

## Mick's Ascending Bending Exercises

The image shows three staves of musical notation for ascending bending exercises. Each staff is in 4/4 time and features a treble clef. The first staff starts on C4 (0) and goes up to G4 (13). The second staff starts on D4 (23) and goes up to G4 (1). The third staff starts on A3 (2) and goes up to G4 (0). Each staff shows a sequence of notes with fingerings and bends. The notes are connected by a slur, and the bent notes are marked with a sharp symbol (#).

Play using designated fingerings but bend the 2nd note to match the pitch of 1st note. When bending the notes make it a **fast bend**, no gliss between "bent" notes and normal notes. The pitch and sound will never be as good on the bent note as the correctly fingered one. The movement of the lips and tongue playing the bent note is what the exercise is all about. You will probably find it easier to bend lower notes compared with higher notes, noticeable around middle (3rd space) Bb-C. Much benefit will be gained by practicing bending from middle C up to G above the staff. (If it is difficult starting on low C as above, try starting on low A below the staff)

As you play this exercise notice that your tongue probably **moves upward** in your mouth in order to make the bend. This is similar to the movement of your tongue when doing upward lip slurs. Also notice that your lips probably need to "pucker", similar to a kiss or a light peck on a cheek. In other words they move **slightly forward** towards the mouthpiece. This is similar to the motion your lips should do as you ascend while playing, and most prominently when doing upward lip slurs.

The main purpose of **Ascending Bending** is to train the lips in this forward motion. Use this motion when moving to the higher register. Always use when playing upward lip slurs and ascending passages of music. I liken it to having a bigger pillow of lip between my teeth and the mouthpiece. This larger lip pillow helps counteract the excessive pressure we sometimes generate with our arms while pressing the trumpet and mouthpiece against our lips and teeth. **This excessive pressure cuts off the blood supply and oxygen to our lip muscles** and makes us tire.

Continue this exercise as high as you want, but at least one octave. **Play slowly: the benefit is in playing the "bent" note.**

Once this becomes comfortable and your default way of playing, extend the exercises in as many variations as you want. Using the I chord and IV chord as found in the Clarke Technical Study #3 will help reinforce this concept. Start each exercise with bent half notes or quarter notes of the key you are playing. For example, in the key of C, start with my first two measures above and then go directly to Clarke #52. Maintain the thought process and mechanics of **Ascending Bending** as you play the exercise.

This exercise and the consequent results, if done properly, addresses the bad habit of "smiling" while ascending on a brass instrument. This smiling embouchure is one of the most pervasive bad habits of trumpet playing. If young students were taught a different way of playing from the very beginning many embouchure problems would never happen.

I encourage you to try this new way of playing. Apply this method to all your exercises, etudes and solos.