

How to Practice

(for people who HATE to practice!)

Be honest now, when you hear your music teacher say, “Practice, practice, practice!” isn’t there some part of you that just dies a little inside?

That’s why I created a whole new way to practice that is quick, effective, fun, and you still get to have a social life! Here it is:

Step #1: Set a place and time to practice.*

This seems obvious, but make sure you have a PLACE to practice. This place should be **free of distractions** (like TV, computer, phone, dogs, little brothers, space aliens, etc.)

(DON’T PRACTICE RIGHT NEXT TO THE TV WHEN YOUR PARENTS ARE TRYING TO WATCH THEIR FAVORITE SHOW!!)

Set a regular time to practice. **Make it reasonable!** DO NOT schedule your time to be right during your favorite TV show or for when your friends usually hang out. Otherwise, you will be tempted to skip out of practicing.

Only set a start time, DO NOT set an ending time! I’ll explain why in a second.

*Sometimes parents cannot stand the sound of a young player practicing, so it might be a good idea to let your parents help you schedule that time. Otherwise, if you’re trying to practice while Dad is paying the bills or Mom is making an overseas phone call, they might shut your practice down!

Step #2: Set 2-3 SHORT, REASONABLE goals for yourself.

Pick 2-3 things that YOU CAN’T DO YET, but you could with maybe 5-10 minutes of dedicated work. They should also be goals that YOU CAN TELL WHETHER OR NOT YOU SUCCEEDED. **WRITE THEM DOWN ON PAPER!** Put a little box next to each one, and when you achieve your goal, check it off! (I love that part!!)

After you’ve met your goals for your practice session, STOP! Put the instrument down, and go do something fun. Call your friends, watch a movie, play with the dog, or take up model ship-building. Whatever you think is fun! ☺

If you didn’t meet your goals, the important thing is to STOP and ADJUST! **Don’t keep messing up the same thing over and over and make yourself mad.** In the end, that will make you hate practicing. If you’re not getting any better at your goal in 5-10 minutes of trying, you probably set the wrong goal. Stop, ask yourself what the REAL problem is, and try again. **IF YOU’RE ANGRY, STOP PLAYING AND DO SOMETHING ELSE!** Anger will make you make more mistakes, which will make you more angry, which will make you make more mistakes, ...Come back later when you’re refreshed, and re-evaluate!

Step #3: Set goals for your next session.

Again, make sure the goals are short, reasonable, and you can tell whether or not you've succeeded. Once again, WRITE THEM DOWN!

Writing down your goals and how you did has another benefit. Ever get down on yourself and think, "I'm no good at this instrument!" ? In those times, go back and look at your practice journal to see how far you've come. You'll be surprised at how much you've grown as a player in such a short time.

AND HERE'S THE BEST PART...

You will be a better player after practicing for 20 minutes than most players will be in 4 hours! Why, because you're focused and goal-oriented.