Long Tones Volume 1

Make Your Sax Sing!

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Make Your Sax Sing!

10 exercises to transform your long-tone practice

by Dan Forshaw

You gotta play long tones...

Long tones are something all players of wind instruments need to practice. However over my twenty years of teaching, I've noticed that as woodwind players, we often 'skip' over something that our brass playing friends can't, namely long tones.

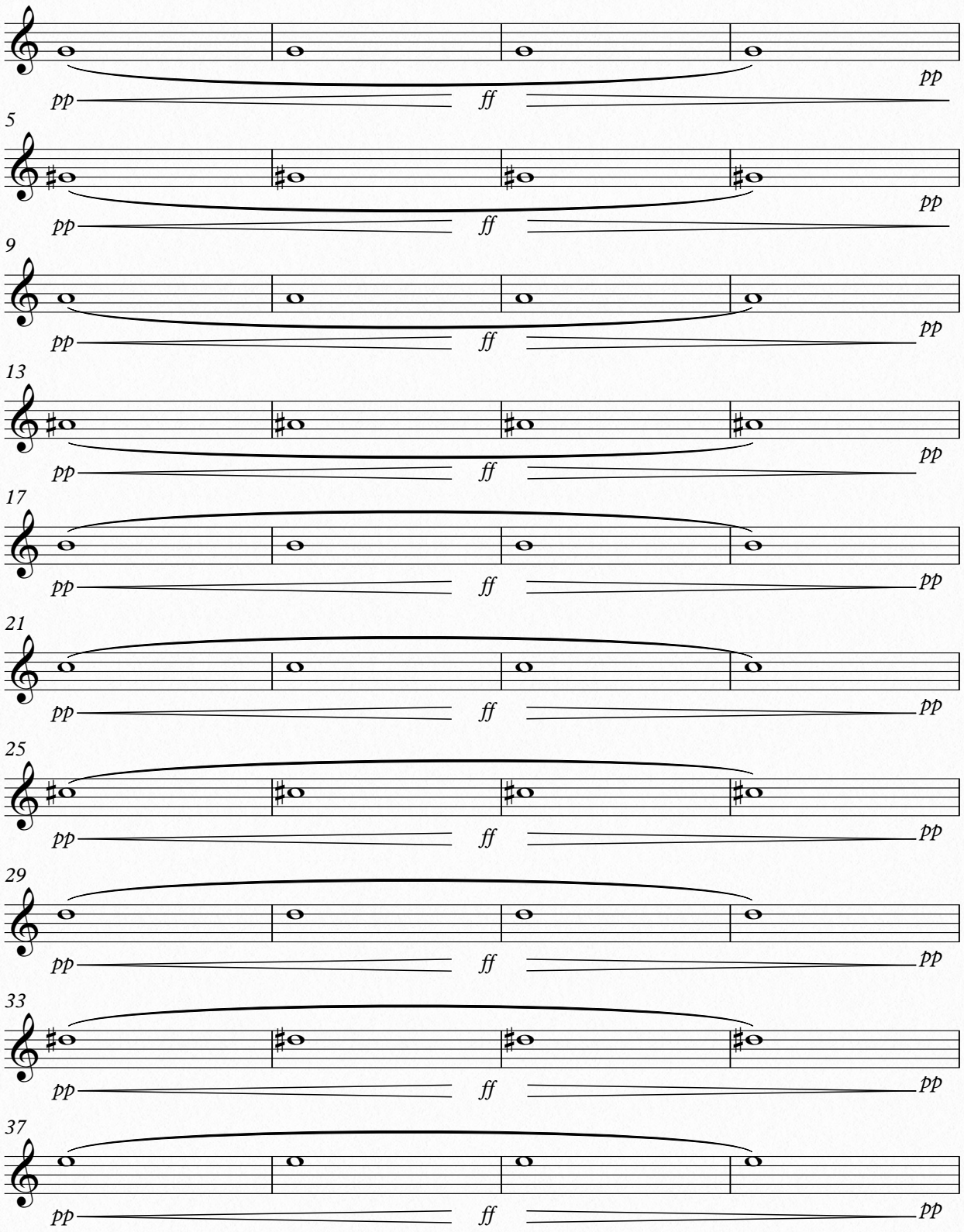
For a number of years I've conducted clinics and worked with a number of jazz ensembles across the world and the one thing I often notice is how much better the saxophones & clarinets can read vs the trumpets and trombones, but the brass players have better tones and can project their sound so much better.

