

Start Defining Practice

This guide will start you on your journey to practicing. It is not the only way to understand practicing, but it should start opening your mind to other considerations as you explore ways to improve your practicing.

INTELLIGENT PRACTICE

The Foundation of Quality Playing: Good Posture

Every motion we make on our instrument is part of the many moving parts of posture. It is good to review your playing to make sure you are efficient and proficient with how you use the bow and fingerings while feeling relaxed during your playing.

A Few Questions to Ask Yourself

Bow:

Am I holding the bow correctly? *(Do you understand how to hold the bow?)*

Am I at the right part of the bow? *(Do you know why you should be at certain parts of the bow?)*

Am I using enough bow? *(Do you know how much bow to use with the correct length and articulation?)*

Am I starting the bow from the string? *(Are you always consciously aware of starting from the string?)*

Am I relaxed? *(Do you know when you are tense?)*

Violin:

Is my violin at the right level for each string crossing? *(Do you know what the level should be?)*

Am I relaxed when playing? *(shoulders, chin, thumbs, neck, curved pinky)*

Am I using my elbow to switch between strings? *(Do you understand what is the correct posture for your left hand?)*

Do I have a straight wrist? *(Do you understand the muscle memory to switch strings using the assistance of your elbow instead of your wrist?)*

Are my fingers curved? *(Do you understand why you may not be able curve your fingers or stay in tune?)*

Types of Practice

Technique/Warm-Up Practice

The purpose of the warm up and/or technique practice is to step away from attempting to learn a piece that may have many different skills needed to perform. This allows you to focus your time on developing specific skills which may need more development for the piece you are about to learn.

Remember, you are establishing a level of expectation and goals for yourself. Only the individual who is playing the instrument has the true control to enforce this idea.

Discovery Practice

When you are first introduced to a piece of music, it is possible you may not have any knowledge about the piece. A Discovery Practice is when you can go through steps to help prepare yourself better for learning the music. Here are a few suggestions to consider:

Listen to the music selection on a recording with and without the sheet music.

While playing/listening through the movement, place marks next to measures where you think there are tricky spots in the music.

TIP: Do not continuously play mindlessly over spots. Your purpose is to get a feel of where everything lays in the music. This will lower your chances of creating bad habits.

In-Depth Practice

Prerequisites:

You have warmed up prior to your In-Depth Practice and have decided to familiarize yourself with the piece through a Discovery Practice

If you have completed the prerequisites, you are now ready to move to in-depth practicing.

Accept That Mistakes Will Happen | Acknowledge the Issue | Isolate the Issue

Many times, you may be tempted to correct the fingering or bowing as you are playing the piece. Even though the intention is to correct the problem, what is really happening is covering up the problem without fixing the issue.

To fix the issue, the first step is to acknowledge that there is a problem and stop playing at that measure. Afterwards, you need to identify what method of practice is required to resolve the issue in the music. For you to choose the method, you need to identify what kind of problem you are experiencing. Is the issue related to a bowing, fingering, shifting into positions, rhythm, or some/all that are mentioned?

Once you have isolated the issue and identified what kind of issue you have, you can proceed with using the correct practice skill that will assist you with correcting the issue.

Critical Thinking

SKILLS

Systems Check

Sight Reading

Tempo

Rhythms