Gilbert Garza
Trombone Beginner Teaching Sequence Lesson Plan

Materials Needed: 2 Trombones, 2 Trombone Mouthpieces, Paper & Pencil

Sequence of Activities:
* Introduction - Greet the student have them take a seat. “Hello, _____. How are you doing? Take a seat. Today we are going to be learning how to play the trombone. The trombone is a cool unique instrument that is part of the low brass instrument family. You can tell the trombone apart from other instruments cause of its slide. We will talk more about what that is later on but for now lets get started.

1) Opening the case: “What I want you to do first is carefully set the trombone case flat on the floor with the instrument brand label facing up. Now unlatch the latches that keep the instrument case sealed. Next, carefully open the case but do not touch any part of the instrument.” (Teacher will demonstrate each of these steps)

2) Name of Parts: “ Now that the parts of the instrument are visible, I will show you what each part of the instrument is called. When I point to each piece, I will say the name of each part and I want you to recall the names right after I say them (Bell, lead pipe (Mouthpiece receiver), tuning slide, counter weight, braces, main slide, inner and outer slide, slide braces, spit valve (water key), slide receiver, and mouthpiece)

3) Assembly/Brief description of how to hold parts: “Let’s begin assembly of the trombone by gently holding the bell in your left hand. Point the bell toward the floor with the receiver to the right. Hold the slide section by the braces in your right hand with the “U” of the slide section down. Make sure the slide lock is locked. Put the longer side of the slide section into the bell receiver. Make a “V” angle between the two sections. The exact angle will be determined by the size of your hand. Tighten the lock that holds the two sections together. Now open the mouthpiece compartment in the case (shows student where that is) and grab the mouthpiece by its shank (show student where that is) by using your right thumb and first finger. Put the mouthpiece into the mouthpiece receiver with your right hand by using a gentle twisting motion. Do not hit or pop the mouthpiece into place.

4) Assembly/Hand Position: Next, Make “a gun” with your left hand and place your thumb around the bell brace. Place your left index finger near the mouthpiece. Place the two middle fingers of your left hand around the first slide brace. Your left hand pinky goes under the first slide brace. With your right hand, hold the bottom of the slide brace with your thumb, index and 2nd fingers. Your right pinky and 2nd to last finger should go under the slide brace for added support. Finally, Set the trombone down by letting the side with the lead pipe gently touch the floor. Careful not to drop your instrument. Any dents, no matter how big or small can ruin your instrument and it’s playing ability.

5) Posture: Now what I want you to do is stand straight up. We are going to learn good
posture. All the best trombone players in the world use good posture and that’s how they sound the way they do. Stand with shoulder width apart. Sit straight down in chair. Make sure you don’t push back into the chair with your bottom. Once seated, push your back gently towards your stomach. Next, your head floats. Make sure no part of your body touches another part of your body by putting hands face up on your knees. Lastly, your body is soft. (Teacher will model all these steps) There should be no tension. This is breakdown of good posture is what I call “stand to sit.” You should feel balanced in your chair. Your ribs should be slightly lifted.

Now we are going to bring the attention to your face. When playing a trombone or any wind instrument, a normal face is needed. There should be no tension in the face. Now show me your normal face. Remember there should be no tension anywhere. Make sure your eye brow area is soft, no part of the face is stretched out or contorted in anyway. This is what I call “Normal Face.”

6) Breathing: Now I want you to put your index finger in front of your mouth. Inhale. As you inhale, inhale through the corners of your mouth and not through your nose or through the instrument. Exhale by saying “poo”. You won’t be actually saying the word with your voice but more mouthing it while exhaling. Make sure your body is still soft and still. Now do it again. Remember, as you exhale, make sure you breathe through the corners of your mouth and not your nose. Breathe in and out at a steady rate. Don’t “vomit” all your air out. Pretend you put a really long strand of spaghetti in your mouth and you have to pull it out slowly or else the strand will break apart. (Teacher demonstrates the pulling of spaghetti while exhaling - Student repeats afterwards)

7) First vibrations on mouthpiece: Now, gently pick up your trombone and hold it using the correct hand position. Using your good posture, be still and let the trombone rest with the tip of the slide on the floor. Show me your normal face. Take your right hand and put it out in front of your mouth. Lick your lips. Inhale and exhale saying “Poo”, exhaling air at your right hand. Repeat two more times. Next bring the mouthpiece without the instrument to your face. The mouthpiece should be 2/3 on top of your lips, and 1/3 on the bottom of the lips. I will demonstrate for you. Now inhale and exhale by saying “poo”. You face is still normal and your posture is still good. Let your lips react to the air stream. (Teacher demonstrates instant vibration) Once you get a vibration, attach the mouthpiece to instrument.