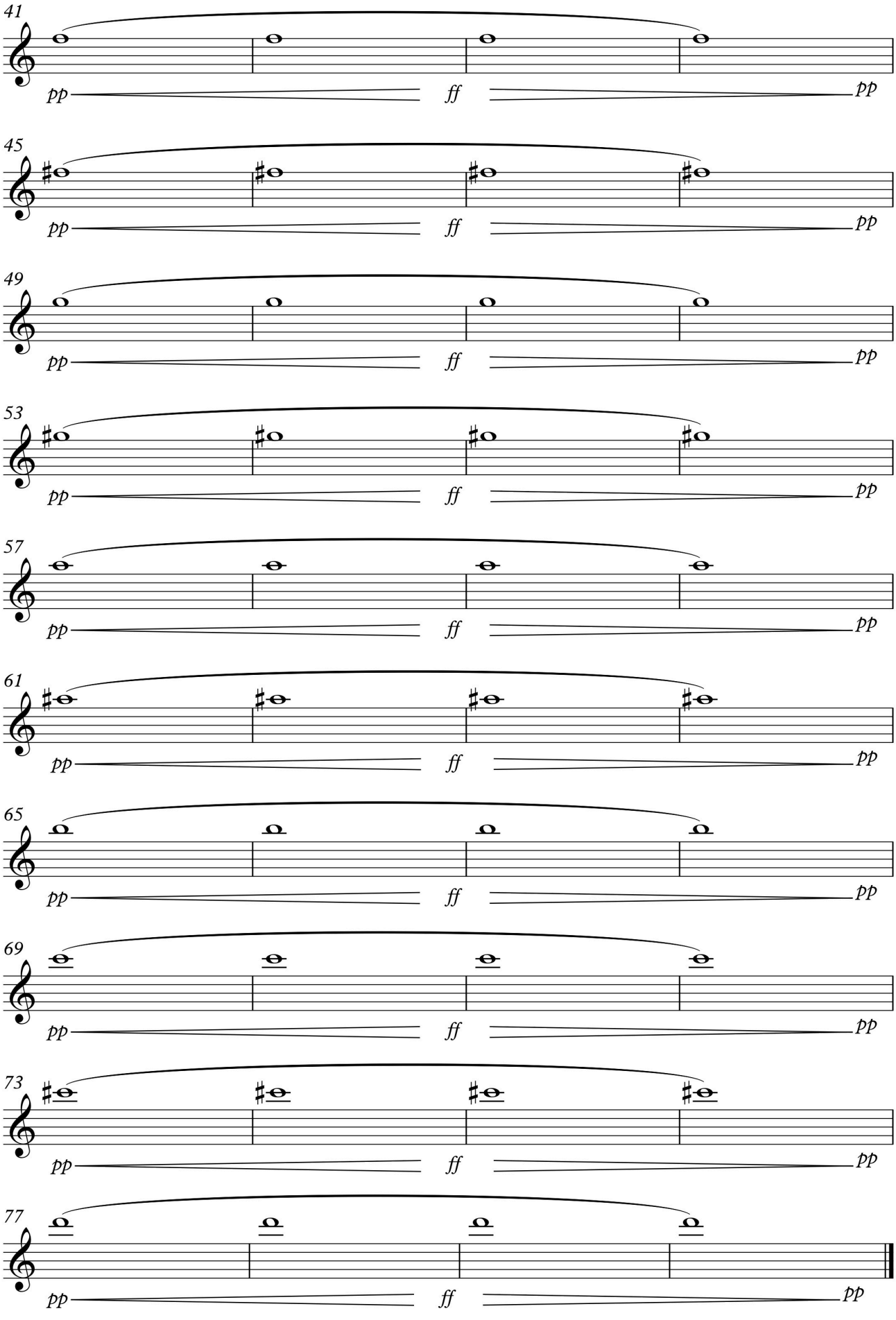
This e-book is a collection of long tone exercises that I've been given over the years and some I've made myself. Branford Marsalis, Eric Alexander and Chris Potter all started their lessons with me by giving me long tones to work on. Find out more at www.cambridgesaxophone.com

This is based on an exercise Branford gave me in 2005 - try and hear the 'centre' of each note and count to eight getting louder, and the from nine to sixteen softer to you can barely hear the note.

