

PRACTICING

The most important part of music study takes place at home - with YOU! At home, you and your child work together on completing the practice assignment, and try out new and fun sounds and ideas.

Research shows that information learned in the lesson is 90% retained for about 24 hours. After 48 hours, 50% is lost, and after 72 hours, retention is virtually zero.

On the day of the lesson, when you get home, help your child read through the home-assignment and discuss what is actually new material and what is simply review. This will prepare both your child and you for the practice week ahead. It will also encourage your child to mentally review what was learned in class.

Practicing seven days a week is not realistic for every student or every family. However, if you and your child practice six days a week, the tasks on the home assignment will be well-reinforced and you and your child will arrive at your next lesson ready to learn more. Your child will become very frustrated with his/her ability to complete the home assignment the longer he/she waits between practice sessions.

It is important that YOU dedicate yourself to practice time fully. Practicing a musical instrument can be lonely and frustrating. Don't imply by words or body language that you'd rather be (or "should be") somewhere else. Sit with your child and help turn pages, read directions and figure-out new material. Occasionally, you can ask your child to teach YOU how to read or play something. As your child gets older and more independent in practice (a couple of years from now), you can simply "keep company" with your child as he/she practices. You can read, balance the checkbook, or simply relax and enjoy your child's music-making.

Many families have discovered that morning is the best time for practice: your child's brain is fresh, no friends are waiting outside to play, and the TV is not on. Practicing in the morning also solves the problem of conflicting after-school activities (no soccer teams practice in the mornings!). If you have a keyboard, you can move it to a convenient "morning location" so that YOU can be accomplishing the morning's tasks while your child practices. This will take some "family adjustment", but it is well-worth the effort.

Many students practice right after school (after a snack and 15-20 minutes of relaxation time) and just before they start homework time. Music practice usually takes between 15 and 30 minutes, but homework can go on all evening. If you and your child wait until homework is completed, music will often be skipped five days a week because, "there just wasn't time". Many families have commented that this arrangement not only helps them to accomplish both practice AND homework, but helps them to get it all done FASTER than before.

You will, of course, need to occasionally nudge your child to practice. No matter what his/her level of interest in music study, he/she is only human. Some days, the temptation to do something else first, or skip practice altogether will be stronger than other days. Be encouraging. Be positive. Be consistent. Be resolute. Remember, if your child is allowed to "get away with it" once, it will be even more difficult the next time.

If you constantly experience trouble inducing your child to practice (tantrums, tears, shouting), consider this:

- Your child may not have thought out the time and effort necessary for learning to play a musical instrument.
- Your child may have realized that playing a musical instrument is not like TV: Playing an instrument is a activity requiring daily participation and TV is a "spectator sport".
- Perhaps a noisy younger sibling OR an out-of-tune piano OR a friend, teacher, or family member making disparaging remarks could be the problem.

Don't just give up - and DON'T WAIT for the problem to go away. Set up an extra-help lesson with Ms. Kirsten. She can discuss options and give you ideas on what to do. Learning a musical instrument is not easy - if it were, everyone would be doing it - but in the long-run, it is well worth the effort.

THE IMPORTANCE OF SOLFEGE



Solfège helps children internalize the music. The solfège syllables are the child's musical language. When children sing fixed DO solfège, they develop a strong sense of tonality and relative pitch. Singing solfège while playing the keyboard strengthens the connection between what is heard, what is seen and what is played. With time, your child will begin to hear the musical patterns on written music before those patterns are even played on the keyboard.

PRACTICE TROUBLES?

Take this little quiz and find out why!

Do you practice six days per week?	yes	no
Is practicing a scheduled activity? Or just something you do if you have time?	yes	no
Do you practice early in the day or evening? before school, immediately after school, or right before dinner?	yes	no
Do you practice before you start your homework? or do you study until late at night and then say, "I'm too tired to practice"?	yes	no
Do you practice a LITTLE PIECE of each song? one or two measures 3-5 times correctly?	yes	no
Do you practice everything on the assignment? EVERYthing on the assignment EVERY day?	yes	no
Do you practice TOGETHER? Does Mom or Dad sit with you and help you with the directions?	yes	no
Do you check-off each item on the list as you go? Mom or Dad can help you with this so that your practice-time goes smoother	yes	no
Is your piano in tune? If you have an electronic keyboard/piano, you can ignore this question	yes	no

If you answered, "No!" to any of these questions, you may have found the source of your Practice Troubles!

Try changing your practice style until you can answer "Yes!" to ALL of these questions. It may take a month or two to make the changes, but BE PATIENT and KEEP TRYING. Learning to practice properly takes PRACTICE!

If you make all of the changes and your problems still do not go away, please talk to your teacher!

PRIVATE STUDENTS!!

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