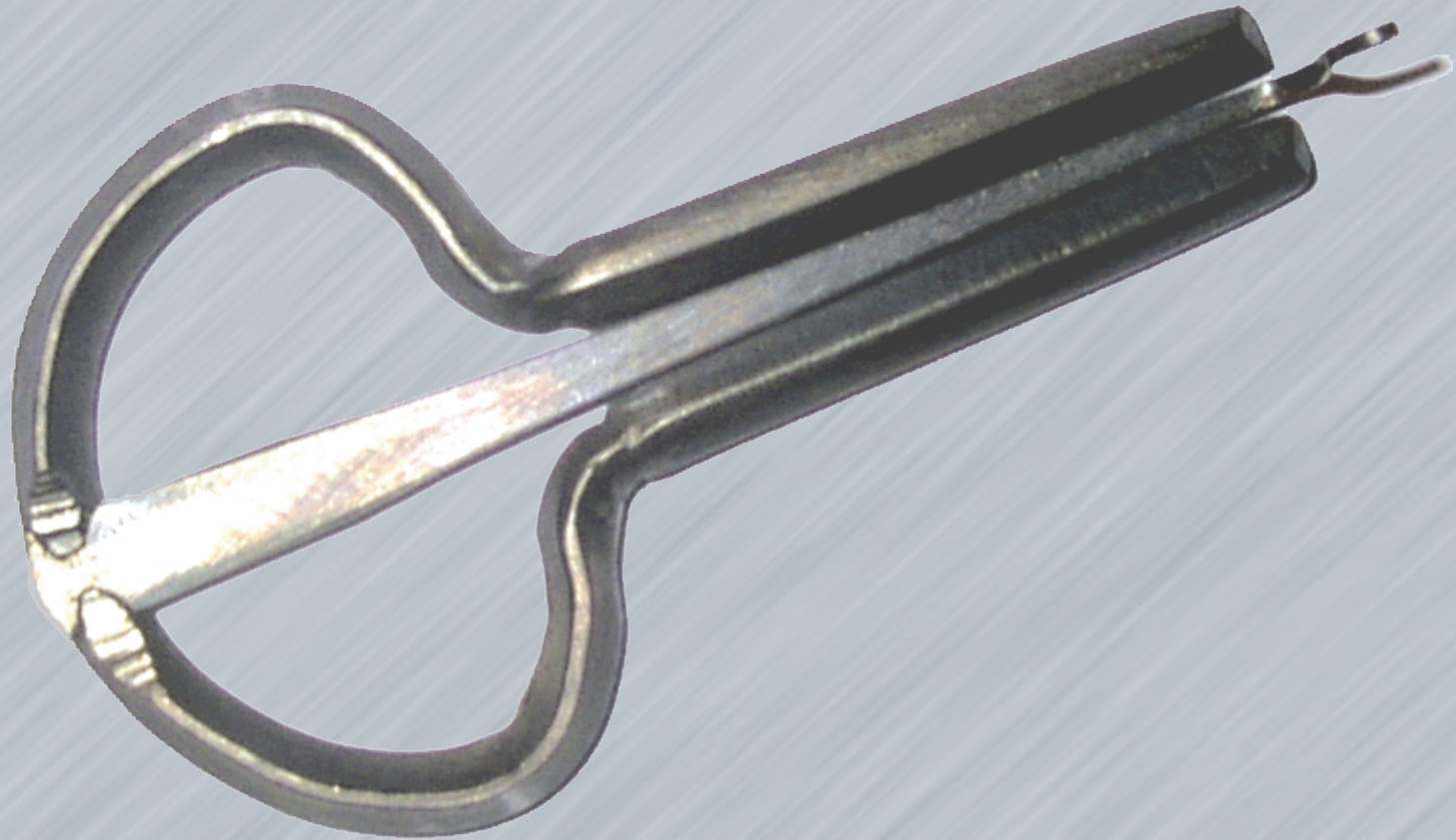
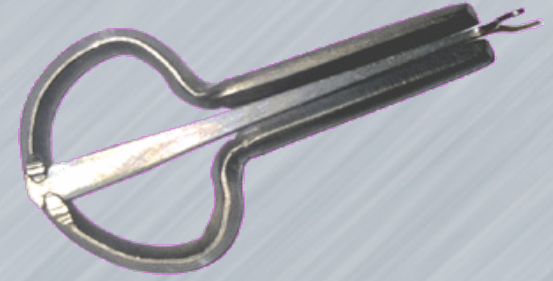


How To Play The Steel Trump



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How To Play The Steel Trump



A Tutorial

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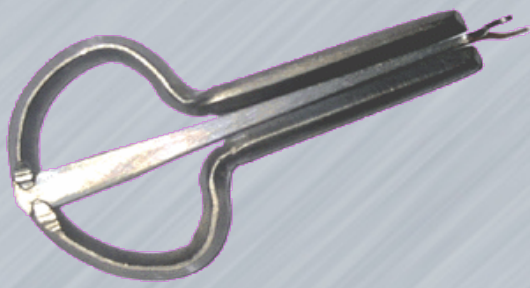
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How To Play The Steel Trump



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Mark D. Poss

Mouth Music Press Co-owner

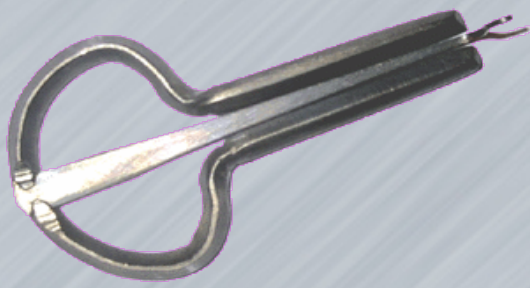


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How To Play The Steel Trump



Hosted by

Mark D. Poss

Mouth Music Press Co-owner



Mark is also the Jew's Harp Guild newsletter editor and webmaster (www.jewsharpguild.org)



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Why Do We Call It A Trump



- A TRUMP is a small magical, musical instrument, also referred to as Jew's Harp, Jaw Harp or Juice Harp, among many hundreds of other names around the world. The more ancient name of "TRUMP" is gaining acceptance among scholars (from Old English). The names may be based in **Language, Country, Region or Culture** and may reflect a **general name** for the instrument or a **specific type or shape**.

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How To Play The Steel Trump



- Here's a sample of the types of trumps that can be played using the advice in this tutorial. Some are brass and steel.