8) Let vibration happen on entire instrument/Instrument Angle: Once your mouthpiece is attached, using correct hand position, bring instrument to your face. Angle your instrument at the angle your air stream naturally came out when you were exhaling air at your right hand. Lick your lips. Remember the mouthpiece placement on your lips. (Demonstrate for student) Now inhale. Remember to inhale through the corners of your mouth. Exhale by saying “Poo”. Let the air out. Repeat until you get an instant vibration on your instrument. Let lips vibrate. Do not make the lips vibrate. Now lick your lips again and inhale and exhale until another instant vibration happens again.

9) Embouchure: Now that you’ve got an instant vibration on your trombone, here are a
couple of things to think about when performing a vibration, or any sound on your trombone. Make sure the corners of your mouth never move out or down. Make sure your teeth are not closed and separation is present. Always make sure your face is normal. With these things in mind, let another instant vibration happen on your trombone.

10) Note shape: Now what I want you to do is perform another instant vibration on your trombone but only this time make it last a longer. Try to achieve a steady block of sound. While you play, I will draw a the shape of your sound. (once student is done playing, teacher will show the student the picture) Now I will play a note and I want you to draw the shape of the note you heard me play. (Tell student they will eventually want a solid rectangle block of sound - but do not pressure students to have perfect notes yet) These are note shapes.

11) Centering/ Tone Quality: The next thing we are going to learn is centering of your sound. When I think of centering, I think of a radio station. Every station has a different frequency. On old radios you had to tune it with a dial to get clear reception. This is what we do on trombone and all the other brass instruments. I’m going to play above center and then I want you to describe the sound to me. (student listens then relays descriptive words back to teacher about the sound the teacher made) Now I am going to play below center and then using descriptive words, I want you to describe to me what you heard. Now I am going to play centered and then describe what you heard using descriptive words. You can find the center of the note by playing a note, bending it below center, above center, center. (teacher demonstrates). Now play a note and tell me whether you think it’s below/above/ or centered. (Student plays. If not centered, have student bend pitch below center, then above, then to center. Explain that a centered sound is in the middle of the two different frequencies of below and above center. Right above below center and below above center. If problem persists, use heuristics to fix problem).

12) Articulation: Now that your sound is centered, we are going to learn articulation. Articulation is the way we tongue. Now watch what I do and copy me. (Teacher demonstrates by saying “thoo” repeatedly without stopping air using unregulated articulation). Next, I am going to blow “thoo, thoo, thoo, thoo, thoo” on your hand, and then I want you to blow “thoo, thoo, thoo, thoo, thoo” on my hand. Make sure your air is connected. When doing this make sure your tongue is soft. The tongue interrupts the air never stops it. Now I want you to say “thoo thoo thoo thoo thoo” and blow continuous, connected air but with your trombone. Make sure your notes are connected and still have a solid, centered sound. (If students get “Hara Hara” tongue, check for a pulled back tongue and correct by reminding them the tongue should be natural and soft, not tensed or pulled back). I will demonstrate articulation and then I want you to articulate on your trombone after me. (If the tonguing isn’t going well, have them 1) tongue where they say “thoo” or 2) tongue where the back of the top teeth and lower upper lip meet.)

13) Slur: The note we have been playing up to this point was a Bb. Now we are going to
play a new new note. The new note we are going to produce is the F above that Bb. Now we are going to play that F by using faster air, letting our lips touch closer, and raising our tongue from “ah” to “ih”. We are going to do each of these steps separately. When you go from one note to the next with a connection and no break, this is called a slur. Now let's slur from Bb to F using faster air (student plays and pays attention to sound). Next let's slur from Bb to F by letting your lips touch closer. (student plays and pays attention to sound). Next lets slur from Bb to F by raising the tongue from the “ah” position to the “ih” position. (student plays and pays attention to sound). Now we are going to slur from Bb to F again but this time, I want you to combine all three of these factors. So remember when slurring from Bb to F, you want to make sure your air is faster, your lips are touching closer, and your tongue is in the “ih” position. (Check to see if students corners are moving in or down NEVER pulled back). Now I want you to Slur from Bb to F back down to Bb. (Teacher demonstrates then student plays) Remember the three factors we talked about when doing this slur. (student plays). Make sure you have your normal face as well as your good posture. (Student plays again and teacher checks for problems. If any, teacher checks for smiling, trombone angle, airstream direction).

14) End of Lesson: Student will demonstrate 1 good note shape, 1 good centered note, unregulated articulation, and one slur (ascending & descending). Thank you! You are going to be an awesome trombonist one day!