Branford Long Tones

As slow as you can - max tempo 55




41
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69
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73
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ff
pp
77
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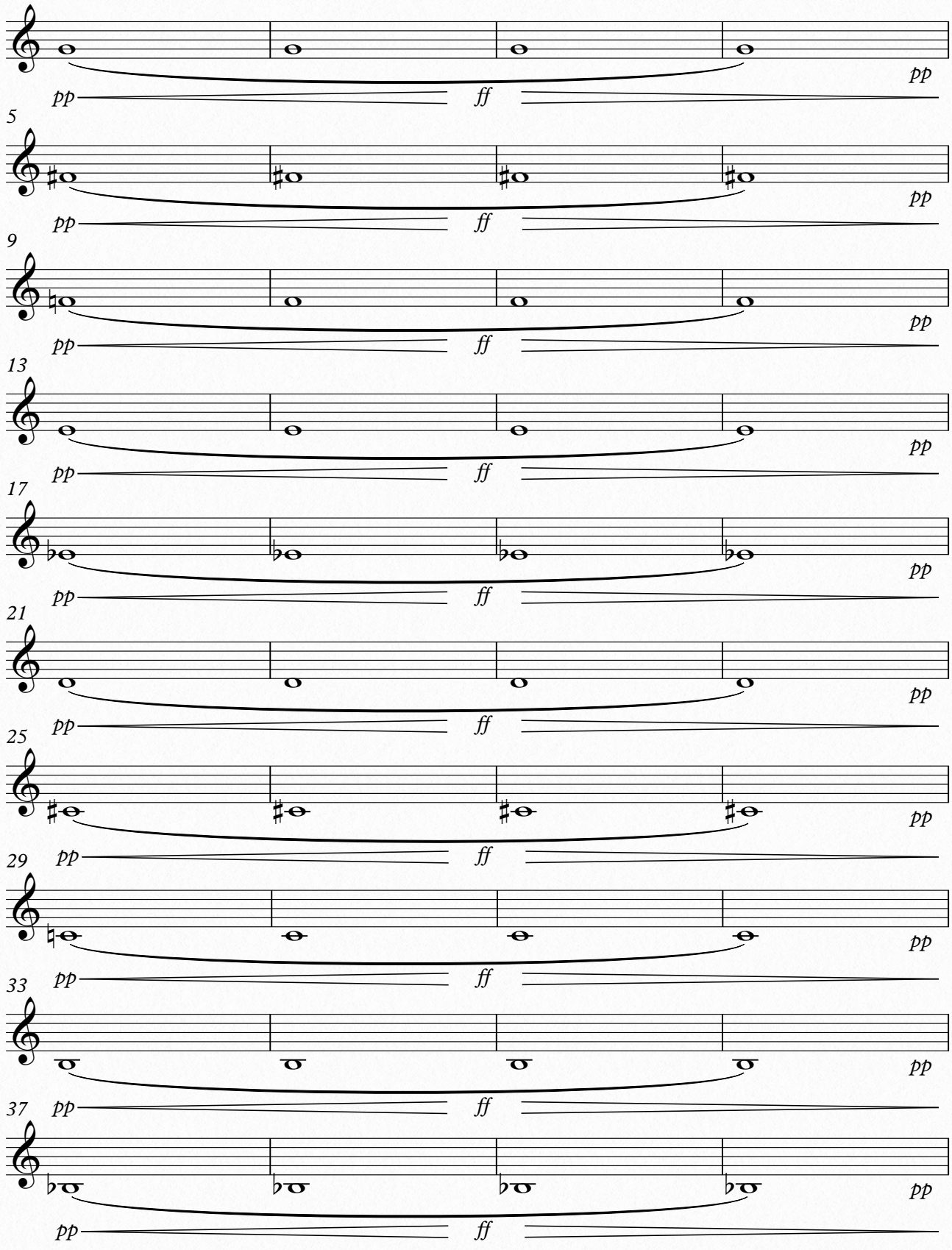
pp

As with the previous exercise, but going down - make sure low D and below don't squeak, or go an octave higher

