

FSM Practice Tips

Practicing at home is an integral part of your musical training and essential to making progress in between your weekly lessons. Your teacher will discuss their personal recommendations for practice with you and offer help & suggestions whenever you need it. Practicing can be enjoyable, but like most things in life, it won't be fun all the time, so here are some tips that can help you practice more efficiently and progress more quickly in your studies.

When to Practice:

Set a Regular Practice Time

Practicing becomes easier when it's part of your routine, just like brushing your teeth or exercising. Having a habit of practicing at a set time makes it less of a struggle on those days when you don't feel like practicing.

Practice Right after Your Lesson

Much of what you learn with your teacher can be lost if you don't practice within 24 hours after your lesson. To get the most out of your lessons, try practicing when you get home from your lesson, even if just for 5 minutes, to help process any new information and instructions.

Be an Early Bird

Everyone is different, but many people find that they practice best in the morning or early in the afternoon while their minds are still fresh. Some people prefer practicing in small chunks of time a couple times a day (ex: 15 minutes in the morning & 15 minutes in the afternoon). Experiment and find what works best for you and your schedule.

When Life is Hectic

We all have days or weeks when we are busier than normal. If you don't have enough time to fit in your regular practice session, try squeezing in even just 5 minutes. You'd be amazed at what you can accomplish in a small amount of time, especially if you try some of our "how to" tips below. If practicing falls through the cracks, don't be too hard on yourself. Just dive back in and start fresh when you can!

If You Get Frustrated

Walk away and clear your mind by doing something else for a few minutes. Or try playing a piece of music that you love and know well, which can boost your mood and rekindle your enjoyment. If nothing helps, call it a day and resume tomorrow when your mind is fresh.

How to Practice:

Create a Practice Chart

Sometimes creating a practice chart can help you accomplish your practice goals more effectively. Young students can help create their own charts with crayons or stickers. Even older students can benefit from planning out which days they'll practice particular exercises or different sections of a song, rather than winging it and practicing aimlessly. A chart can also help you see how much you've accomplished over weeks and months of practice!

Divide & Conquer

Playing an entire piece over and over is not the best way to practice. Divide a song into small chunks of a few measures or one line, and practice each chunk slowly until it feels easy. Then slowly connect the chunks and practice transitioning from one section to another, before adding on the next chunk.

Start at the End

Very often we know the beginning of a piece very well and the end not so well, because it is so tempting to always practice from the beginning of the song. Try learning the end of the piece first, and then adding on section by section till you get to the top and can play the whole song through. Psychologically speaking, this can be a great tool to help when you feel overwhelmed by learning the whole piece or feel stuck somewhere along the way.

Focus on One Thing at a Time

When learning a new piece, you don't need to perfect everything all at once. If you're still learning to read music, you may find it helpful to point to each note and say the name out loud before playing. You can also try clapping and counting the rhythm a few times before playing. Once you've mastered the notes and rhythm, focus on the expression and dynamics (the louds & softs) of the piece to make the music come alive.

Slow Learning is Quick Learning

When in doubt, slow it down! Most of us practice too fast to allow our muscles and brains to process the new material, and we make mistakes that quickly become engrained in our muscle memory. Go as slowly as necessary to master each passage perfectly, and you'll be amazed at how quickly you will learn without having to undo mistakes!

Reminders:

Parents Can Help

Even if you don't have a musical background, you can still help your child practice and ensure all assignments are completed. Review your child's assignment notebook, ask the teacher for specific things you can help with, or sit in on part of the lesson if you need clarification. Help your child build practicing into their daily routine and implement the strategies outlined above. Discuss how learning music is a journey with many ups and downs along the way. As your child gets older, parental involvement will lessen, but it is still important to take an active role in ensuring they practice regularly and to help them to communicate any personal goals, needs or struggles with their teacher.

We Can Help

Please don't hesitate to call or email us if you or your child is struggling with home practice or anything at all concerning their lessons or teacher. Part of our job as school directors is to serve as a liaison between you and your child's teacher and to take care of any issues that may arise during the school year. Contact us as soon as you have any questions or concerns, and we will help!

Stick With It

While the overall experience is a positive one, it is not unusual to get frustrated and want to stop lessons prematurely. Many adults who took lessons as a child say their greatest regret has been not continuing with lessons or playing music.

Continuing with lessons, even through all the inevitable ups and downs, has incredible benefits towards building future success, confidence, and a lifelong enjoyment of music.