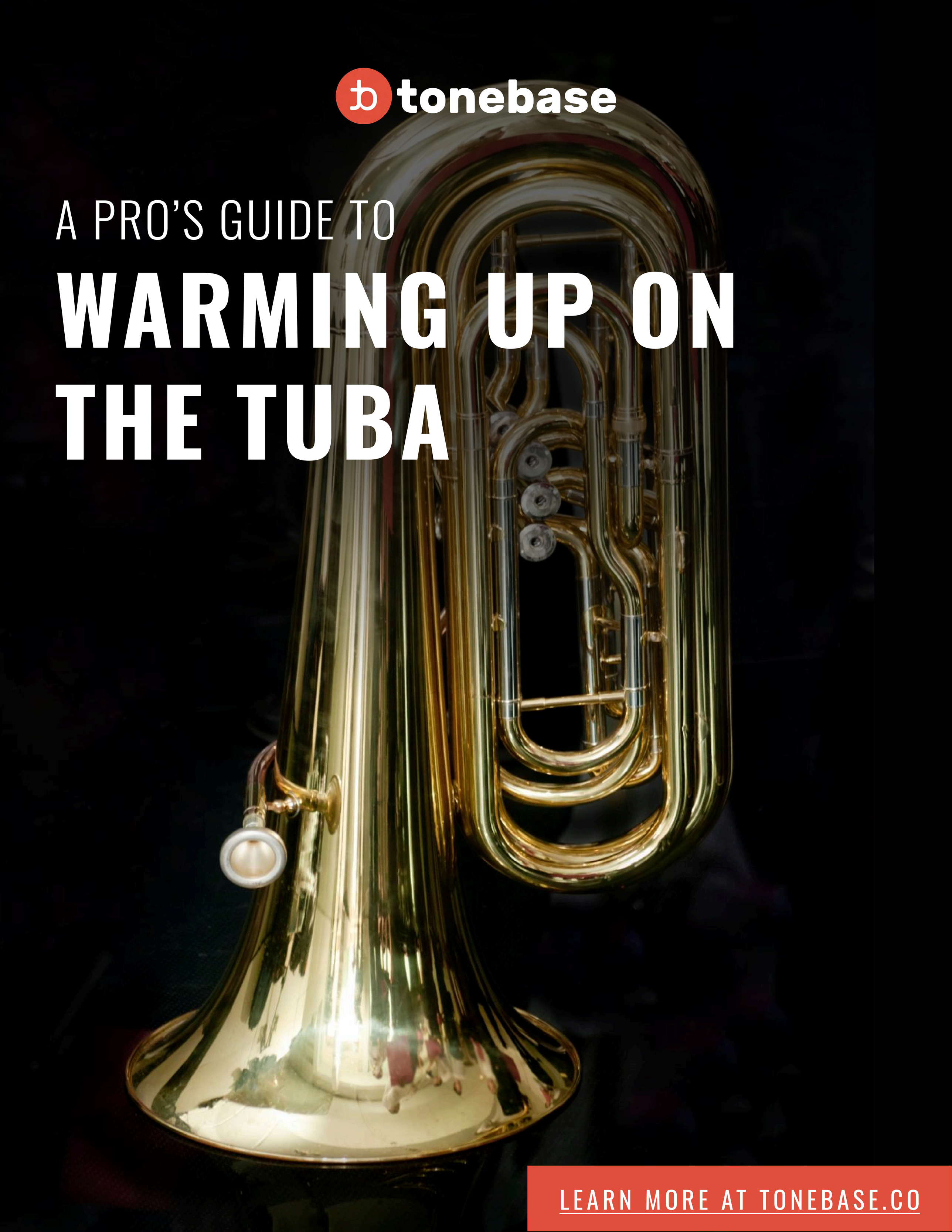
tonebase

A PRO'S GUIDE TO

WARMING UP ON THE TUBA



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BRASS

Warm-Up Outline

Stretching 02

Breathing 02

Buzzing 02

Long Tones 03

Slurs 05

Flow Studies 06

Articulation 08

Scales & Arpeggios 10

Rest 11

Hydration 11

Stretching

It is very important to stretch the body every day before warming up on your brass instrument. Keeping the body flexible and free of tension will allow you to create a sound that is also flexible and free of tension. To start, get blood flowing to the big and small muscles with dynamic movement. Focus on shoulders, neck, hands and arms, torso.

- Shoulder rolls
- Neck rolls
- Hand/wrist extensions
- Torso elongation and rotation

Breathing

Begin the day with full, deep breathing. This brings oxygen into the body which will fuel the muscles and organs for the physical demands of playing the trombone. Use a metronome as you do these exercises.

- 6 beats in, 6 beats out
- 4 beats in, 12 beats out
- 2 beats in, 20 beats out
- 1 beat in, 32 beats out

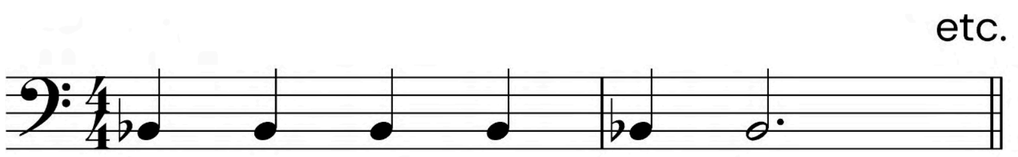
Source: Sheridan/Pilafian, *The Breathing Gym*

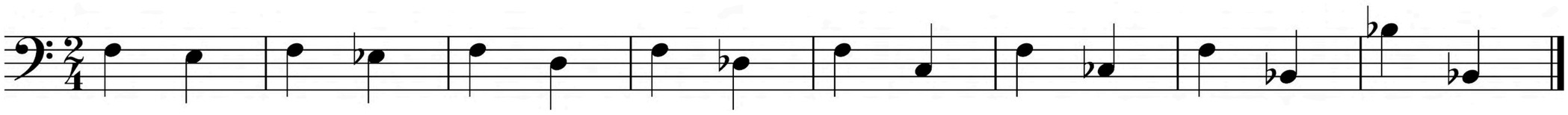
Buzzing

A good buzz is the prerequisite for a good sound. Start with an easy glissy buzz, then work toward centering pitches accurately. Strive for a full, rich, resonant buzz. Use a piano to check pitch. While buzzing, focus the ear on the clarity of the buzz and the resonance in all ranges, since this is the genesis of your desired sound. It is very easy to distort the position on the mouth while covering different ranges.