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What We'll Cover



- **Basic Techniques**

- Trump Parts
- Holding the Trump
- Positioning the Trump
- Plucking the Trump
- Fundamental tone
- Basic sounds
- Using your breath

- **Advanced Techniques**

- Plucking – In and/or out – various styles
- Advanced breath control – Inhale/Exhale for accents/sustain
- Using your thumb, tongue, and lips to change tone
- Putting all the advanced techniques together

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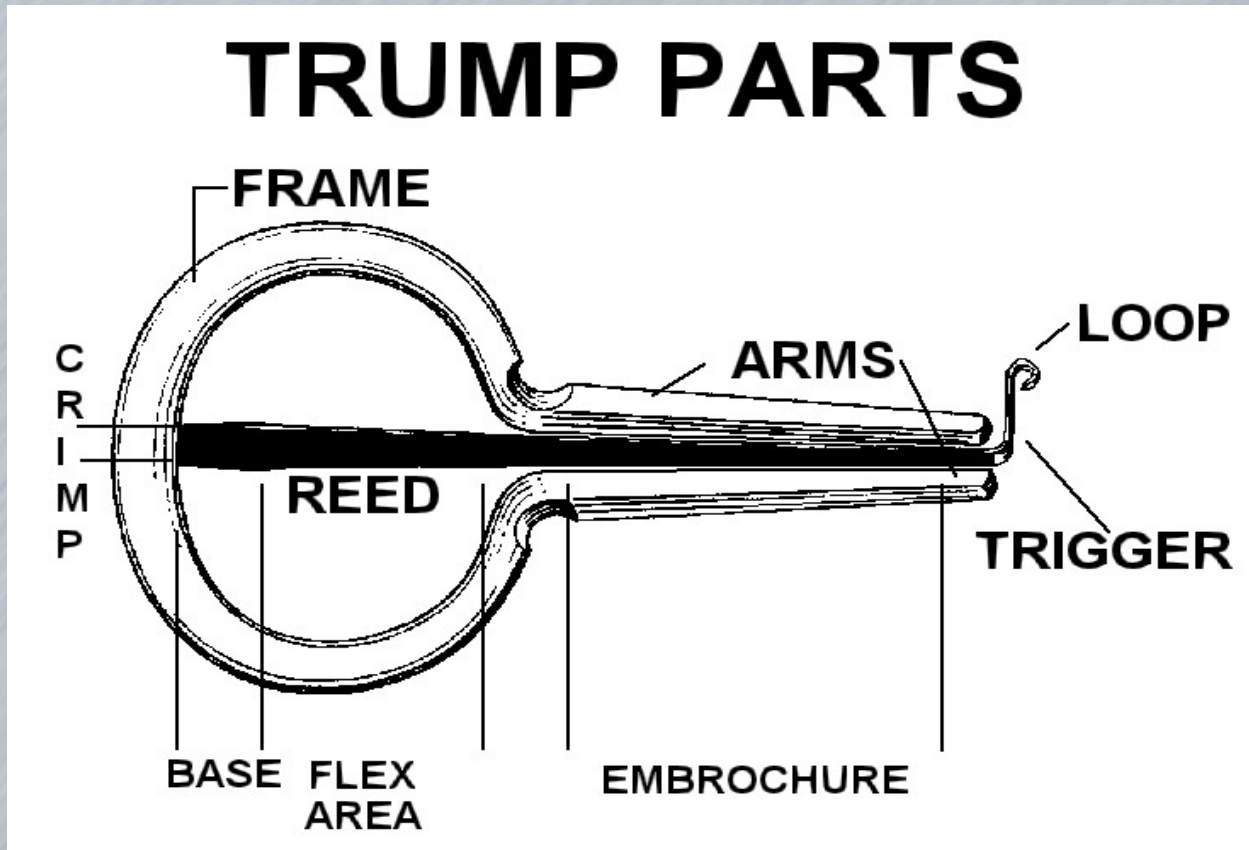
How To Play The Steel Trump



