TUBA BASICS

When to start?

It is difficult to start a tubist in elementary school. If a young student greatly desires to start on the the tuba, then the following is necessary:

- must have a small enough tuba (see Bailey 121)
- small enough mouthpiece (Bach 32 is good for small sized beginners)
- device used for holding the instrument (such as the Wenger Tuba Tamer).

TUBA BASICS

Largest and *newest* member of the brass family (1830's) – replaced the ophicleide

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aQX6A8DWB-Y

Conical (similarly to horn and euphonium)

May be pitched in different keys (Bb, C, F, Eb)

Bb is most common for bands (C for orchestras)

Officially referred to as BB-flat, or CC, etc. (designates it as pitched an octave lower than the "tenor tuba," i.e. baritone/euphonium)

BREATHING

Given the size and bore of the tuba, successful breathing is an integral part of the process.

Consider daily breathing exercises as part of your warmup/practice session (Bailey p. 7/8)

"The Breathing Gym"

http://youtu.be/qEz0ku-oXM4?t=7m1s

To switch or not to switch?

If starting students from the beginning is not an option, then many band directors will switch other instrumentalists to tuba around middle school.

Often there is an imbalance in bands, favoring higher instruments to lower. There is almost always a need for more low brass.

Most student instrumentalists are well suited for switching to tuba, with the exception of trumpet/double reeds/clarinet.

Tuba Embouchure

In general 50/50 both horizontally and vertically

Throat is to remain as open and relaxed as possible at all times

Keep tongue low as if to say “ah” or “oh”
Along with this, the jaw should be low, teeth distance resulting in roughly the space of a finger

What the deal with these valves?

Tubas may utilize either piston valves (like trumpet/euphonium/baritone) or rotary valves (like horn).

Piston valves allow for faster action while rotary valves allow for a smoother legato style.

Some tubas (and euphs) have 4 valves to extend the range chromatically below low E. Also, it can be used for more desirable intonation on 1-3 valve combination notes (use 4 alone) or 1-2-3 valve combination notes (use 2-4)

Tuba Emboucure (cont.)

The aperture is the sole point of resistance, as everything else should remain as open as possible

Watch out for puffing cheeks and encourage firm corners

Lips should not be rolled in on tuba... encourage rolling out slightly, favoring the primary vibration of the lower lip, especially in the lower range.

Baritone or Euphonium?

Baritone horns are more cylindrical than conical. The bell typically arcs forward.

Euphoniums are throughly more conical, allowing for a richer tone. The bell is typically upright, resembling a tuba.

Both use the same mouthpiece as trombone, though in general, a deeper cup size is desirable for baritone/euph.

Tuba Tonguing

Different than other brass instrument in that:

Back and forth motion for much of the lower range of the tuba (tho, tha, thu)

Upper range is more up and down (toe, tah, tu)

Fingerings

Fingerings for the baritone/euphonium are the same as tuba, *except* for the fact that they are one octave higher than the tuba.

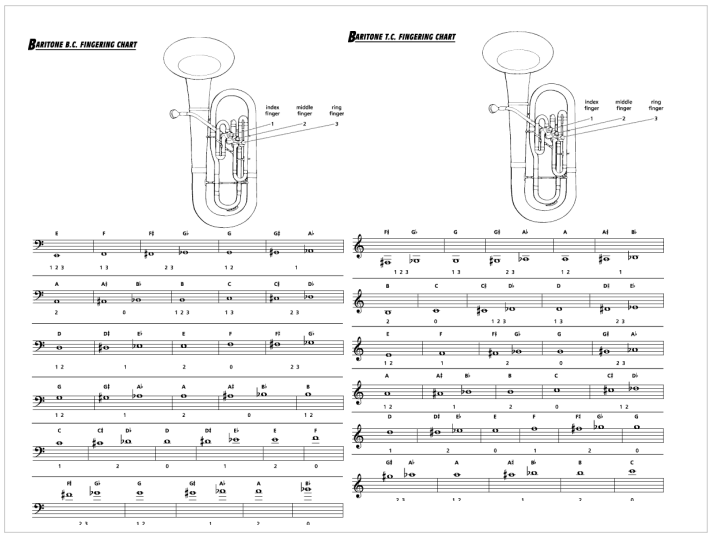
The fingerings for baritone/euph/tuba are the same as trumpet, except these fingers are used a whole step below the fingerings for trumpet.
EXAMPLE:

Low D4 on trumpet = 1-3 / Low C3 on euph = 1-3 / Low C2 on tuba = 1-3

Treble Clef Baritone?! (T.C.)

Because the fingerings are identical to trumpet (except off by a note), music publishers will often include a “Baritone T.C.” part in band scores.

This is meant to quickly transition trumpet players switching to baritone, getting them reading music and playing on the instrument in band quickly, circumnavigating the problem of simultaneously learning a new clef while playing on a new instrument. BE CAUTIOUS to not let students become too dependent on these parts – they ultimately need to learn bass clef.



Euphonium Compensating System

The compensating system on some euphoniums adds length for certain valve combinations to alleviate intonation problems. For instance, a low C on a euphonium with a compensating system with be fingered 1-3 (the normal fingering) with the 4th compensating valve.

The compensating valve is not in alignment with the other three valves... it is off to the right side and played with the left index finger.