

Tips from the Workbench Ozwind's Brisbane

Tip #2 – Mixing Synthetic and Petroleum Oils

This tip relates to a problem that happens when different oils are mixed. The compounds in different oils can react to create something that works against you rather working in your favour.

For trumpets and other valve instruments there are lots of oils on the market.

The biggest difference you will find is that there are two categories:
Synthetic Oils and Petroleum-based oils

Here is the tip: *Never mix synthetic oils with petroleum-based oils.*

Although this may not be strictly true in many cases, mixing different oils can cause the ingredients to combine into a gummy mess, making the instrument sluggish. In this case it would be necessary to clean out the entire instrument.

Most teachers settle on using and recommending just one type of oil for their instruments (and their students). This is a good practice and leads to consistency and fewer problems.

Choosing an oil

The biggest difference that retailers point out about the oils is that petroleum based oils are probably a little more toxic than the synthetic alternatives, and having them so close to the mouth and airway is probably not the best option for health.

On a student level (not so advance player) it probably makes no difference to the action of the instrument. For more advance players who have instruments built with high tolerances, petroleum based oils will feel smoother in general, but will dry out more quickly than synthetic oils. This is not usually a problem for players that maintain their instruments regularly.

Synthetic oils will last longer before drying up, but may not feel quite as smooth to the player. This is something that is usually only evident to advanced players, so for students the advantage to using synthetic oils is lower toxicity and lubrication that lasts longer.

For these reasons, a synthetic oil would be my recommendation.

Other advantages to Synthetic Oils

Synthetic oils come in a much larger variety of viscosities, from very light and runny oils to very thick and heavy.

For new instruments (good quality such as Yamaha) a light oil is the best to use, since the tolerances are very close.

For older instruments that have worn out a little, a thicker oil would be a better choice. Oils can be used to "fill in the gaps" for instruments that have worn out a little and make them feel



normal. It also helps to prevent the possibility of air leaking between the valve and the casing.

What does this mean for you?

If you are specific about which oil you use or recommend for students, you will need to mention this to your repair technician whenever instruments are left for servicing. This means that the oils you prefer can be applied at the end of the service, allowing you to continue trouble-free.

If you are thinking to change over the type of oil that you are using, it may be a good idea to wash the brass instrument to make sure the previous oil type will not cause any issues.

If a repair technician has given you some advice about which oil viscosity would be best to use for a particular instrument, it may be a good idea to leave a sticker inside the case so that a player cannot be confused about what to buy.

Future Tips

If there is anything that you would like to know, and are looking for an answer, please let me know. I might be able to include it in some tips for teachers.

brisbaneworkshop@ozwinds.com.au

Drew Niemeyer
Woodwind Specialist Technician
Ozwinds