Use your natural mouthpiece setting when taking in air and widen the mouth to cover the rim of the mouthpiece to maximize intake. Avoid gasping, but take in more air than is needed. Visualize warm wet air rushing into a great cavern. Using a reverse HO sound can open that throat right up. Practice breathing as silently as you can. Many performances are spoiled by excessively loud breathing. Create an opening that minimizes that noise. Breathe musically.

Source: Randall Hawes, Warm Ups

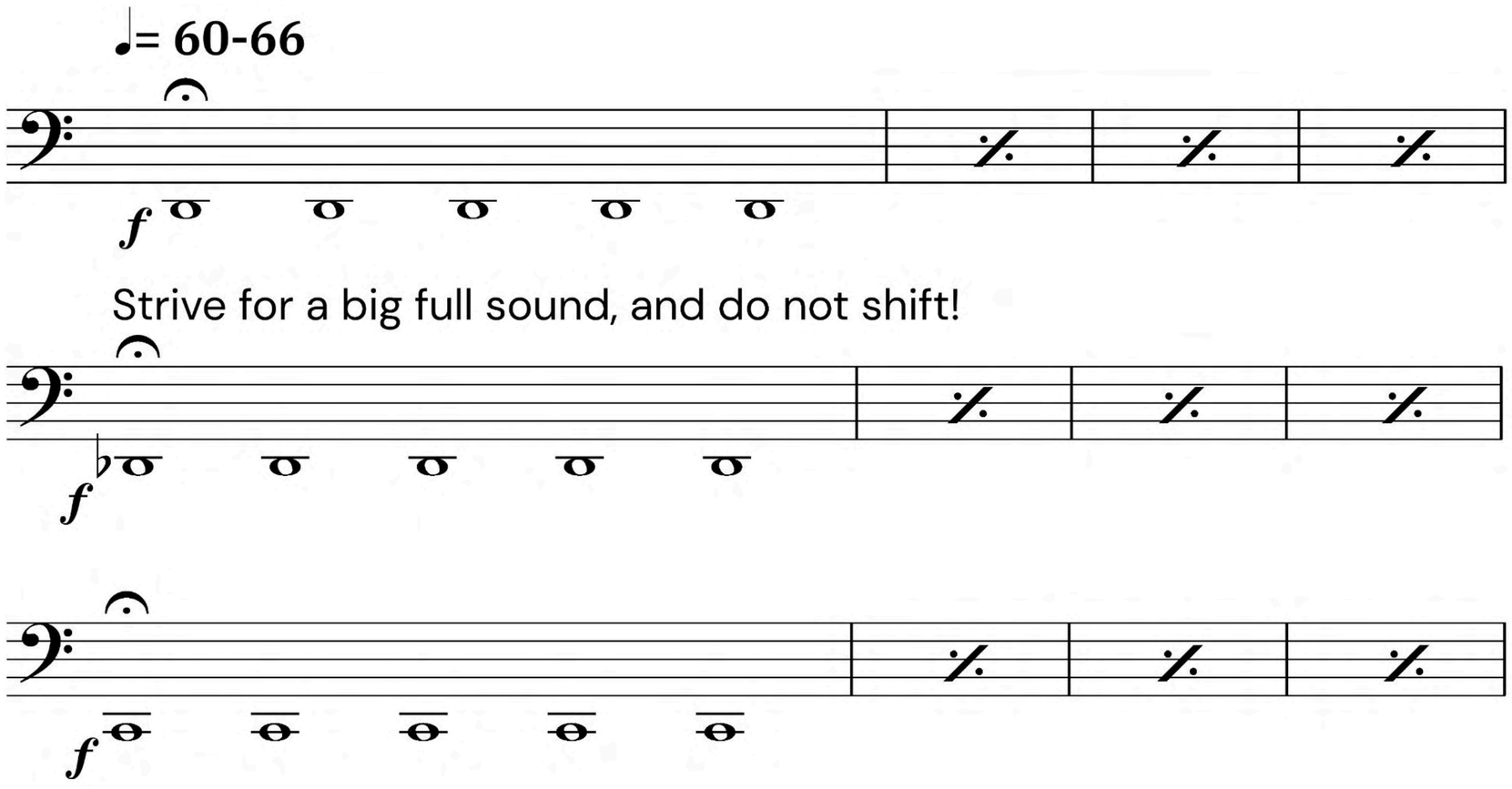


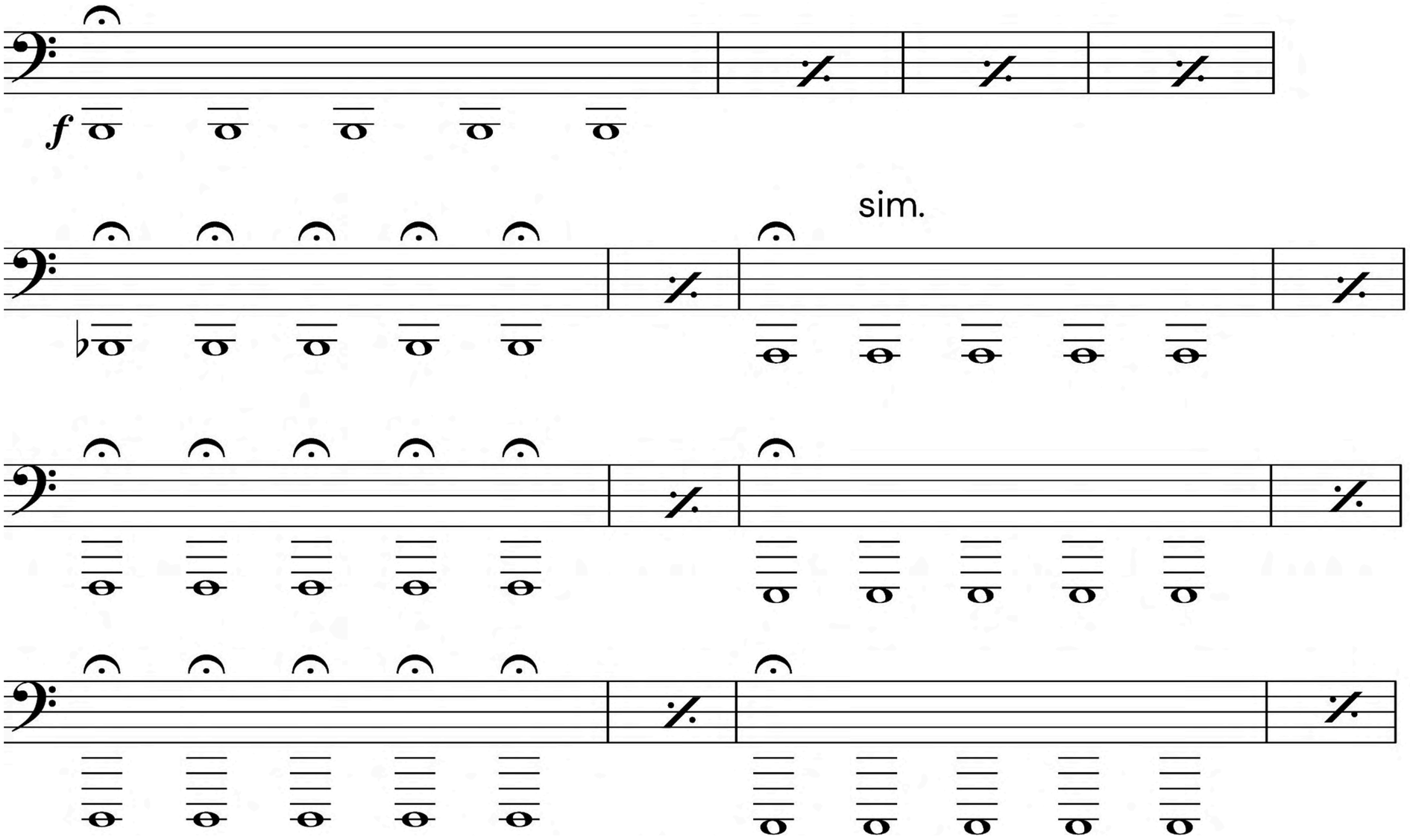


Long Tones

Focus on quality of sound with long tones. Project the sound as much as possible with minimum effort. Ask yourself: What kind of sound am I trying to make? Is this the sound I want? Why do I want this sound? Play this at a mezzo-piano to mezzo-forte dynamic. Use a metronome set to ♩=60–66 bpm.