Branford Long Tones II

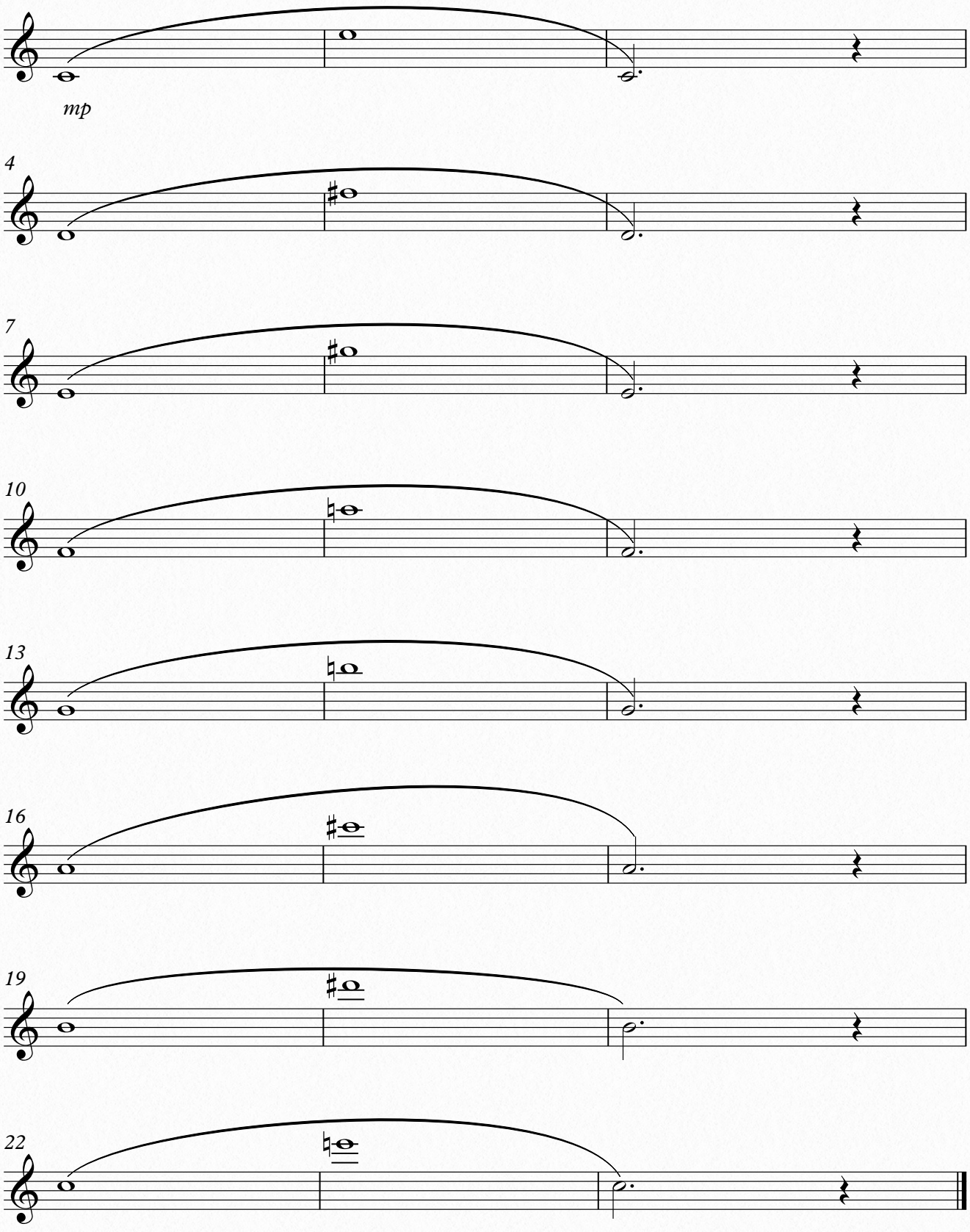
As slow as you can - max tempo 55



Long Tones in Intervals of a 10th

This one can be a killer - keep the corners of your lips back as far as you can & check your tuning!

