

7 Tips to Getting the Most out of Music Lessons!

Music lessons are a big commitment for a family. Lessons and instruments are costly and busy schedule have to be juggled to get to lessons and group practices. So here are 7 tips to make sure you and your child are getting the most out of the experience.

1. SCHEDULE A DAILY PRACTICE TIME: If you don't have a set time it probably won't happen. If afternoons are too full set a time before school. A student practicing for 30 mins a day will spend a total of 3 ½ hours playing their instrument a week. The weekly lesson makes up less than 15% of what they can achieve in a week! Amount of practice = Amount of progress!! This is largely up to you!

2. CHECK THE NOTEBOOK: Check the notebook with your child to make sure you both know what they should be practicing and how. Flying through songs and scales with no attention to specific instructions will be of little value and often means they are getting better and better at playing something incorrectly!

3. MAKE SURE THEY USE THE CDs: Listening and/or playing along dramatically speeds up the learning process. It also helps to increase general music awareness and skills in expression. For violinists it is essential that they practice with the CD's to develop good intonation (finger placement/tuning).

4. MAKE SURE THEY DO THEIR THEORY & FLASH CARDS: Students who don't know their notes well are slow to learn new songs and slow to progress! At later grades understanding the theory behind the music gives them independence to learn extra songs without my help and be involved with school music activities such as bands or take music as a subject. At least Grade 3 Theory is needed for year 11.

5. EXPECT PROGRESS: With good practice and individual lessons you can expect good progress! Students should be starting new work each week. If you see exactly the same work set for more than 2 weeks in a row something is wrong! As a rough guide the Piano Adventures tutor books usually take 3 terms to complete and students will move up 1 grade every year and a half. I have also started setting term goals for students (see the front of the notebook).

6. GET INVOLVED: Attend lessons if you can and feel free to ask me if you don't understand what or how your child should be practicing. All primary age students need help at home, imagine them trying to learn to read or do maths with only a 30min lesson a week and no help at home!! I am always happy to discuss progress, difficulties, problems with practice, boredom with songs, goals for the future, etc.

7. KEEP IT FUN! Having said all this it sounds like a lot of hard work! Once you get into a good routine this shouldn't be all too serious. Remember that music is primarily for entertainment and should be fun! Try to work with your child rather than nagging them to practice. Try to make music a part of your families life and allow your children time to show family and friends how talented they are!

Encourage them to participate in any school, church or other community groups that are available. Social interaction also speeds up the learning process and adds to the enjoyment! Above all else a sense of achievement makes it fun! Most of the time when students are finding music boring it is because they aren't progressing satisfactorily.

PRACTICE = PROGRESS = SUCCESS & CONFIDENCE = FUN