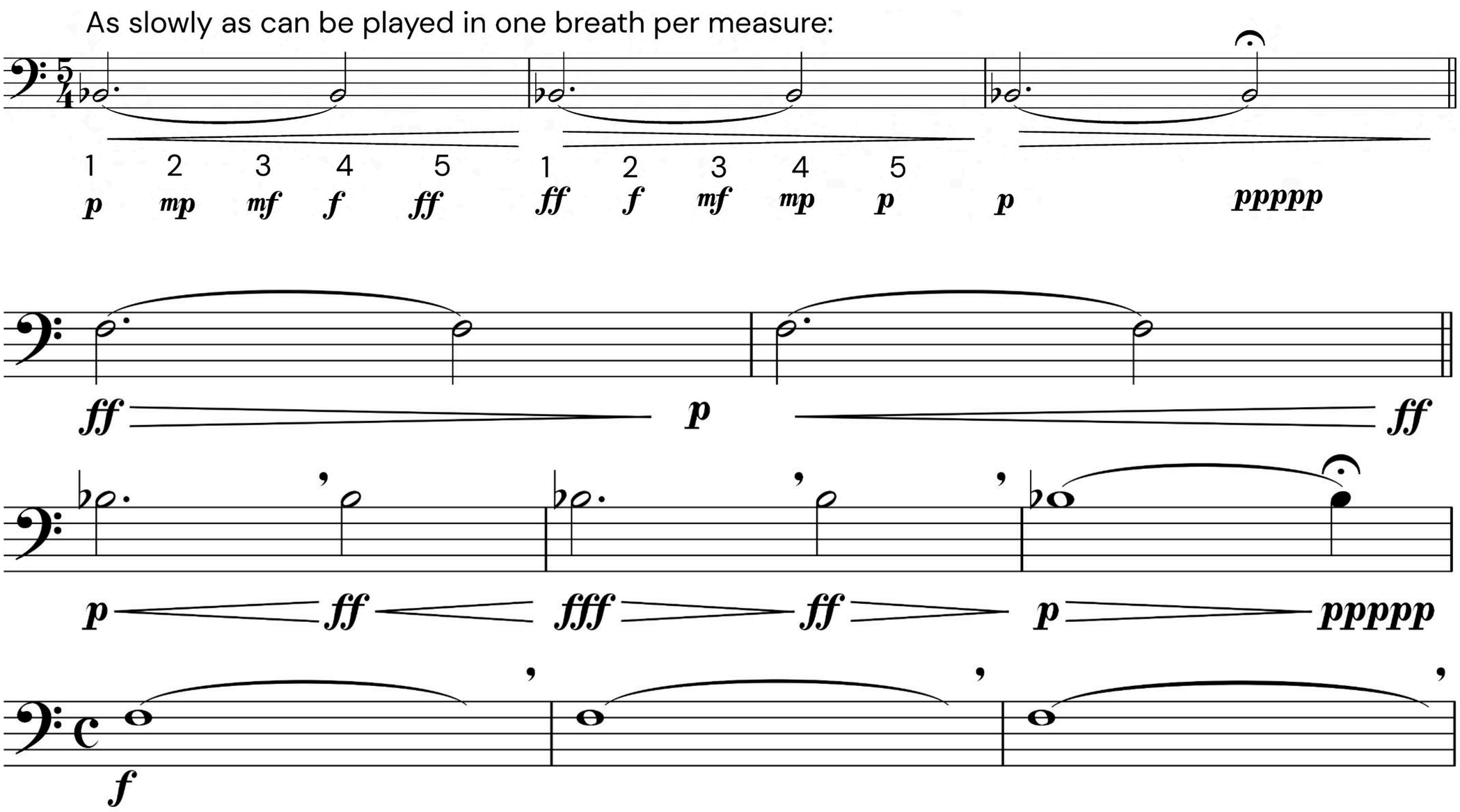
Source: Phil Teele, Daily Routine





Source: Arnold Jacobs, Song and Wind

As slowly as can be played in one breath per measure:

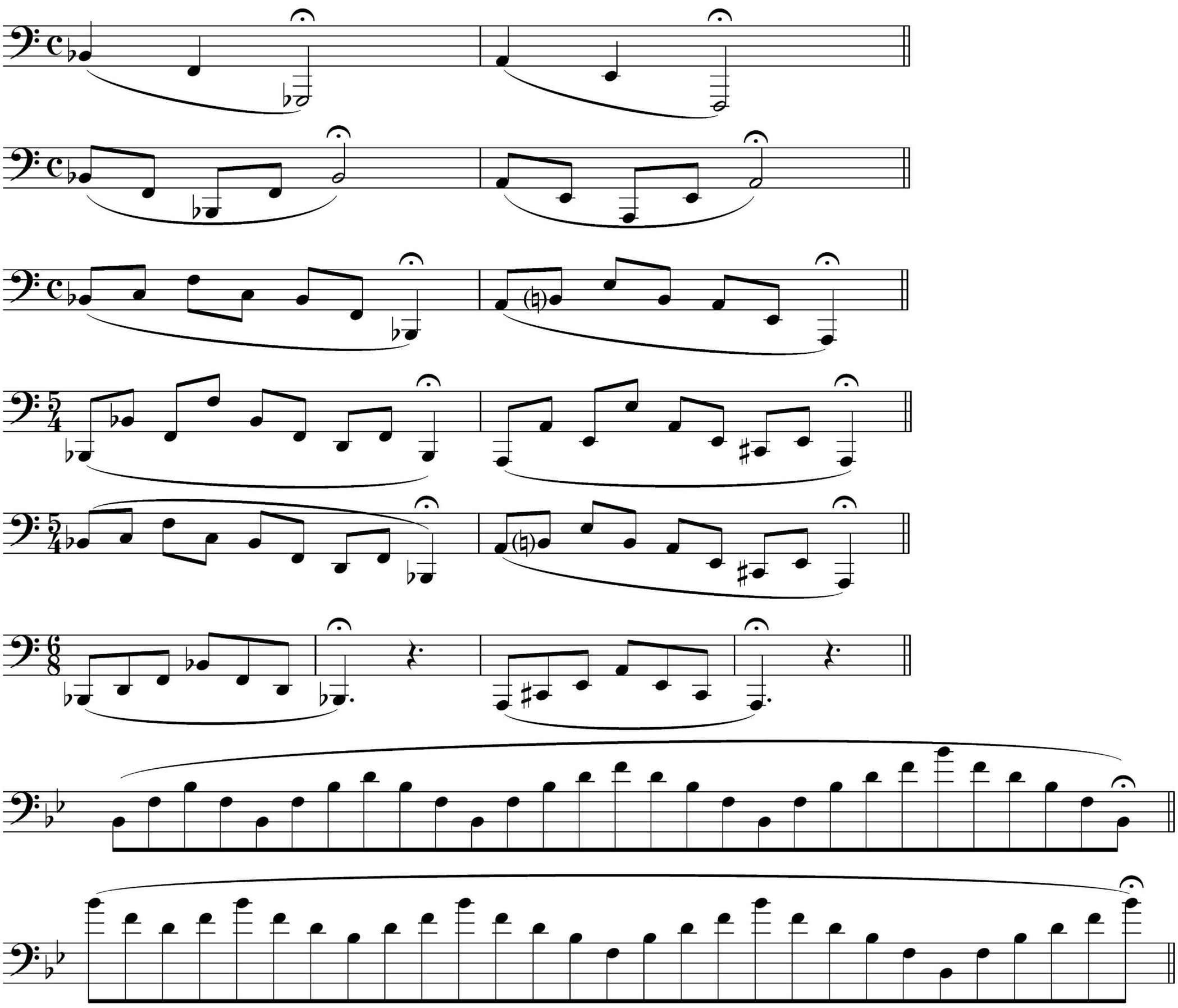


Strive to take as quick and relaxed a breath as possible.

Slurs

Start with slow slurs. Focus on really connecting the notes by filling the space with pure sound. Use a metronome.