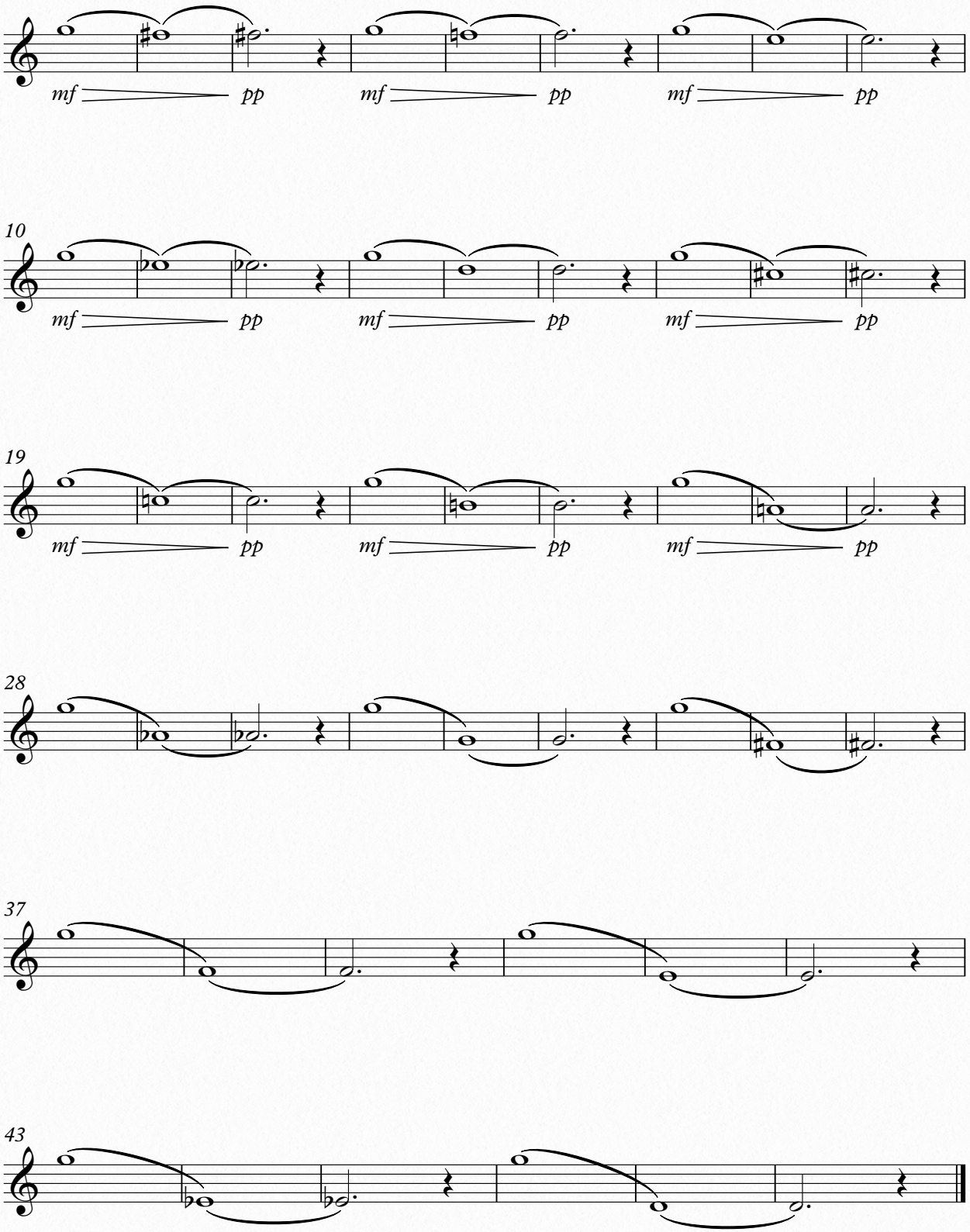
no faster than 60 bpm



Pivot Long Tones

Make sure you don't overblow the lower octave notes!

No faster than 60 bpm



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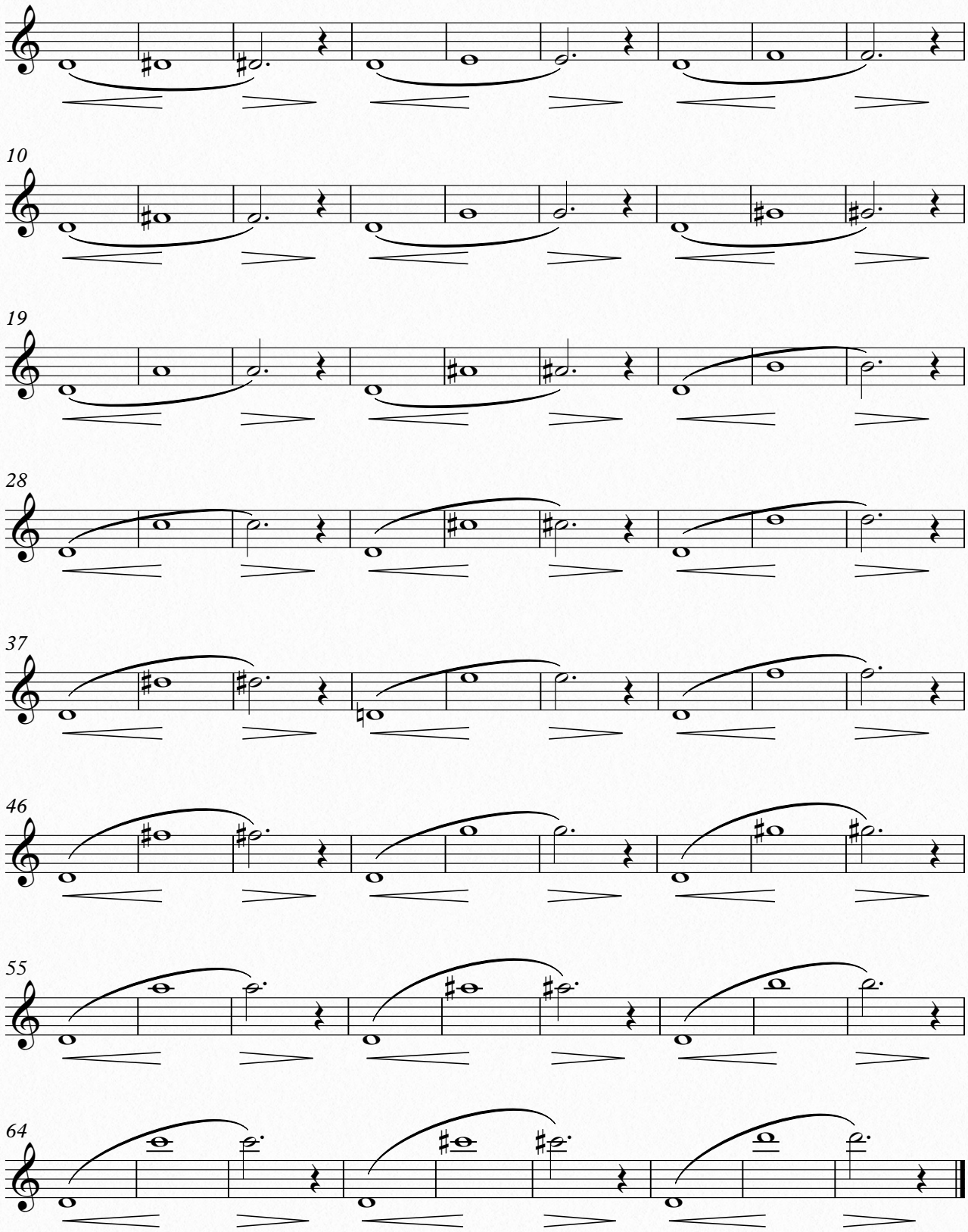
Pivot Long Tones II

