

HOW TO PRACTICE

Here are some simple guidelines for a 20-minute practice session:

1. Warm up with something easy (5 minutes or more).

- Brass Buzzing: high pitches and low pitches, sirens, nursery rhymes and fun songs (one can play any song with just the mouthpiece!).
- Long tones (for wind instruments): Hold a note as long as you can, medium loud, with the best sound that you can. Keep the volume and the pitch absolutely steady. Do this with notes in every register - high/middle/low. Do this for 5 minutes every day.
- Scales and arpeggios: These are the basic building blocks of music, and will be a huge help to you in the long term. Memorize them!

2. Get down to business while you are fresh - REALLY learn it.

Take as much time as necessary. Work on problem areas. Using a pencil, circle problem spots and work on them. Figure out the note names, fingering, rhythms, dynamics, etc. When I'm learning something new, or fixing a problem, I tell myself that I have to get it right *four times in a row* before I can consider it learned.

3. When you are satisfied that you have achieved your goal for the day, don't stop just yet.

Play fun stuff, easy stuff, old stuff, or do some sight reading, for 10 or 15 more minutes.

4. Always think about your tone when you practice.

Play with a beautiful resonant tone. Even when you are just playing scales, try to play with a good tone.

When you are reading music, **look ahead**. Don't just look at the notes you are playing - try to see one or two measures at a time.

Here are some additional important things to include in your practicing:

- Working on pieces as long-term projects: As you become a more advanced player, you will be working on pieces that may take several weeks (or more!) to learn.
- Sight reading: This is an important skill to develop. Open one of your exercise books to a random page, and see if you can read it correctly on the first try.
- Improvising: Using a scale as raw material, make up your own music. You can do this with major scales, minor scales, or blues scales. If you are studying jazz, you might want to use a play-along recording.

5. Set achievable goals for yourself - both one-day goals and long-term goals.

Your teacher will help you with this.

Remember - When you solve a fingering or reading problem, it's not just to make that particular piece sound right. The next time that fingering comes up in a different piece, it won't be a problem. As you become a better and better player, you will solve more and more of these little problems - and you'll gradually play at a higher and higher level.

When you are practicing a piece, play with feeling and expression. Of course you should follow the dynamics and expression markings, but you can also add the kind of expression that can't be written down.

Stay relaxed, both mentally and physically. You'll think better and play better.

Try to practice at least 20 minutes per day, at least 5 days/week. Twice as much would be a good idea, when possible. If you are really serious, more!