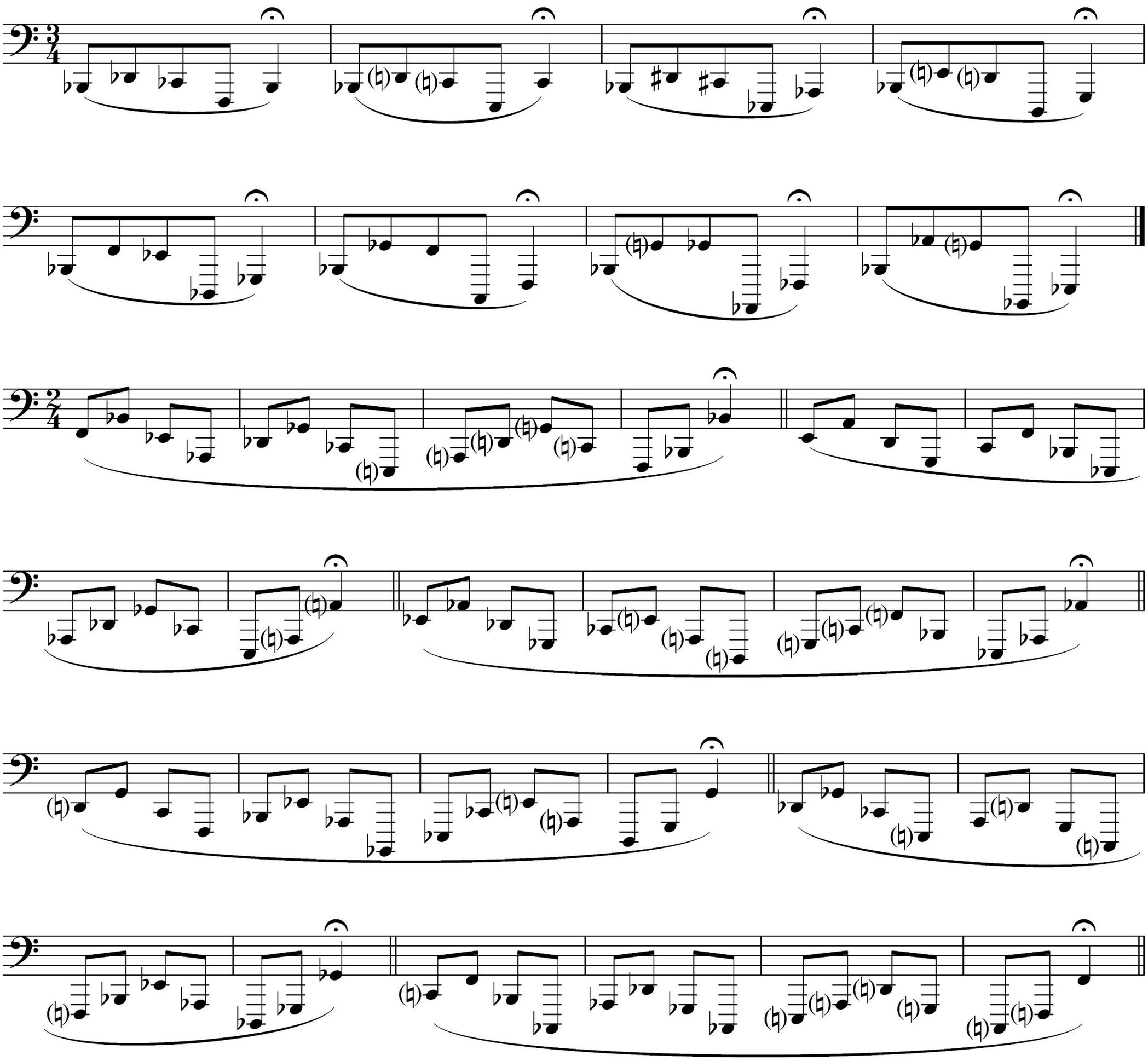
Source: Charles Vernon, The Singing Trombone



Flow Studies

It is important to be in touch with your air and how to use it effectively. Working on flow studies helps with the easy delivery of air and connecting notes. Try to be as musical as possible and complete each exercise in one breath.

