

12 TOP PRACTICE TIPS

1. Establish a Weekly Practice Routine

"When you have a habit of practising at the same time and in the same place every day, you hardly have to think about getting started. You just do it." Says Angela Duckworth in her bestselling book 'Grit'. Angela extols the benefits of routine when it comes to doing something new and hard, like learning a musical instrument. And indeed, she and her family each learn a musical instrument to strengthen their own sense of grit.

While we all lead busy lives and it may not be possible to achieve a daily routine, setting a weekly practice routine is helpful. Find just 3 or 4 bubbles of time in your week of 10 - 20 minutes and set them aside for your music. When you do this, your mind and body become accustomed to focusing and taking on new learning at these pre-determined times. And everything just become a whole lot easier.

2. Find the time that works best for you & piggy back it into a routine

Many people find morning sessions work well. Most of us are bright and alert after a good night's sleep. If your mornings are busy and it's a struggle to just get it all done on time, then morning practice may not be for you! Research shows that there is greater success in establishing a habit when you piggy back a new habit onto another series of established habits such as your morning routine. Perhaps you have an afternoon or evening routine at your place. Be strategic - it makes life easier.

3. Little & often

Short, frequent sessions promote progress, especially in the beginning. Resist the temptation to crash practise the night before the lesson. It does not work long term.

4. Make your time effective

Practice is not about how long you spend at your instrument. It's what you achieve when you are there. Forget time-based practice sessions. Use the Power Practise approach to achieve one or more outcomes per session.

5. Worst first

Start with your worst piece first whilst you are fresh, calm and have the best focus.

6. Narrow your focus

Use the Power Practise approach to isolate the bits you cannot do and work on them one at a time until you can. Practice is not about playing a piece once through. Improvement is achieved by isolating your little glitches and perfecting them one at a time; putting them back into the whole by playing the piece or section from the beginning once you have mastered a glitch and moving on to the next one.

7. Make it fun

Set yourself mini challenges and games around your goals at the moment and leave it in a positive place! It could be a scale challenge, a note reading challenge, a perfect-this-4-bars challenge, a time-based challenge. Be creative and inventive. Learning music should be fun. So get on board and make it so!

8. Watch your words

Watch what you say and the tone of voice you use when encouraging practice. If you make practice seem like a negative chore it will never be met with a positive response.

In a 14-year longitudinal study represented in the book "Music in our Lives" by Gary McPherson, researchers discovered children were most likely to stick with music in households where parents supported their children. You can support your children by:

- taking an interest in and sitting and listening to a child practicing. Young children need you to sit with them and direct activities.
- making positive comments and noticing improvements. Whilst we focus on mastering glitches, make sure you celebrate what they do right!
- valuing your fledgling musician and celebrating their little successes. Doing little things like setting up family concerts for visiting friends or relatives is a great way to highlight progress.

9. Use Practice Buddy

Our online practice buddy is the best practice help there is for students learning from one of our Forte programs. There are play-along videos which are a tremendous help at home. It is fun!



www.fortemusic.com/practicebuddy

10. Jump into Forte Practice Programs

When your school is running a practice program, wholeheartedly support it. We do this to foster interest and reward practice effort and to make your life a little easier!

11. When the going gets tough...

Bring on some rewards. Over the short term, these seem to work well but the novelty wears off after a while. So use rewards sparingly and strategically to get you through the inevitable slumps.

12. The going is still tough? Talk to us!

If you need a little more help in making practice a positive experience in your household, talk to us. We may suggest a private assessment to make sure they are in the correct class or with the right teacher.

Come and see us at reception. We want to know how you are going and will do everything we can to help. Being able to play a musical instrument brings immeasurable joys for life.

With any long term activity there are ups and downs. Sometimes we just need to get through little challenge periods.