How to Clean Your Trombone

Learning to properly clean and maintain your trombone is an important part of becoming a good musician. Cleaning, polishing and lubricating your instrument will keep it looking and sounding like a million bucks...or whatever you paid for it. This article will give you the tools to learn how to properly maintain your horn and its warm tone.

Things You'll Need:

- Trombone
- Trombone Cleaning Snake
- Mouthpiece Cleaning Brush
- Mild dish soap
- Bath tub
- Clean soft cloths
- Slide cream
- Tuning slide grease
- Spray bottle filled with water

1. Fill a bath tub with enough warm, NOT HOT, water to submerge the trombone parts completely. Add a few squirts of mild dish soap, such as Dawn.

2. Completely disassemble the horn. This includes removing the tuning slide from the top and pulling the inner slide out of the outer slide. Lay all the parts gently in the bottom of the tub and allow them to soak for 10-15 minutes.

3. Insert the mouthpiece cleaning brush into the barrel of the mouthpiece and move it back and forth to scrub out any gunk inside. When finished, rinse and dry the mouthpiece and set it aside.

4. Working under the water, scrub the inside of the other trombone parts (bell, tuning slide, inner slide and outer slide) with the cleaning snake by inserting one end of the snake into the horn and moving it back and forth to loosen any food particles or other gunk inside. Clean one part at a time, then rinse and set on a dry soft towel to air dry. Be careful to set these pieces in a safe
place where they won’t fall or be stepped on. Be VERY careful when working on the inner slide---
don’t scratch and dent it!

5. Once all the parts are dry, it's time to reassemble your trombone. First, lubricate the tuning slide
with some tuning slide grease and insert it into the top of the trombone. Pull it in and out to make
sure it is adequately lubricated and wipe off any excess grease.

6. Next, apply the slide cream with your fingers to the outside of the inner slide until it is coated
with a thin layer. Be careful not to scratch the metal as this will cause problems when trying to play
the instrument. Spray the inner slide part with water from the spray bottle until coated, then slide it
into the outer slide and move back and forth to ensure it is properly lubricated. If any scratching is
heard or felt when moving the slide, spray more water onto the inner slide. If the scratching
continues, try cleaning this part again and starting over. If this doesn't work, you make have dents
or scratches in the metal and may need to take it to an instrument repair shop.

7. When finished reassembling the slide, use a clean, soft cloth to remove any other buildup or
water spots that may still remain on the outside of the trombone. Your horn is now ready to be fully
reassembled and played, or placed back in the case to be played at a later date.