Parts of the Trump

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Parts of the Trump

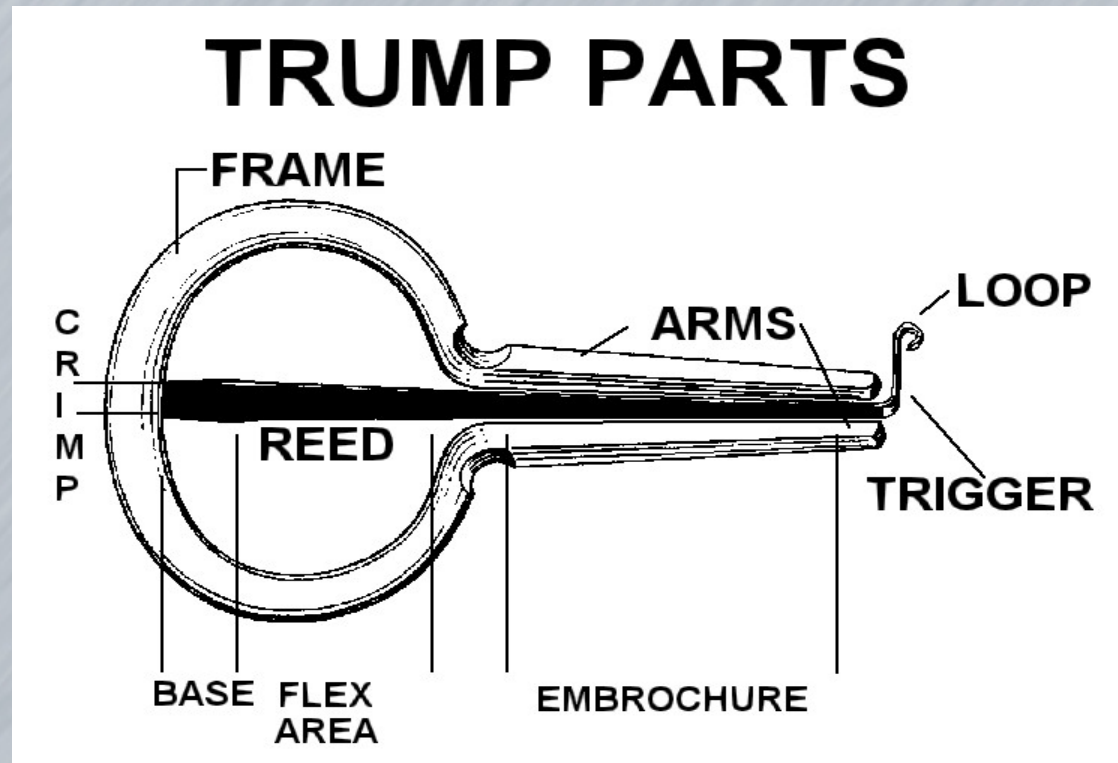


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Parts of the Trump



- The crimp is where the reed is joined to the frame

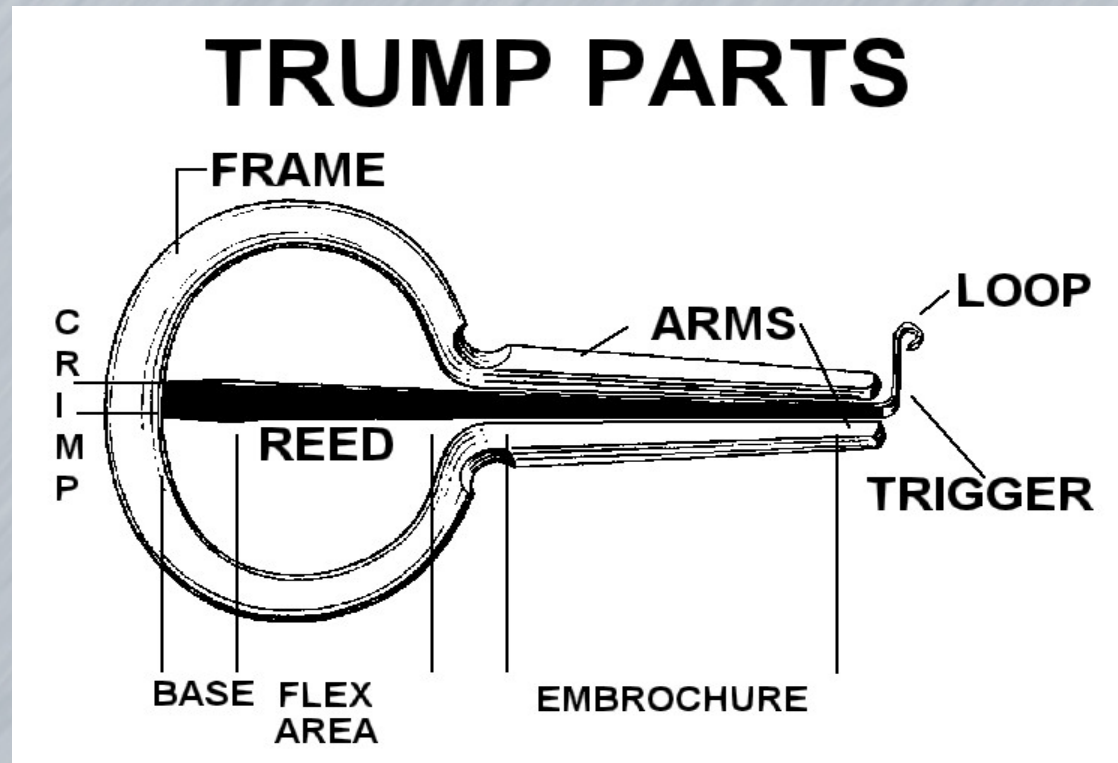


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Parts of the Trump



- The crimp is where the reed is joined to the frame
- The reed is also known as a tongue or lamella

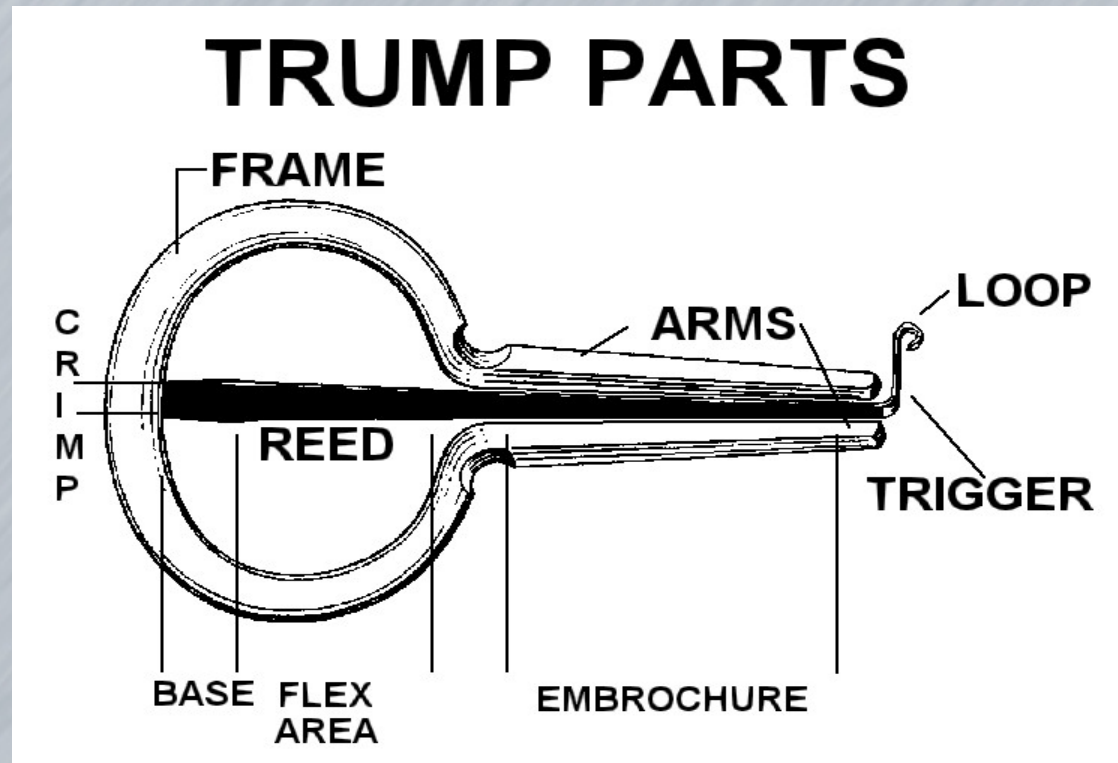


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Parts of the Trump



- The crimp is where the reed is joined to the frame
- The reed is also known as a tongue or lamella
- The embrochure is the "sweet spot" for playing

