

How To Practice Your Instrument

To be a successful musician, it is important that you distinguish the difference between **playing** and **practicing**. No matter how much you play your instrument, you will never reach your full potential unless you develop productive practice habits. The amount of time you spend practicing is not as important as the quality of practice time.

PRACTICE GUIDELINES:

1. Warm-up.
 - ✓ Practice on long scale tones using the best possible breath support & tone.
 - ✓ Practice dynamic levels.
 - ✓ Articulations—exercises to improve your tonguing and rhythm skills
2. Intonation
 - ✓ Use your ears! If you don't have a tuning CD, get one from a director. Play long tones and know what notes are in or out of tune on your instrument. Remember to tune concert F first and make proper adjustments to pitch using embouchure and/or tuning slides.
3. Practice music that you are responsible for.

HAVE A PLAN—avoid wasted practice time!

- ✓ **BREAKDOWN:** Practice problem areas in sections of 2-3 measures with a slow, steady tempo and gradually increase speed to correct tempo as you master the part.
 - ✓ **EVALUATE:** Evaluate your practice time by periodically recording your playing. Listen and make notes on improvements that were made or what needs to be improved.
 - ✓ **USE A PENCIL:** Edit/mark your music with a pencil. All dynamics, problem notes, intonations problems, etc. should be **MARKED!**
4. Some basics:
 - ✓ Write counting under any difficult rhythms.
 - ✓ Make sure you understand the rhythms. If you are unsure—get help. Many problems exist because you practice incorrect rhythms and thus, have to re-learn. Save time and get help early.
 - ✓ Practice with a steady beat.
 - ✓ Strive for a good tone quality.
 - ✓ Make sure you are playing the **CORRECT NOTES**. Be attentive to key signatures and accidentals. Mark notes that you are having difficulties with.
 - ✓ Play musically; be attentive to intonation and tone quality.

Many times, simple things as mentioned above are ignored. A less than adequate performance can become average or above by following the practice guidelines above. Students that adhere to a practice plan will be assured of success. Remember to make music and not noise. Practice with the best possible tone and play with feeling and dynamics. Pay special attention to small detail and make the most of the music.

Failing to Prepare is Preparing to Fail
-- Ben Franklin