

Trills - Guidance Notes

Trills on a standard, 3-valve instrument

General rules for writing trills:

- **Semitone and tone trills are possible throughout the range. Some trills larger than a tone may be possible: composers should check with individual players**
- **When one finger is moving (depressing and releasing a valve) the trill will be smoother and faster than if two fingers are moving: the latter tends to sound like sixteenth notes (depending on speed) rather than a genuine trill**
- **Semitone trills which move from an open position are particularly effective; tone trills which move from an open position are possible but more cumbersome**
- **Trills below middle C are awkward**
- **Trills which have no common valve are particularly difficult to control (e.g.: 1-2; 2-3; 1-3). Common valves give stability and security to the right hand.**

Notes for composers: remember that if a valve slide is in use for one of the fingerings it won't necessarily effect the other fingering – check the relevant fingering chart to make sure.

Quarter-tone Trills

- **Quarter-tone trills tend not to be possible where pitches share the same name-root (e.g. D and D quarter-sharp, although there are occasional exceptions) or where they share the same fingering (where one of the pitches involves a valve slide adjustment: trills on valve slides are ineffective)**
- **Trills can often be aided by preparation or early positioning of the valve slides**
- **In the case of an added fourth valve, this does not particularly benefit trilling. Trills using the rotary valve described on this site are possible but somewhat 'measured'. A fourth piston valve would allow effective trilling on the quarter-tone valve.**