Dear Horn Student,

Congratulations, and welcome to the world of the horn! You have chosen to learn and play a truly amazing instrument. There are a few things you should know about the horn, however, and this information packet will be an excellent resource for all of your new horn player needs.

In this packet you will find information about the history of the horn, different types of horn, good horn brands, some playing information, and a fingering chart. You should keep this packet with the rest of your band music so you can refer to it at any time.

The horn is a difficult instrument to play at times, but well worth the effort. No other wind instrument has the same dark, mellow sound as the horn. Again, congratulations on your decision to play the horn, and good luck!!

Sincerely,
Rebecca Partlow
(Fellow musician and horn player)
Horn History

• The Very Beginning:
  o The first horns were hunting horns, used by hunters to communicate while riding on horseback through the woods. Hunters used different horn calls (or signals) to “talk” to one another, kind of like the Morse code system we use today. Some horn calls meant “come this way”, or “the hunt is over”, or even “help”. The sound of the horn carried well over long distances, so if the party of hunters were separated, they could easily find one another again by following the sound of the horn.

• How the Horn Became Part of the Orchestra:
  o There is a story about a man named Count Franz Anton von Sporck, who was a German noble in the early 1600s. The story goes that while on the hunt, Count von Sporck loved hearing the horn so much that he demanded that two of his men be taught to play the instrument. These two men played the horn all over Europe as the traveled with Count von Sporck and the horn slowly spread in popularity. By 1650, the horn had begun making an appearance in the orchestra.

• What the First Horn Looked Like:
  o The first horn that was played in the orchestra didn’t look much like the horns of today. The first hornists played on what is now called a natural horn. This horn had no valves like the horns of today.

  Because there were no valves, horn players could not play very many notes. This lead to the development of a technique called “stopping”. The player closes their hand over the mouth of the bell, and this raises the note. In the way, horn players could play more notes.

• Where Does the Right Hand Go?:
  o A horn player places their right hand inside the bell of the horn. To correctly place your right hand in the bell, let your hand hang down by your side, fingers pointing to the floor. Notice the shape your hand makes – slightly curved, but very natural. Keeping your hand in this shape, place your hand against the far side of the bell, with the knuckle of your index finger holding most of the weight. Hand position is very important because it has a huge impact on your sound. Good hand position will give you a lovely, mellow sound. Poor hand position will give you either a stuffy sound, or a sharp, rough sound.
• What horns are Like Today:
  o The two most popular styles of horns are the single and double horn. A single horn is
    normally in the key of F, and is a good horn for beginners (especially for new
    musicians in the sixth grade). The single horn has three rotary valves (or rotors), that
    are played with the left hand. The right hand is kept in the bell.

  o The double horn is slightly more complicated. This horn is actually two horns in one.
    The double horn is keyed in Bb and F, and has three rotary valves and a thumb
    trigger. The double horn has two stacks of slides connected to every rotor instead of
    one, like the single horn. The top set of slides is the F horn, the bottom set the Bb
    horn. The trigger lets the air into one horn or the other. When the trigger is not
    pressed, you are playing on the F horn. The F horn is used for low notes. When the
    trigger is pressed, you are playing on the Bb horn. The Bb horn is great for high
    notes. The trigger is used for G# and higher. Although the double horn is two horns in
    one, it is played like one horn.
• Why is it Called a French Horn?:
  o The horn is not called the “French” horn because it is French. Actually, it’s German! The name “French horn” came about because composers used to write “French horn” in music because the French had a different style of playing the horn than other musicians, and the composer wanted that sound. The correct name for a horn is just that – Horn.

• Good Horn Brands:
  o After you have played horn for a bit and you have fallen in love with it, the time may be right to purchase your own horn. This is not a requirement, because most schools (even colleges, like WKU) have horns that you can play on for free. However, if you decide that you want to purchase a horn of your own, there are a few names you should know.
    ▪ Holton 177/179: A wonderful horn that would last through a college career. Excellent style of horn, and Holton produces quality instruments (I play a Holton 177).
    ▪ Holton 277/279: Just like the 177 and 179 except these two models come with a detachable bell. While the detachable bell is convenient for travel, there is always a risk of stripping the bell, so extra caution is needed when playing a horn with a detachable bell. Also, they are much more expensive.
    ▪ Conn 8D/10D: Another good horn that will last through a college career. Conns and Holtons are very similar, it just depends on which style fits you the best.
    ▪ Hoyer: A German horn company. Also a good name in horns.
    ▪ Alexander: A British company that produces quality horns.
    ▪ Lawson: The Cadillac of horns! These are hand made, and cost about $12,000 new. Professionals only!
F Horn: Use the upper fingerings.
Bb Horn: Use the lower fingerings.
The "T" only applies to double horns.

Double Horn: You may use the Bb-Horn fingerings by depressing the thumb valve.

Notes normally played on the slide of the horn are indicated with a "T" before the fingering.