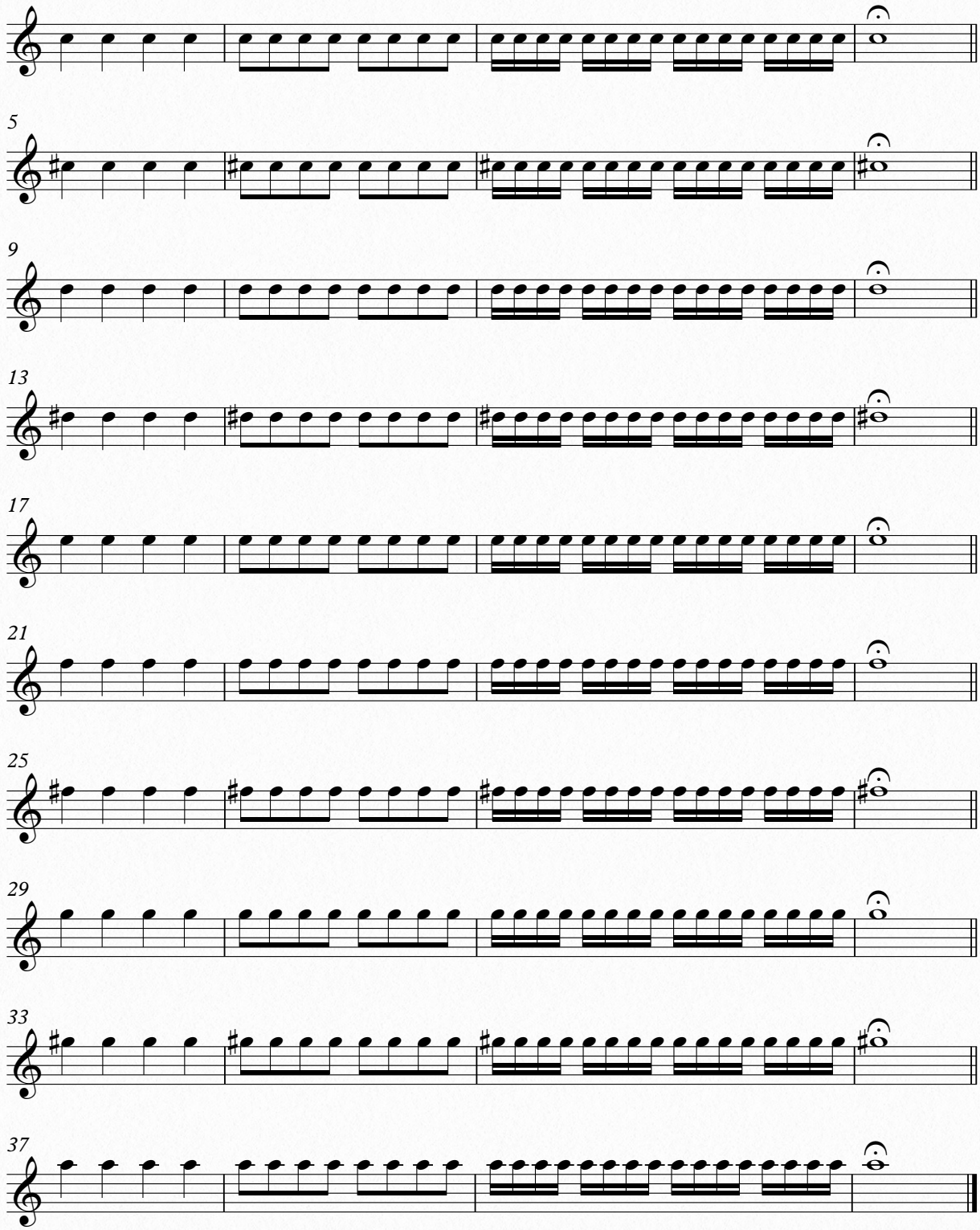
No faster than 55 (but aim to get to 40)



