

Necessary Skills for the Professional Trombonist **(In Addition to Playing the Trombone Well...)**

Music Related

- Read Bass, Treble, and K clefs (alto, tenor, mezzo soprano)
- Be able to transpose Bb, Eb, and F treble clef parts
 - (Bb) Tenor Clef, add two flats
 - (Eb) Read as bass clef, add one flat
 - (F) Read as mezzo soprano clef, add one flat
 - Also be able to transpose music up and down an octave
- Build the ability to read to the left of the stand
- Don't play into the floor, get bells up - almost parallel with the back wall
- In a big band set up, play in windows between saxes.
- Develop an ear for different mute colors (metal vs. stone line)
 - Certain mutes work in certain situations but not others.
 - Sometimes directors have a preference, but sometimes you need to be able to make those decisions on your own.
 - This may mean having several of each mute to choose from.
- There's more music out there besides classical and jazz - learn as much of it and about it as you can.
 - First and foremost you are a musician
 - Secondly you are a trombonist, learn as many styles of playing as you can. This will lead to more, and a greater variety of work.
- Learn to play bass trombone in addition to tenor trombone (or vice versa)
- Train yourself in sight singing, keyboard skills, rhythmic exercises, harmony/theory, music composition and arranging.
- Develop an ear for how music goes.
 - You may find yourself in situations where you have to use your intellect and instinct to make musical decisions.

Non-Music Related

- Learn how to communicate over emails/phone
 - Responding to people looking to hire you, book gigs, communicating details to a group you are leading, etc.
 - This is very important! If you are easy to communicate with and clear with all of the details, everyone will be more at ease.
 - Also, a quick and professional response may be the difference in getting a gig or getting passed over.
- Learn how to promote and market yourself
 - Website, social media, promotional materials, newsletters, business cards
 - Update your materials regularly, including headshots!
 - You can have a great product, but if people don't know about it, they will not come to your performances/events.
 - Also, great promotional materials demonstrate a commitment to your craft.
 - For example, would you rather purchase a product with a website with background information, tutorials, and commercials? Or a product that has been recommended but with no available information? (Again, think of the masses)
 - Remember, you will be hired by people who do not know you.
 - They need to be able to learn about you on their own time (i.e. your website).

- Be early, be prepared, be polite, be easy to work with, be great.
 - Know your role (this may/will change in different situations!)
 - Know when you may have a say in musical decisions, when it's ok to talk, and when it's time to be quiet and just do your job.
 - This is also very important! Again, if you are easy to work with, there is work out there!
 - It takes time to build a good reputation, but bad news travels fast...
 - If you are late, unreliable, unprepared, etc., word spreads quickly.
- Stay grounded; you're only as good as your last performance. And as a brass player, there are new (or old) challenges every day.
- Learn additional music software
 - Music Notation Software - Sibelius or Finale
 - Recording Software - Logic, Ableton, ProTools
- Keep good records.
 - Make an income spreadsheet for all musical income (with lots of different sources of income this is important)
 - And with most musical income, taxes are not withheld.
 - Keep track of mileage to and from musical work (non W-2 work)
 - Keep track of business expenses/work related purchases (keep receipts)

Misc. Tips

- Always have a water bottle with a lid
 - It's best to have them fill your water at the venue than get a glass and spill on power cords, music, etc.
- Always carry ibuprofen and tums in your gig bag.
- Not a bad idea to carry an extra set of black socks.
- Take care of yourself - Stay Healthy!
 - This can be a fun but tough (mentally and physically) job.
 - Stay hydrated
 - Get enough sleep
 - Exercise
 - Meditation
- Know and understand that when you have a gig, that it is your work!
 - Be at your best for every performance
 - Don't be the person that comes in for a performance, complains about how tired their chops are after hours of practice, and doesn't do the best they can do because they overexerted themselves in their practice.
 - Again, this is your job!
 - It can be tough to balance the desire to practice and improve when you maintain an active performance schedule, but you have to be aware of your chops.
 - Sometimes you have to put the horn down when everything is going great, so that you can be at your best for a performance later in the day.