

## 1. *Be Balanced*

All of the individual movements of breathing coalesce into the singular, well coordinated and organic motion of breathing. The motion of breathing is complex but it needn't be confusing, because ultimately, musicians need only cooperate with nature to breathe well. The only improvements to be made are in our cooperation with the process.

In order to breathe well, it is important to achieve muscular freedom throughout your body. One of the keys to achieving muscular freedom is to allow your bony structure to hold up your body. Your skeleton is designed to deliver your weight to the chair or floor in cooperation with gravity, and when you rely upon your bones in this way, you are balanced. There is no need to use muscular work to hold yourself up when you are balanced.

Balance is an internal, lively sensation, not the stagnant holding of a position. You can feel whether or not you are balanced when you have musical movement available to you in any direction. Try it now: as you observe the image, allow your weight to be delivered down to your chair and move in little circles on your rockers. Your rockers are the two rounded bones which make contact with your chair.

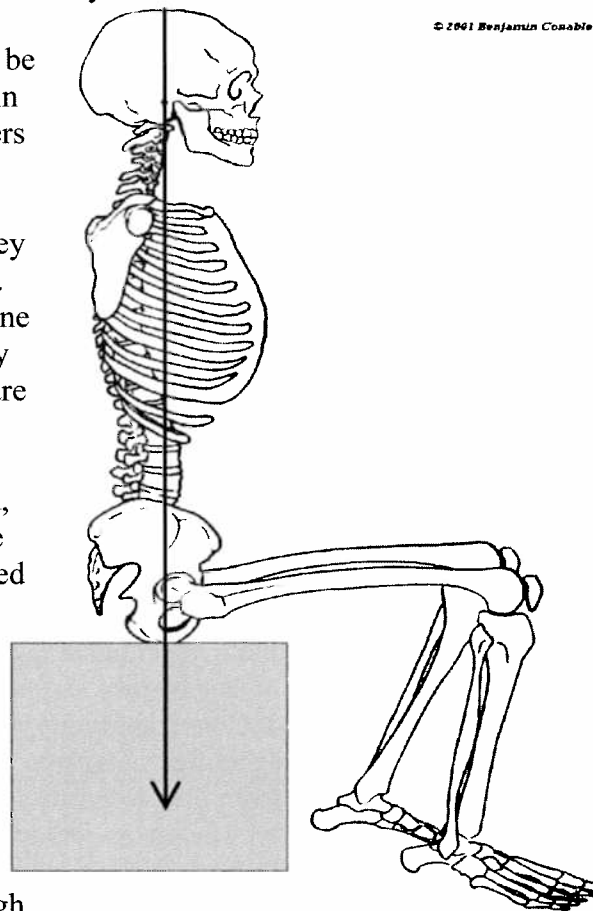
Notice from the image that you don't sit on your legs; they attach to your pelvis above your rockers.

When you are balanced, your spine will be curved, as in the image. Don't try to make your spine straight. When you are balanced, you have the support of your massive lumbar spine (the bottom five large vertebrae). When you are balanced, you can use all of your muscles to create resonance because they are not being used to hold up your body.

If you sit up too straight, as though trying to make your spine straight, it is the postural equivalent of playing sharp. Try it now: sit up too straight and experience sharp sitting. Take a few breaths in this position and notice how it feels to breathe when sitting sharp.

If you slump over, as though relaxing too much, it is the postural equivalent to playing flat. Try it now: slump over and experience flat sitting. Take a few breaths in this position and notice how it feels to breathe when sitting flat. If you are balanced when sitting, it's like sitting in tune. Try it now: allow your bones to support your weight and sit in tune. Breathe in this position and notice how much better it feels to breathe when sitting in tune.

Notice that being balanced is a prerequisite to breathing well. Being balanced is like being in tune—it makes everything else about your playing easier!



# 1. Be Balanced

▲ = Inhale  
Time the inhale so it happens during this beat. Don't breathe in through the instrument.

□ = Blow  
Blow air through the instrument vigorously without creating a tone. Finger the valves as though playing the indicated pitch.

♩ = 80

Blow

Play

Blow

Play

*f*

Are you balanced?

*f*

Sit or stand in tune.

*f*

Let your bones hold you up.

*f*

Feel your weight being delivered through your lumbar spine.

*f*

Remain balanced as you blow.

*f*

Being balanced helps you achieve maximum resonance.

*f*

Now play these long tones and notice how being balanced improves your sound.

Turn off the metronome.

*mf*

Feel free to play additional long tones.