Source: Roger Bobo, Mastering The Tuba



Slow

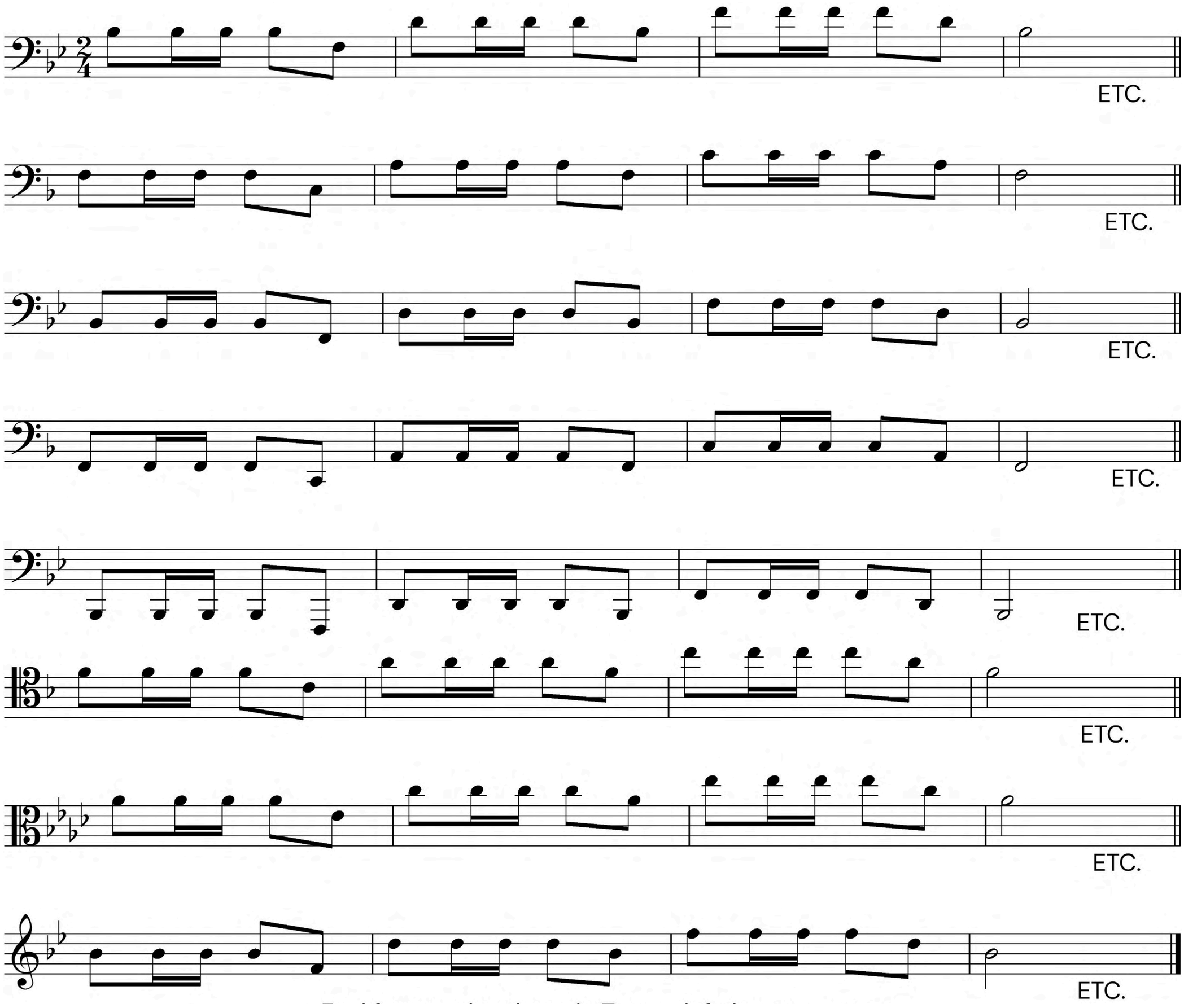
p-f

As is, and down
an octave

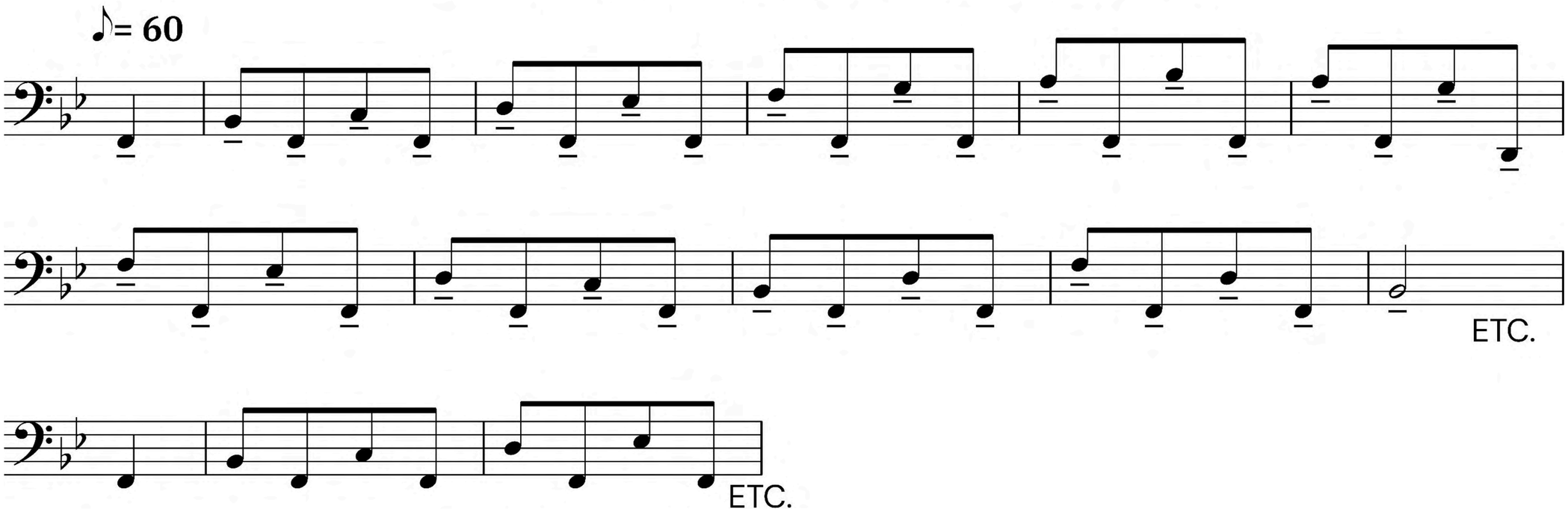
Articulation

Pay attention to the quality of the start of each note. Strive for a crisp, clear, immediate sound followed by an ocean of air. Vary your articulations to cover