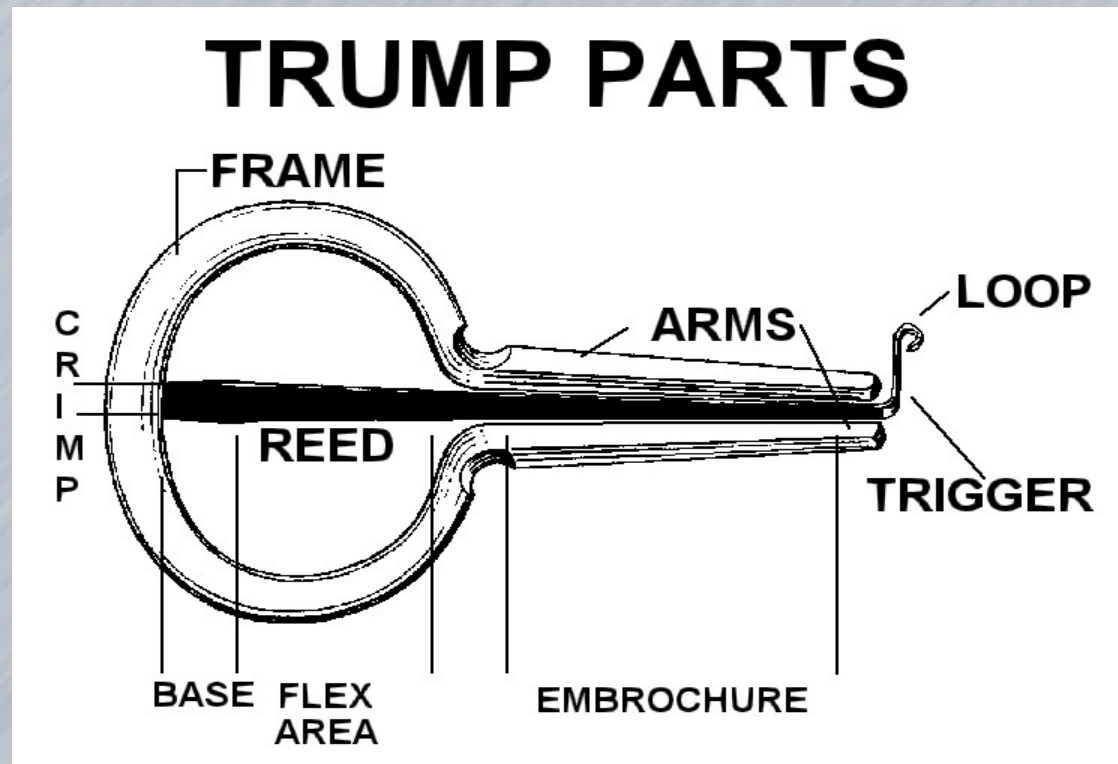


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Parts of the Trump



- The trigger may end in a loop, bend, or stub as the maker deems fit. It is sometimes called a strummer or plucker as well.

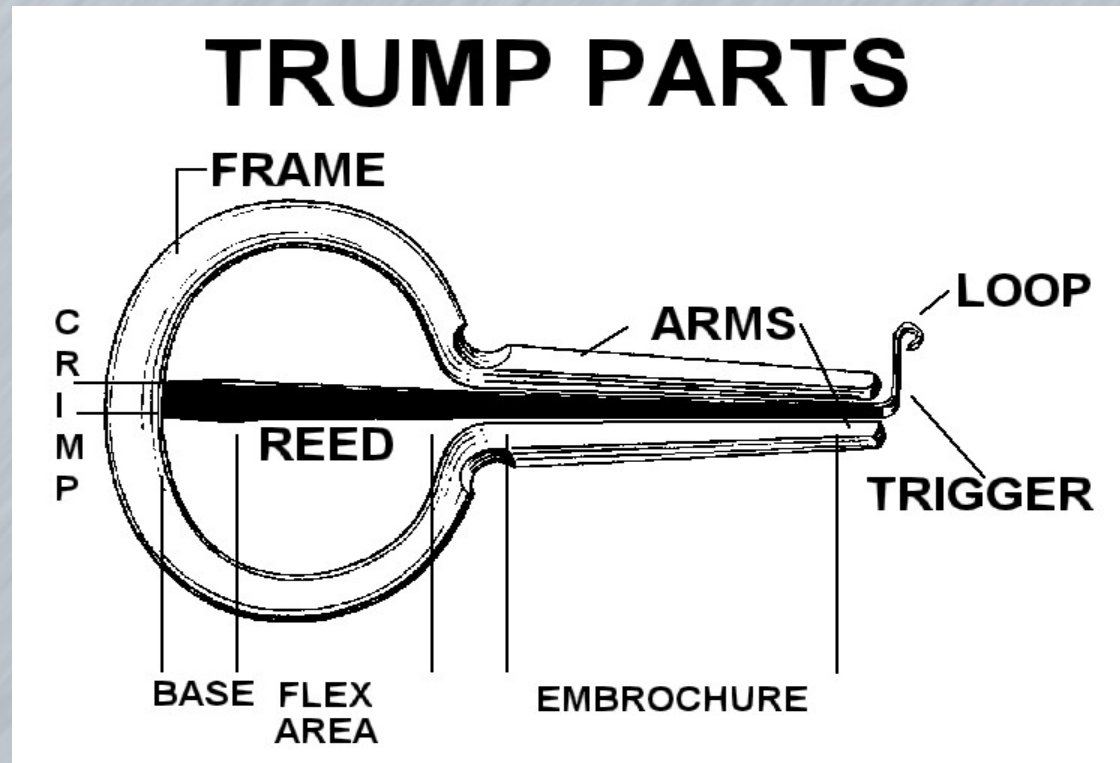


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Parts of the Trump



- The trigger may end in a loop, bend, or stub as the maker deems fit. It is sometimes called a strummer or plucker as well.



