

Learning how to practice a musical instrument is crucial to a student's progress and success. Here are some tried and true activities to consider when establishing your own practice routine. (These are in no particular order.)

- Be consistent and organized with your practice. Have a plan and stick with it every day.
- Break up your practice session with stretches, yoga breaths or a drink of water.
- Pay attention to all the other stuff on the page besides the notes. There are rests, dynamics, articulations, tempos, accidentals. Play "detective"!
- Keep a practice journal making note of your learning journey, the challenges, the easy stuff, performance experience, what you like or don't like.
- Tell a story with your music. What does the music mean to you?
- Take care of your instrument. Does everything work – the keys, valves, the pads? Is it in tune?
- When you make a mistake or miss a note, don't always go back to the beginning of the piece and start over. Focus on the error spot, and the measure in front of it. Chances are the issue is not the missed spot, but how you approach the spot.
- Slow practice is just as important as fast practice to make sure your playing doesn't become only muscle memory rather than brain memory.
- Turn off your phone and any other distractions.
- Read the assignment and any notes your teacher made in your music.
- ALWAYS play musically, even while working out a new piece.
- Sing your piece! If you can sing it, you can play it!
- Keep a few old favorites in your fingers and play them often.
- Spend some time with 'free play', or improvising. Make up a song of your own. Try to notate it.
- Learn something about the life of the composer you are playing and what historic period they belong to.
- Record yourself playing. Then listen while watching the music score. Did you do everything the composer asked? Does it sound like you wanted it to?
- Playing a piece from the beginning to the end all the time is NOT practicing. Practice means ..."to perform and activity or exercise (a skill) repeatedly or regularly in order to improve or maintain one's proficiency."
- Don't forget your exercises, scales, cadences, arpeggios. Learning these will make learning your repertoire much easier.
- Sightread something every day for a few minutes. This also helps improve your learning.
- Play for others! There are many opportunities to share your music with others. Consider visiting a senior residential facility and presenting a program by yourself or with some friends.
- If you have a week, where you couldn't practice as much, go to your lesson anyway. Your teacher always has other things you can work on. (sightreading, improvisation, theory, technique, etc)
- HAVE FUN MAKING MUSIC!

For more practice tips, visit readingmusicteachers.org.