legato, staccato, accent, tenuto, marcato, and any other articulations you might see in music. Also, use this as an opportunity to hone valve technique. Use a metronome. Choose different scales every day. Repetition is the mother of skill.

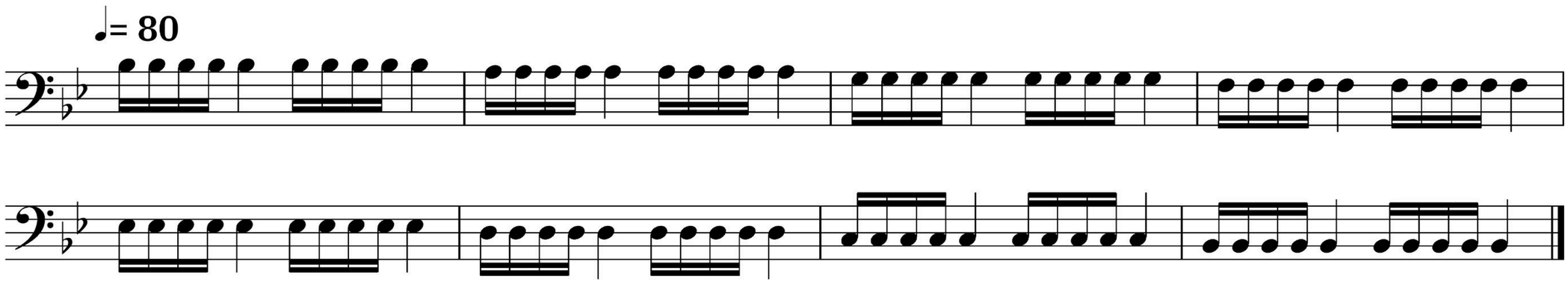
Source: Jean-Baptiste Arban, Famous Method



Feel free to play these in Tenor clef, down an octave.

