

Common Questions about Music Practice

Q: What is practice?

A: Practice is when you go over the things your teacher has done at your last lesson. It is practicing the things written in your notebook. Practice is not playing old pieces you already know or just generally playing around on your instrument. It is good to enjoy your instrument for fun and play old pieces, but do NOT count it as practice when you write your times in your notebook.

Q: How often should I practice?

A: Practice at least 5 days a week. You can't catch up with a big practice in the weekend. Only daily practice will help you improve.

Q: How long should I practice for?

A: Smaller children and beginners will practice for a shorter time, about 15 – 20 minutes. Most of you will need to practice for 30 minutes a day. Grade 3 students and higher should be practicing for 40 – 45 minutes each day.

Q: What should I do when I practice?

A: Start with scales & exercises and play each one twice or three times until it flows. Play each piece through slowly. If you make a mistake go back a few bars and play the hard part several times till you can play it easily and correctly. At the end of each practice play each piece through without stopping even if you make a mistake try to keep going. If you use a CD to play along with try this with the CD.

Q: Do I really need to do theory each week?

A: Yes!! You wouldn't try to become a writer if you couldn't read, and you can't become a good musician if you don't read and understand music well! It is a good idea to try and do a little theory every day although you can catch up on this in the weekend. If you have been given flashcards to help learn notes, key-signatures etc you must do these each day.

Q: But isn't playing an instrument meant to be fun?

A: Of course it is!! When you have practiced the set work written in your notebook you may like to play over some other songs for fun.

Q: Is it really important that I hold my violin up and stand a certain way when I practice at home?

A: Yes – If you don't stand up correctly to practice, use your shoulder rest, and hold your violin up correctly with your wrist back and thumb bend you won't get used to holding it like this and later on you won't be able to go to higher grades and won't be able to play in tune or sound nice to listen to!

PARENTS PRACTICE TOO!

For your child to gain the most out of these music lessons and to progress steadily a substantial commitment is required also of you as a parent:

- * As adults undertaking a new challenge we will often enlist the help of a support person, personal trainer, someone to both encourage and keep us accountable. So too even my secondary aged students can benefit from a more active parental role.
- * Please supervise your child's regular practice, encourage them, ask to hear certain pieces again, or point out a place where the piece needs more work.
- * Go through the list in their notebook with them and make sure that they have done everything that is written down.
- * Make sure they record their practice times so that I can monitor progress and difficulty of work more easily.
- * Encourage your child to play regularly to you and to other family members and give them heaps of praise and encouragement.
- * I would love you to stay with your child when they are having lessons so that you know what they should be working on (especially for primary age) and please feel free to ask any questions. If you haven't had a music education yourself you will be getting two for the price of one! However, I understand that it is not always possible for you to stay for your child's lessons but please do at least touch base at the end of the lesson from time to time to see what is going on, or e-mail me any time.
- * Please let me know immediately if your child is struggling with the work I am giving them, or finding it too hard or boring, or not what you had in mind for them. My programme is flexible and is best adapted to suit the needs of each individual student.
- * Finally - Please make sure your child does their weekly theory work, this is part of learning to play an instrument and if the reading part of music lessons gets left behind it will hold them back in their playing of new material.