- The 'Flex Area' is where the reed gets its range of movement
You can also flex your thumb here to change the pitch

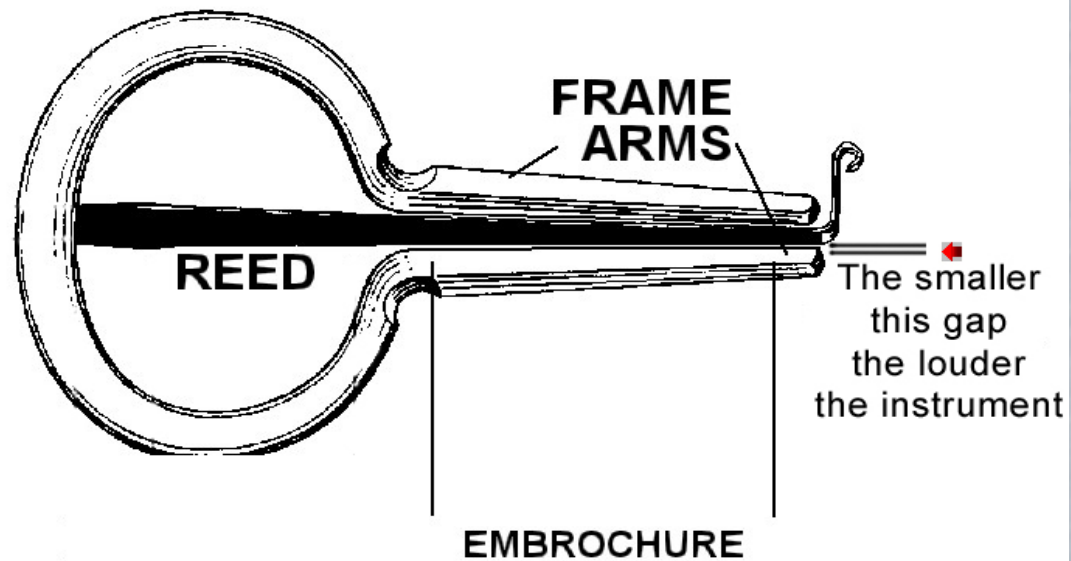
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Parts of the Trump



- Professional trumpets have a very close tolerance between frame arms and reed... So don't squeeze the frame!

Tolerance between reed and frame arms



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How To Play The Steel Trump



How to Hold Your Trump

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How To Play The Steel Trump



How to Hold Your Trump

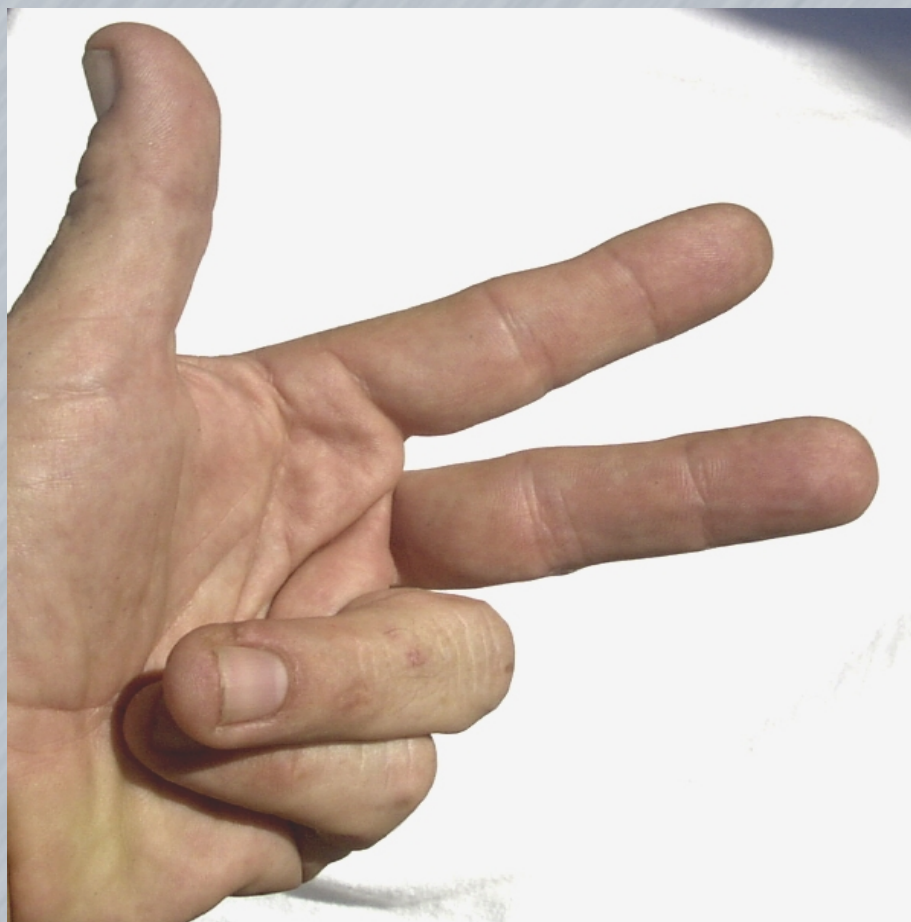
We're using a Hörzing Coal Black
Trump for this presentation
(that's it in the upper right corner)

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How to Hold Your Trump



- Set your left hand and fingers as seen in the photo to the right (right handers).