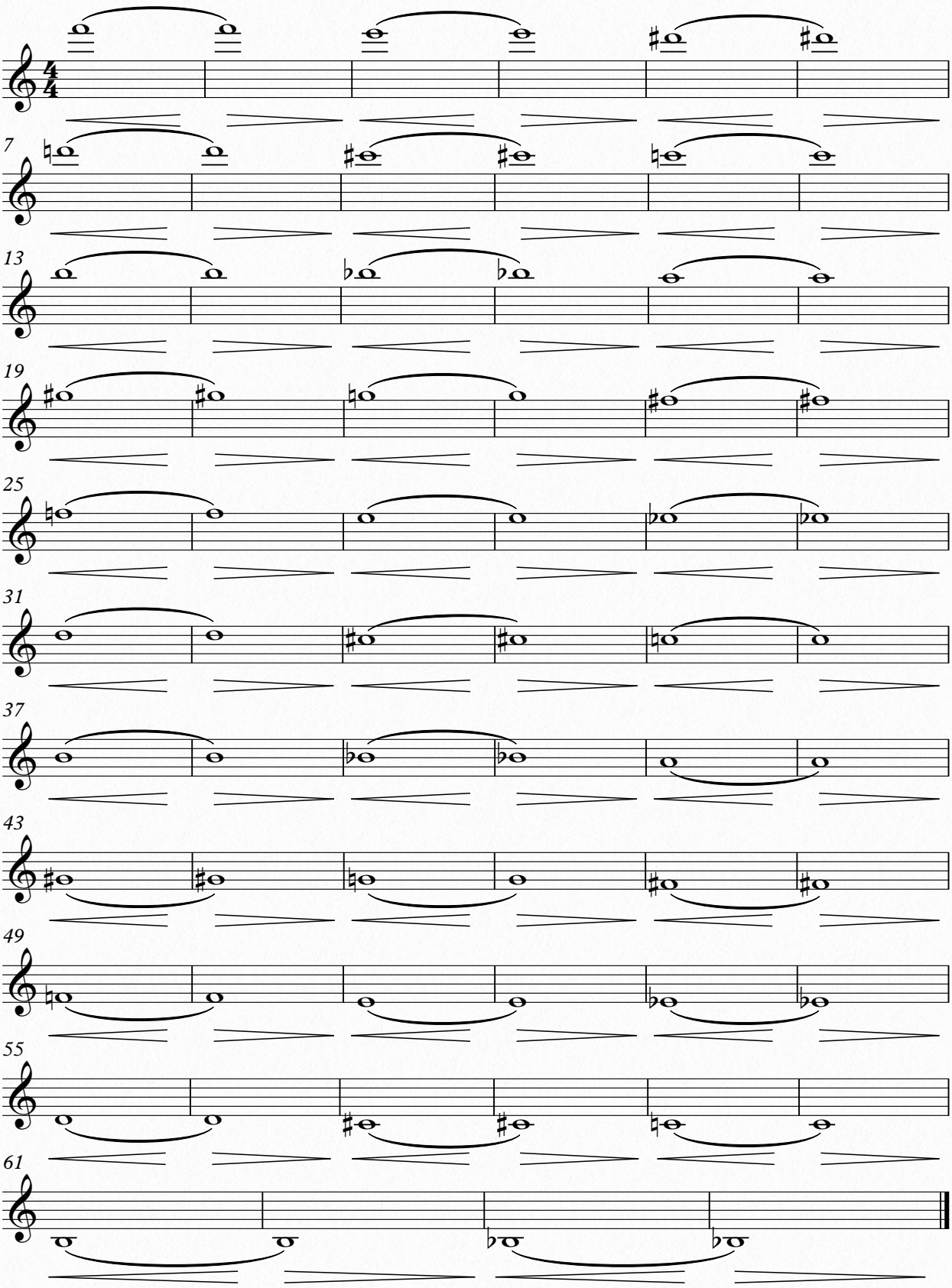
Tonguing Exercise #1

'De' not 'Tea' Sound (softer tonguing)

Metronome should be increased by 10 each day



Full Range Long Tones



Play me a tune....

The previous exercises are really great for honing your tone, but they take some application as they are not the most interesting exercises. As musicians we all want to play music, so in this exercise pick one of these songs, (or another one that you think fits) and play it ALL BY EAR...

DO NOT GO ONTO GOOGLE AND LOOK FOR THE LEAD SHEET

Take your time and try and hear the interval before you play it.
Use a metronome when you've got the song under your fingers...

Songs could be...

-Somewhere Over the Rainbow (I like this in the key of F on saxophone)
-Autumn Leaves
-Blue Bossa
-Happy Birthday to You
-Twinkle Twinkle Little Star
-The Blue Danube
-Mack The Knife
-Hey Jude
-Summertime

Mouthpiece Pitches

Go through the internet and you will always find a myriad of different opinions, especially from saxophone players on this exercise. Some say it's really important, others say it's rubbish...

