PRACTICE TIPS FOR WOODWINDS – Mike Croom

- 1. Several short periods of work are better than one long period
 - Minimum: (4) 20 minute practices weekly OR (5) 15 minute practices weekly
 - Concentrate on troublesome spots
 - Isolate 2-3 hardest notes and practice them SLOWLY
 - Then practice hard spot with notes around it; follow with whole phrase
 - Prepare ALL material and SCALES up to the SAME proficiency level
 - Don't waste time on spots you can already play
- 2. Set a regular daily practice time
 - Uninterrupted NO distractions
 - Open on both ends Does not overlay with another activity
 - Buy a folding music stand; don't prop music on home furniture
 - If home practice is a problem, practice in the band building rooms BEFORE school
- 3. Listen to yourself play
 - Tape on cassette recorder and play back for your own evaluation
 - Identify weak spots; practice them two times SLOW and one time at tempo
- 4. Set realistic goals regarding
 - Region/State Tryouts Camp Band Placement
 - Solo/Ensemble Contest College Scholarship Auditions
- 5. Practice to improve details
 - Correct Notes and Rhythms; set tempo, tap foot and count; carry accidentals through
 - Correct Articulation; tongue and slur as marked; vary accents, tenuto, staccato
 - Correct dynamics; look under the notes; exaggerate markings for musicality
- 6. Quality of Sound
 - Get a good tone on every note in all registers
 - Use fresh reeds to avoid flat high notes (old worn reeds have weak tips)
 - Use a good mouthpiece and rotate three good reeds (broken in)
 - Keep instrument in good repair

(tenon corks, bridge key adj., crows foot adj., ring height, replace bad pads)

- 7. Scales
 - Memorize hard scales early; play the scale, then play it with eyes shut

 - Know the required octaves for each scale
- 8. Practice some music other than tryout exercises
 - Concert music; short sight-reading excerpts; solos
- 9. Simulate Tryout Conditions
 - Mock tryouts at school are very beneficial
 - Find opportunities to play in front of others
 - Arrange times to practice with your competitors
- 10. Suggestions for Advanced Players
 - Practice technical parts at different rhythms and articulations at a SET TEMPO
 - Return to 'As Written'; the passage should sound smoother
 - Blow BETWEEN the notes; push air from the end of one note to the beginning of the next note
 - Check required tempo markings with a metronome
 - Use a metronome to identify problems with rushing or dragging
 - Be accurate; don't go too fast
 - A big, centered sound is more important than speed