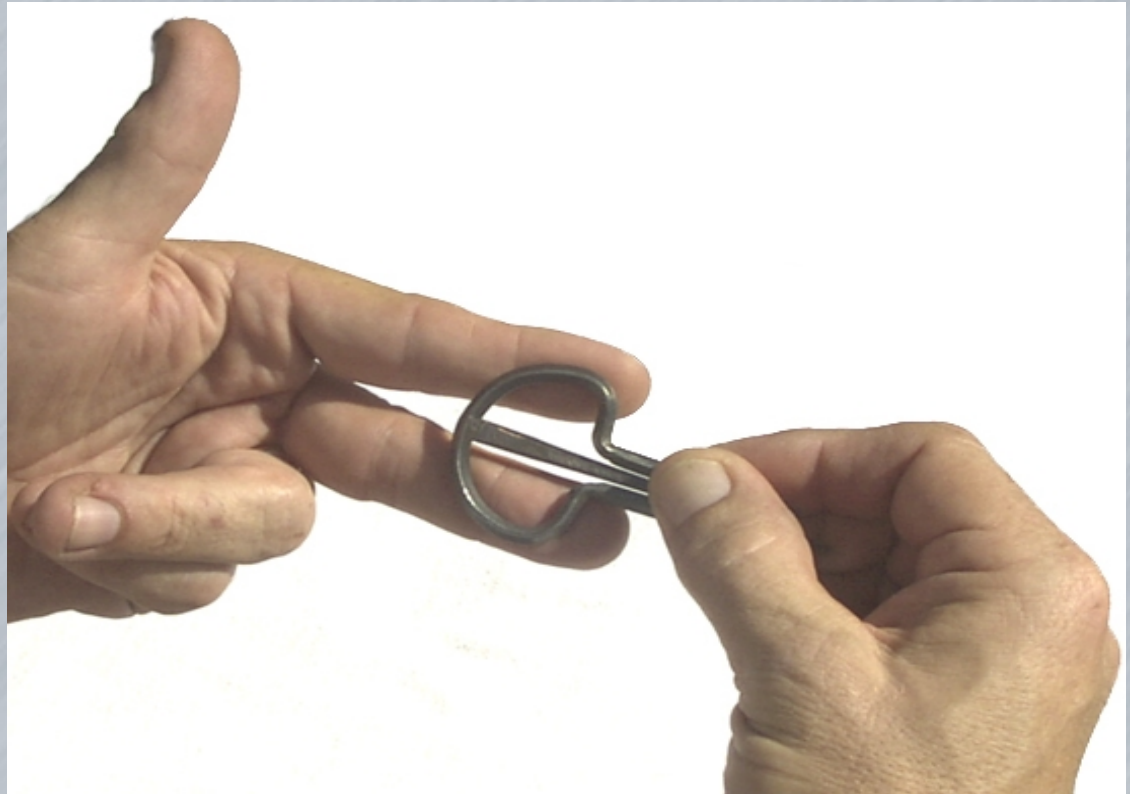


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How to Hold Your Trump



- Place the trump, trigger pointed away from you and towards the right, with the wide part of the crimp end laying on the extended fingertips.



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How to Hold Your Trump



- Close your thumb to grasp the trump above the crimp. Adjust your fingers to just curl around the bend of the trump and apply enough pressure to hold the trump between the fingers and the thumb.



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How to Hold Your Trump



- Voila! This is the correct way to hold your trump.

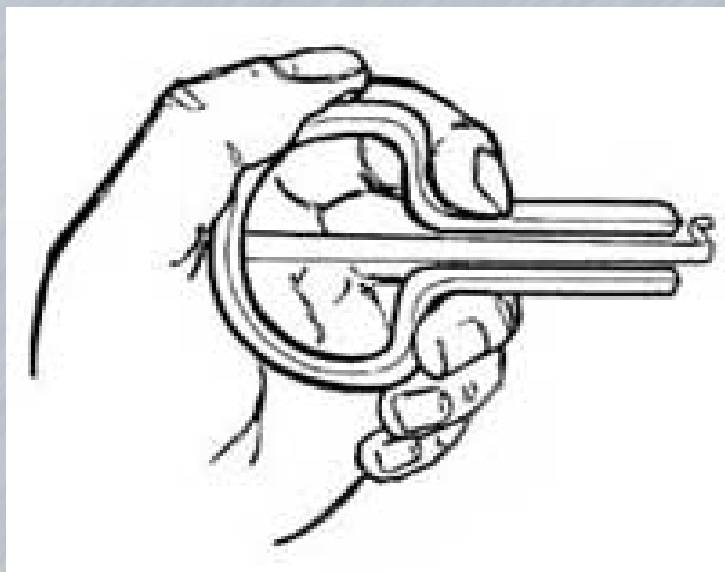


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How to Hold Your Trump



- Two incorrect ways to hold your trump
These methods squeeze the frame into the reed – tink, tink, tink!



▶▶ Click or hit the spacebar to continue

How To Play The Steel Trump



Positioning The Trump

Placing the trump on the teeth

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Positioning The Trump



- Use the correct grip shown in the previous slides. Move the trump to your mouth and press the frame arms along the embrochure firmly (but not too firm) to the teeth. Teeth opened slightly to allow the reed to move between them.



▶▶ Click or hit the spacebar to continue

Positioning The Trump



- Use the correct grip shown in the previous slides. Move the trump to your mouth and press the frame arms along the embrochure firmly (but not too firm) to the teeth. Teeth opened slightly to allow the reed to move between them.

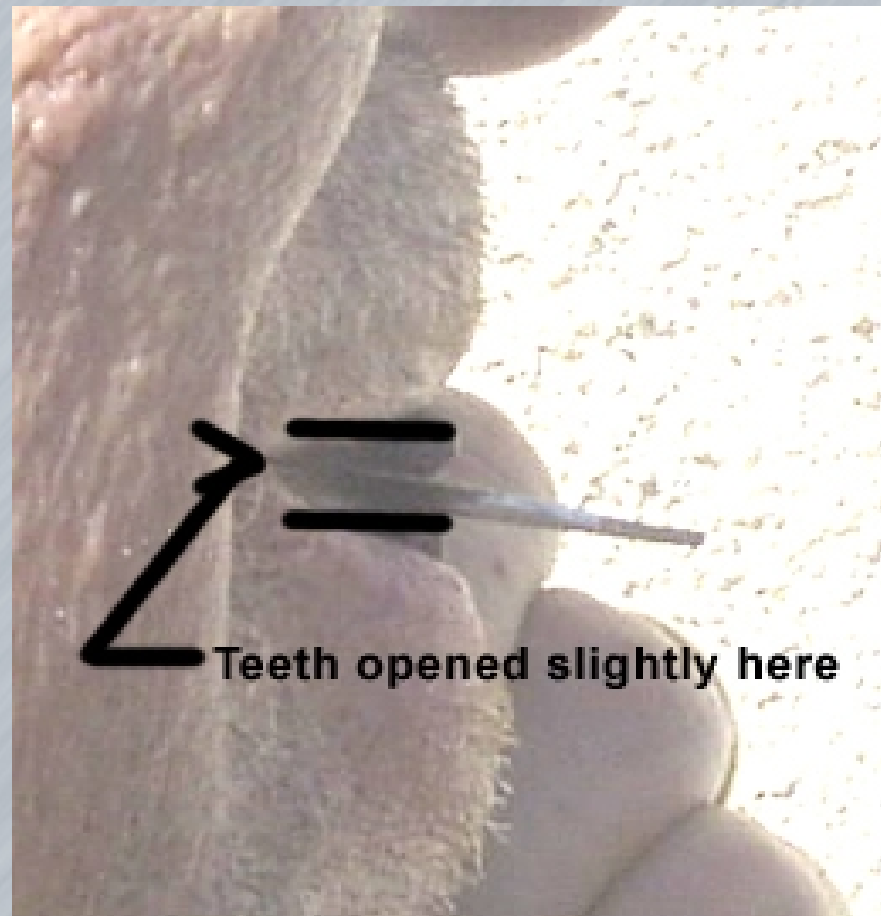


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Positioning The Trump



- Use the correct grip shown in the previous slides. Move the trump to your mouth and press the frame arms along the embrochure firmly (but not too firm) to the teeth. Teeth opened slightly to allow the reed to move between them.