I think it's great for working on Dave Liebman's theory that the closer you get to the source of the sound, the greater the effect of the sound.

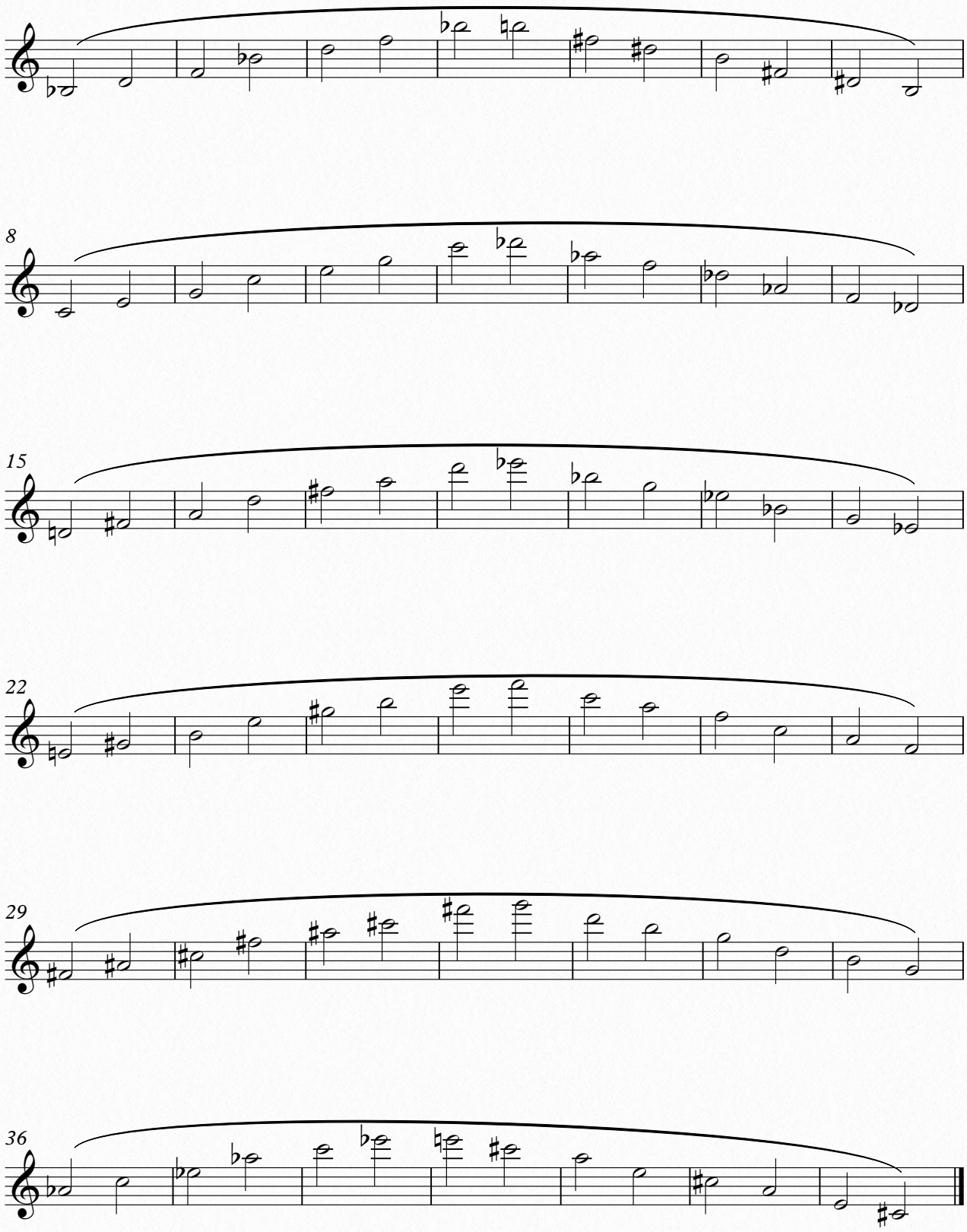
For this you need a tuner, or a tuner app, (I like the TE Tuner on iOS, but any app that can give you an accurate reading will do!)

The pitches are listed at concert pitch

Tenor Mouthpieces should pitch a 'G' when blown in isolation

Alto Mouthpieces should pitch an 'A' when blown in isolation

Soprano Mouthpieces should pitch a 'C' when blown in isolation.

Once you've got used to the correct pitch, see if you can pitch an arpeggio and then a full major scale – British saxophonist Courtney Pine showed me how to do this backstage at the Southport International Jazz Festival in 2002.

Arpeggios