

Breath Builder



The Breath Builder is a self-teaching device. Its primary lesson is the effortless, complete exchange of air at either end of the breath, without any holding or physical tension. It is a visual aid for learning the concept of breath support and also aids improvement of breathing efficiency and of lung capacity.

Developed by the late bassoonist Harold Hansen of Las Vegas, Nevada, the Breath Builder is a translucent plastic cylinder closed on the bottom with 3 holes on top and a ping-pong ball inside. The 3 holes and the 2 accompanying plastic tubes with different diameters can be used to control resistance to your air movement. The object is to keep the ping-pong ball at the top of the cylinder while blowing into the Breath Builder and also while sucking the breath back through the device. The air is always moving in or out, never stopping. Very simply, if the blowing is steady and the breath exchanges well, the ping-pong ball stays at the top of the plastic cylinder.

Benefits of the Breath Builder

A common musical benefit is increased phrase length. Proper use of the Breath Builder permits full exchange of oxygen in each breath; revitalizing cells and facilitating clear thinking and promoting good health.

Tips for Use of the Breath Builder:

I suggest using the larger tube. The smaller one tends to increase physical tension. Begin by blowing into the tube to raise the ping-pong ball to the top of the plastic cylinder. Once you have mastered this, while the ping-pong ball is at the top, try sucking the air back through the tube without letting the ball drop.

Blow from the front of your mouth. Try to release the air from your lips. Be careful not to overdo. Begin with one or two exchanges of air.

Try sucking the air back from the tube and then performing a task; play or sing a phrase or execute some other physical action while you release the breath you just sucked throughout the tube.

Be sure the sternum does not compress as you blow into the machine. This causes unnecessary tension and inefficient release of the breath. Allow your spine to lengthen as you release each breath.

Caution: Avoid repeating this process until becoming dizzy. Stop immediately if you feel dizzy and rest until the feeling passes. While learning to use the breath builder, please sit down.