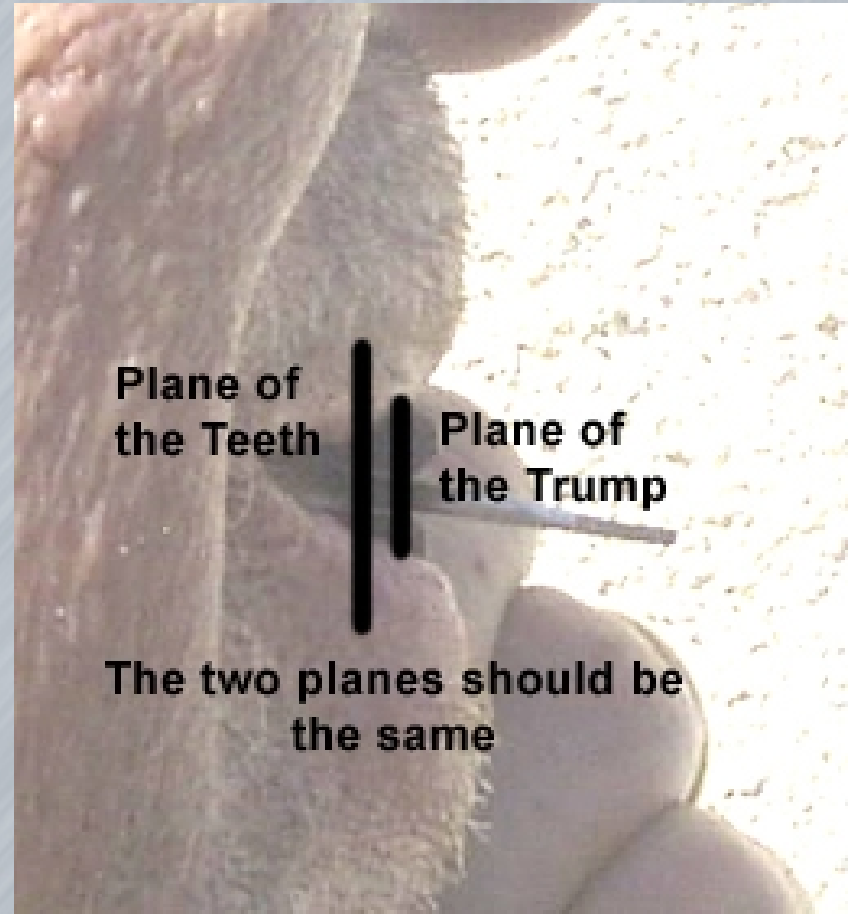


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How To Play The Steel Trump



- The frame arms should rest on your teeth so the trump is exactly vertical in plane with your teeth and face... not twisted so that the reed would hit your teeth or cause a rattle when plucked. **Go ahead** and give the trump a pluck any way you like just to get adjusted.



▶▶ Click or hit the spacebar to continue

How To Play The Steel Trump



Plucking The Trump

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How To Play The Steel Trump



Plucking The Trump

Plucking is the act of making the reed move.
It is also called twanging or stroking the trump.

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Plucking The Trump



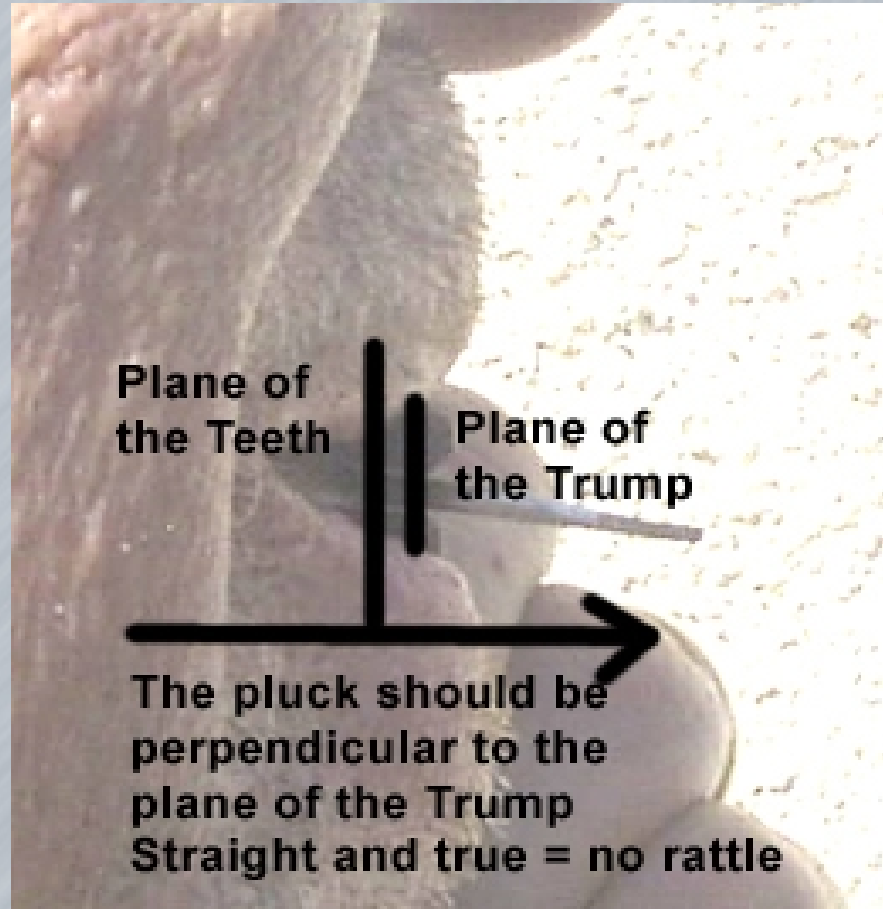
- The Hörzing Coal Black trump we are using here has a looped trigger which allows easy plucking in both directions. All trumps can be plucked this way but some are easier than others.
- In Europe an inward pluck is most common and many European makers design their instruments with this in mind. You should learn all the different strokes (later in advanced techniques) just as a matter of mastery. **We'll start with just a simple outward pluck.**

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Plucking The Trump



- The goal here is to pluck straight and true. Again, the frame arms should rest on your teeth so the trump is exactly vertical in plane with your teeth and face... not twisted so that the reed hits your teeth or cause a rattle when plucked.