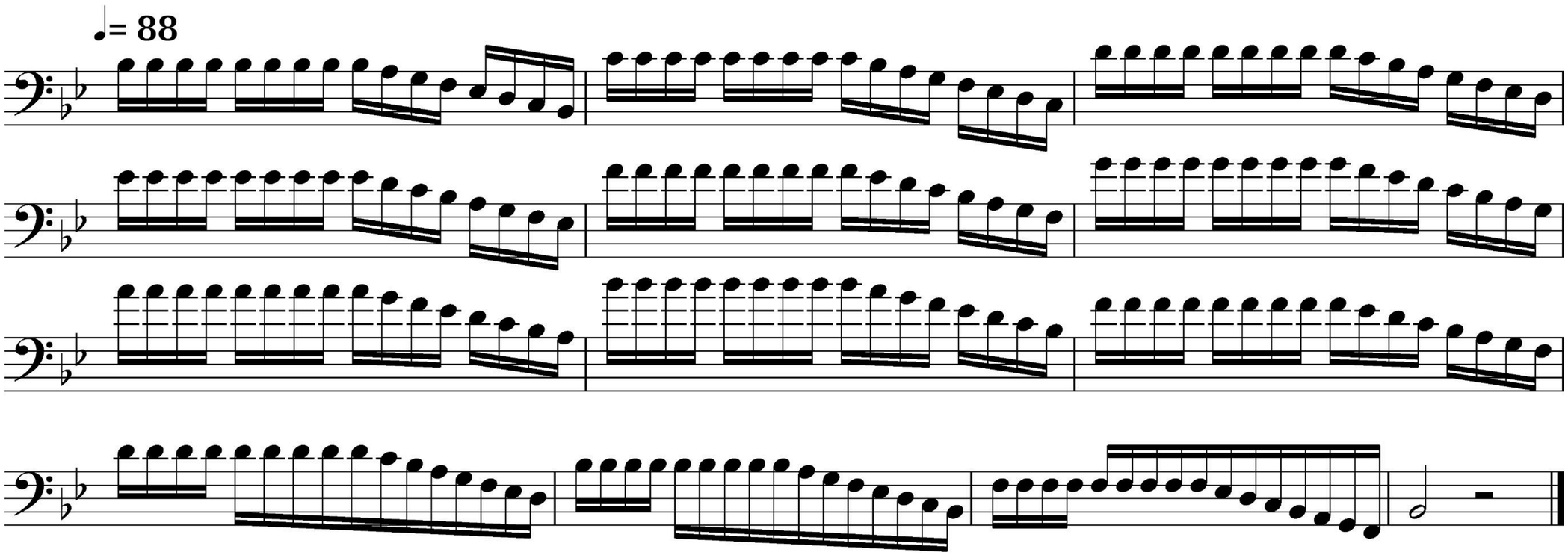


Source: Emory Remington, Daily Routines



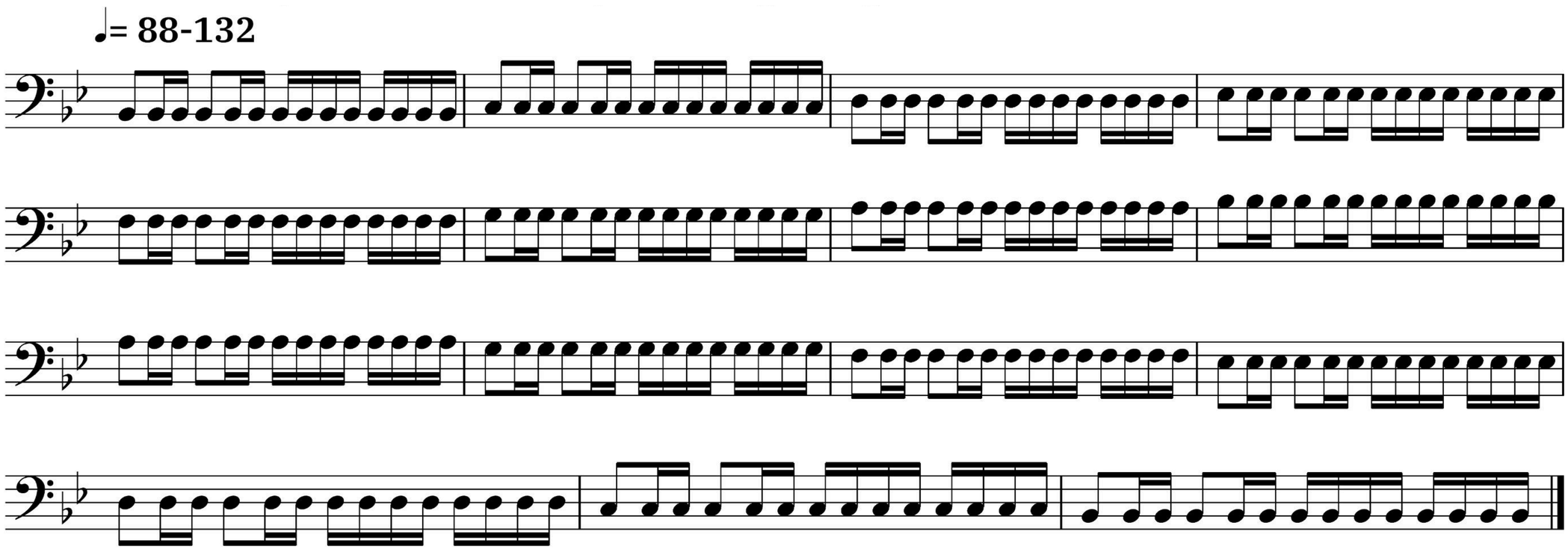
Source: Max Schlossberg, Daily Drills and Technical Studies

Play this exercise in all different keys/modes and articulation styles.



