



For students

Here are some tips to help you make better progress and to enjoy your music making. Practising can be fun and makes the music easier!

You should try to practise –

Regularly...

'A little and often' is better than a long slog the night before your lesson. You will lose the benefit of your hard work if you don't play for even a few days. Develop a routine that fits in with your whole family, preferably when you are most likely to be relaxed and free from interruptions and distractions. Try practising at the same time every day.

Carefully...

If you make a mistake and repeat it, it can take up to three times as long to put it right. Don't always start at the beginning of a piece. Try tackling the hard bits first. Your teacher teaches you one day a week, you teach yourself the rest; imagine your teacher is looking over your shoulder.

Patiently...

Don't give in to frustration, anger, boredom and disappointment. Remember that even the best musicians work for many hours, and they must experience those feelings too. Some days it can be hard to get started. Try to remember how you felt on the days when you played really well. If you lose your patience with a particular problem try to think of a new way of approaching it. Use your imagination, don't give up; some things take weeks or months to improve.

Enthusiastically...

When you know a piece quite well try giving a practice performance to a friendly audience (real, imaginary, a tape recorder or just the cat!), trying to make your playing as interesting as you can for them. Listen to recordings and go to concerts, especially those involving your instrument. Try playing your favourite tunes by ear, as a change from your usual pieces.

You may like to make up some music of your own. If you only know how to play a few notes remember that some of the most beautiful tunes are very simple.

Finally join your school and York Arts Academy band or orchestra, and don't forget to practise your parts for them. Making music with your friends is the best fun of all.

Good luck...

If you practise hard you can be very proud of yourself and music will be a great joy to you for the rest of your life.



How do I help my child to practise?

To make the most of his/her lessons, your child will need to be helped to maintain a regular practice routine. Your encouragement, involvement and interest are vital. Even the best motivated, talented young musicians will occasionally need persuading to practise, especially when there is something good on the telly!

Don't feel that you have to listen to every note; many children will resent this anyway and it may discourage their independence. They will need somewhere quiet and free from interruptions, where they feel confident that they are not being overheard by those who may complain or make fun of them. Praise is most important to young musicians making their first sounds; jokes about "wailing cats" or "putting it out of its misery" can be hurtful and off-putting. Most parents are pleasantly surprised at how melodious their children's playing sounds even after a few lessons!

Practising music is more like learning a poem than reading a book. The music needs to be broken into small sections, which are then repeated until they improve. Simply playing the piece through from beginning to end is not enough.

What do I do if they ask for my help? I know nothing about music.

You can enjoy learning with your child. This will not necessarily mean playing the instrument yourself (although this can help!), but learning about playing technique and the reading of music enough to check that your child is on the right track.

Check your child's practice notebook or practice sheet so that you know what they are supposed to be doing and ask them what advice has been given by the teacher. There are some internet links below to help you find out more.

How long should my child's practice sessions last?

This will depend on your child's age, instrument and the standard they have reached. The teacher will suggest a minimum time and number of sessions per week, usually 10 – 15 minutes at least four times a week when they start. Any additional time spent practising is a bonus. Bear in mind that quality and regularity are as important as quantity, and that forcing a child to practise too long can do as much harm as no practice at all.

How should the practice session be structured?

Warm up routines

Your child's teacher will suggest suitable warm up routines. These prepare muscles, fingers, brain, eyes and ears for the practice session and lead to:

Playing a familiar piece or pieces

Your child can spend a few minutes playing through something they know well. They should then be ready for...

Practising work set for this week

They should focus on areas that require special attention. Target the areas of difficulty and allow enough time to do repeat practices of the awkward passages or technical exercises. This is an important stage of practice, and needs good concentration. Once concentration begins to wane, it's time to move to...

Performing

Perhaps a performance of the work just practised could now be attempted, or simply finish the practice session by playing for fun!

Useful websites

Parents Music Room:

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/music/parents>

Practice Spot

<http://www.practicespot.com>