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Plucking The Trump



- For this example, position your right hand as if you were pointing to something in the sky. Place your right index finger at the corner of your lip directly behind the trump trigger. Then throw that fingertip forward striking just the trigger.



Pre-pluck Position >>>

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Plucking The Trump



- For this example, position your right hand as if you were pointing to something in the sky. Place your right index finger at the corner of your lip directly behind the trump trigger. Then throw that fingertip forward striking just the trigger.



Post-pluck Position >>>

▶▶ Click or hit the spacebar to continue

Plucking The Trump



- Try this a few more times



▶▶ Click or hit the spacebar to continue

Plucking The Trump



- There are several different methods of plucking. We'll cover these in the advanced techniques... but here are some samples.



Inward pluck
Index finger

<<< Front view

Side view >>>



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Plucking The Trump



- There are several different methods of plucking. We'll cover these in the advanced techniques... but here some samples.

Inward pluck mid-finger



Dead-hand pluck – draw the wrist backward



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How To Play The Steel Trump



Fundamental Tone

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Fundamental Tone



- Pluck without using any breath (no inhale or exhale). The tone you hear is the “Fundamental” tone (the basic pitch or key) of the instrument. From here we can apply breath control, mouth changes with vowel sounds, tongue alterations or combinations of all these to alter the pitch and timbre of the tone.

(Timbre [pronounced tamb'r] = Tone quality, characteristic instrumental sound.)

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How To Play The Steel Trump



Basic Sounds

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How To Play The Steel Trump



Basic Sounds

Using vowel sounds, tongue, and breath
to alter the tone and timbre

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Basic Sounds – Vowels



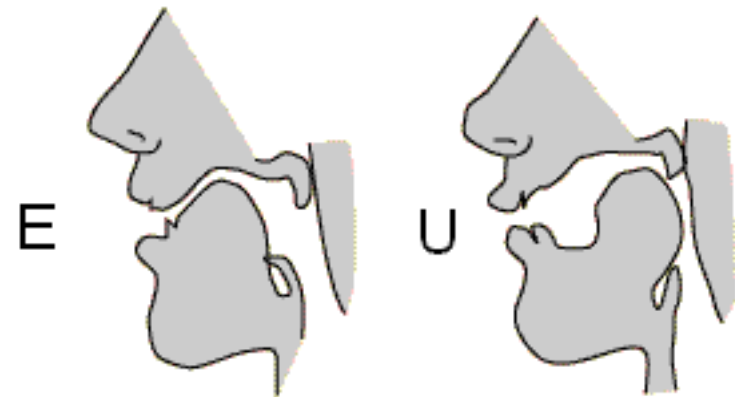
- **As you pluck – slowly, then quickly – shape the vowel sounds in your mouth. A... Ē... I... O... U... Repeat at different speeds and combinations. Notice the effects.**
- An 'A' kind of maintains the fundamental tone with a upward shift in pitch at the end.
- An 'Ē' raises the pitch slightly.
- The 'I' and 'U' kind of go up-n-down in pitch with a timbre difference between them.
- The 'O' basically maintains the fundamental.

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Basic Sounds – Tongue



- Hopefully you noticed how your tongue moves to create the vowels, especially when making an 'Ē' – it raises and moves forward toward the teeth, effectively making the cavity of the mouth smaller and raising the pitch of the trump. The 'U' shape pulls the tongue backward making the mouth cavity larger and pitch lower.



Search the web for
“vocal formants”
for more information

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Basic Sounds – Tongue



- Now try moving your tongue all over your mouth while plucking. Move it forward to the teeth and give it a little 'flutter' action and observe the tremolo effect.
- The pitch should lower as you move your tongue to the back of your mouth. Try “opening your throat” (Lowering the larynx and raising the soft palate) to find the lowest pitch you can hit, then forward to find the highest.
- Practice, practice, practice. Depending on the instrument you should find at least 5 distinct pitches.

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Basic Sounds – Breath Control



- **Breath control** is perhaps the most important skill that effects the tone and timbre of the Trump. Its application varies from instrument to instrument (low-pitched trumps use different breath control techniques than do high-pitched trumps) and in the desired end result (i.e. accent versus sustain). Well used breath control adds a lot of variety to a trump performance. Let's look at the two basic uses.

Accents Sustain

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Basic Sounds – Breath Control



- **Accents** – An 'accent' is a high-light or stress to a note or pluck. Accents may be applied with either an exhale or inhale. Each have different effect.
- Pluck – wait a half-second – then **exhale** sharply. You'll hear the accent, and notice that the exhale almost stopped the reed's vibration completely.
- Now Pluck and **exhale** sharply at the same time. The effect is much the same but a bit more robust.

▶▶ Click or hit the spacebar to continue

Basic Sounds – Breath Control



Now let's do the same using an inhale

- Pluck – wait a half-second – then **inhale** sharply. You'll hear the accent, and notice that the exhale almost stopped the reed's vibration completely. Also notice the difference in timbre from the exhaled accent.
- Now Pluck and **inhale** sharply at the same time. The effect is much the same but a bit more robust.
- Pluck at different speeds and use both inhale/exhale at different times – try not to hyperventilate!

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Basic Sounds – Breath Control



- **Sustain** – Sustain is the time that you can keep the reed vibrating after it normally would have decayed to a stop. Sustain is accomplished by applying slow air movement – either inhale or exhale – across the reed.
- Different Trumps will decay at different rates and react to slow air movement across the reed differently due to the spacing between frame and reed; reed material, shape, stiffness and length; and overall design of the instrument.

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Basic Sounds – Breath Control



Try this

- Pluck for a fundamental tone – notice how long it takes for the reed to stop vibrating.
- Pluck – after a half-second, exhale as softly as you can across the reed. Notice how long you can keep the reed 'alive.' Repeat until you feel comfortable. Try using different strengths of breath and notice the results.
- Try the same thing again using an exhale.

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Summary



We've covered the basic techniques to Trump playing. Please take the time to practice these, separately and in combination, until you feel comfortable. I hope to continue this tutorial in "Advanced Techniques" very soon. Please contact me, using the Mouth Music Press Feedback Form, with any comments or suggestions.

Until then Happy Trumpin'.

Mark

Co-owner - Mouth Music Press - www.jewsharp.com / www.mouthmusic.com

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