Source: Patrick Sheridan/Sam Pilafian: The Breathing Gym

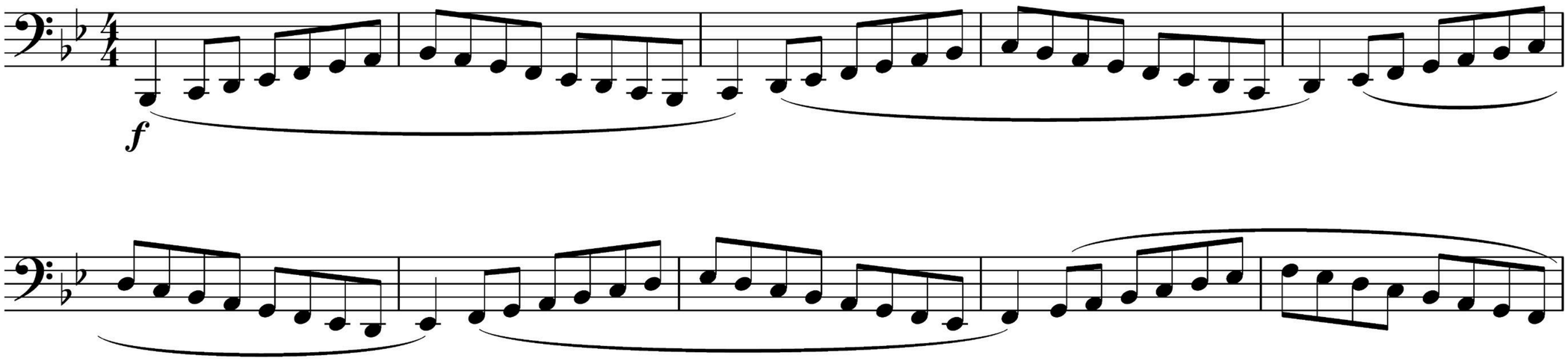
Breathe only after eighth notes. Keep air moving through beats 3 and 4.

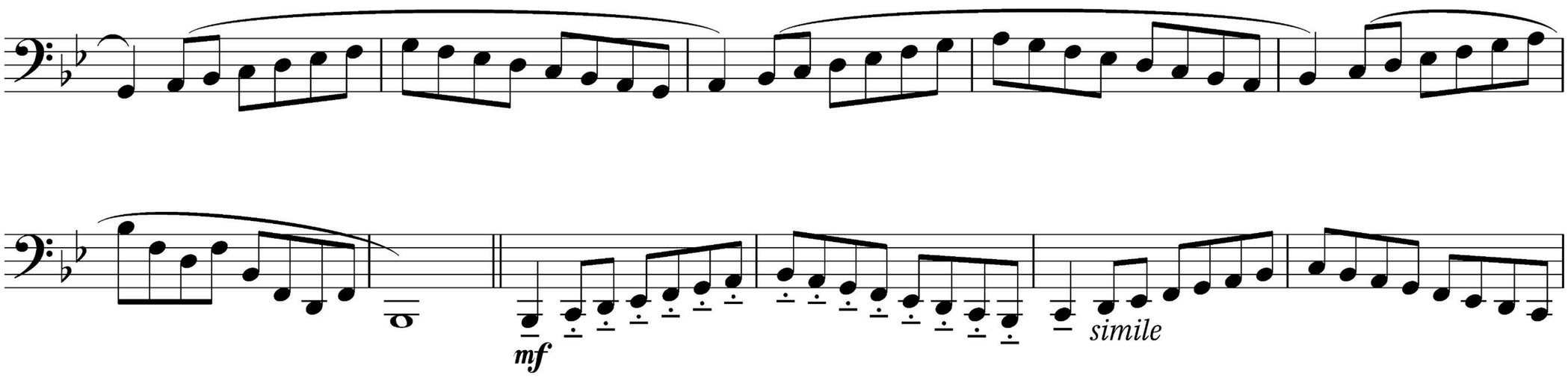


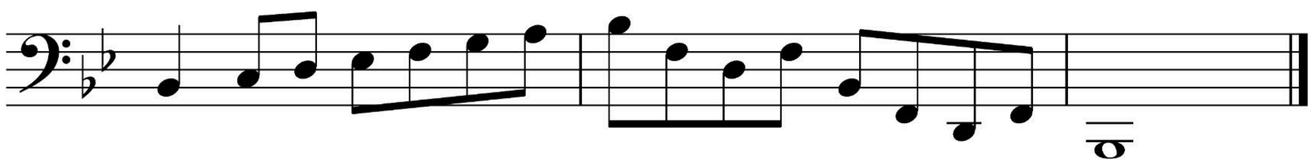
Scales & Arpeggios

Complement your warm-up routine with plenty of scales and arpeggios. Strive for a wide-ranging, healthy, and musical approach to scale patterns. Set a goal of two to three octaves, and make sure you cover all twelve major scales and thirty-six minor scales. Vary the approach with articulations, dynamics, rhythms, and tempi. Once you feel comfortable, challenge yourself by learning scales in thirds, fourths, fifths, sixths, and sevenths, as well as experimenting with modes, whole tone, octatonic, chromatic, and blues scales. Pay close attention to accurate valve technique as you maneuver these scalar patterns and work in alternate fingerings as a challenge.

Source: Brian Hecht, Warm-Up Routine







Rest

Be sure to incorporate rest into your warm-up routine. Rest in between each exercise for the amount of time that it takes you to do that exercise. It's a good idea to give your chops a minute or two rest after the buzzing patterns before putting the instrument to your face.

Hydration

Drink water! Before, during, and after your warm-up, and throughout the day. Hydration is key to maintaining healthy moisturized lips and mouth cavity, as well as providing oxygen to the body. We lose a lot of water from playing brass instruments, and can easily get light headed from the amount of air we have to move, so drinking water will help to replenish those resources. Drinking fluids with electrolytes can also help combat dehydration and dry mouth.