

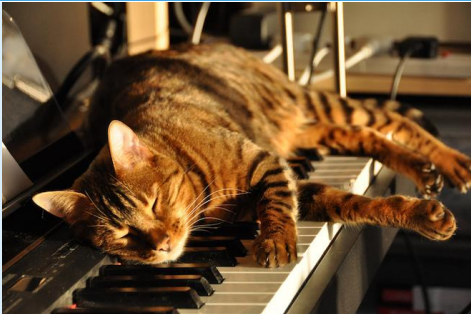


## Practice!

*How to get students to practice and practice effectively*



By Mai Riquier for ME!



## Resources

**8 Things Top Practicers do Differently**

<http://www.bulletproofmusician.com/8-things-top-practicers-do-differently/>

**How to Think About Practicing**

<http://www.bulletproofmusician.com/learn-quicker-by-thinking-less-about-what-your-body-is->

## How to Get Kids to Practice

- **Denote a specific amount of practice time**
  - This should be age specific. For example, for smaller kids it would be good to start with 10 minutes a day, every day of the week. For middle and high schoolers 20-30 minutes would be reasonable to expect. If the student is really motivated, then suggest 45-60 minutes. At the very least encourage the student to take their instrument out every day.
- **Make a practice log!**
  - The practice log should be age appropriate. For example, for a smaller child, a large piece of paper with the days of the week

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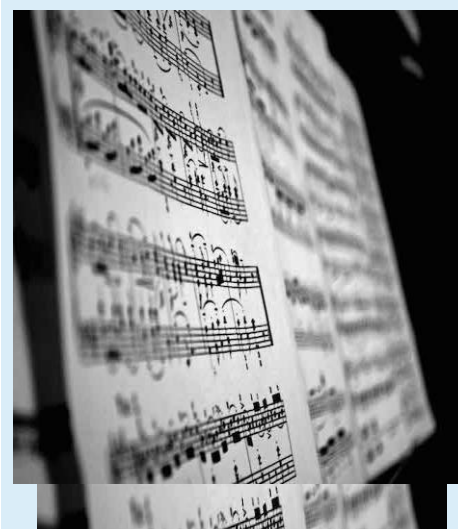
marked clearly and some star stickers would work. The student could place a star sticker down for every day that they practice.

- **Ask them about what they've learned every week**
  - If the student expects that they will be asked about their practicing habits, they will make practicing a priority.
- **Small motivations**
  - Give the student something to look forward to to help motivate them to practice. For example, bring in their favorite food (if the parent is okay with it) or set up a small game or fun activity for ten minutes in the next lesson if you see progress!
- **Faux Performances**
  - If your student is one that is motivated by performances, then throughout the semester set up certain weeks to be recital weeks. You can set up a slightly more serious environment by asking the student to introduce the piece and also have the parents listen. Tell the student one or two weeks in advance when they will have to play through the piece and have their "lesson recital".
- **Praise and Positivity**
  - Praise your student when you can tell that an aspect of their playing has improved to emphasize how the practicing has helped. A positive environment is extremely important so that the student does not get discouraged and stays motivated.



### Parents Involvement in Student Practicing

Parents should be informed of what progress their student is making, however the parents should not be the motivation for students to practice. It is best to encourage students (with the help of these techniques!) to practice on their own. It can mean a lot to a student to have something that they can do by themselves and be proud of without a lot of parental involvement.





## Practicing Effectively

Teaching your students how to practice effectively is an extremely valuable tool that they will be able to use as they grow older and will ultimately be able to extend to their studies.

### **The Danger of Mindless Practicing**

Mindless practicing is practicing with constant repetitions without pauses to reflect.

### **Why is Mindless Practicing Dangerous?**

- Weeks can go by without improvement because this type of practicing can strengthen bad habits and tendencies, making them harder to correct.
- There is no learning involved in this type of practicing. The student

should be able to start identifying why they sound a certain way (this should definitely be explained in lessons when something sounds better or worse!). With mindless practicing the student will not learn how to identify the problem.

- Mindless practicing is super boring! It is essentially just going through the motions.

### **Deliberate Practicing**

Teaching and leading students in the direction of deliberate practicing is infinitely more beneficial to them because it helps students to think critically, a skill that will benefit them in any problem solving scenario. Deliberate practicing is the process that involves an analysis of what went wrong, why it happened and



*"The right kind of practice is not a matter of hours. Practice should represent the utmost concentration of brain. It is better to play with concentration for two hours than to practice eight without. I should say that four hours would be a good maximum practice time—I never ask more of my pupils—and that during each minute of the time the brain be as active as the fingers."*  
~Leopold Auer

how to correct the error. Deliberate practice treats the practice room as if it was a lab-type environment where students can experiment with different ideas.

For example, if a note is out of tune and scratchy on a string instrument then it is the experimenter's job to question why the note sounds like that and how they can change it (perhaps putting less pressure on the string and moving the finger so that it is in the right place).

Deliberate practice is efficient and is not about the actual length of the practice but the amount of focused practice.

### **Tips for Good Deliberate Practice**

- Practice at times where you are the most productive!
  - This way, the mind will be the most alert and your student will be more likely to engage in an active mental process.
- Getting Started
  - The hardest part of practicing for students is often getting started. Perhaps encourage your student to place their case in a place where they see it often because they will be more

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- likely to pick it up and start practicing!
- Create Suspense
  - Curiosity is very prevalent in young students and can be used to help them practice. For example at the end of your lesson after the student plays, help them identify another musical or technical aspect that they can improve on and leave them hanging. Encourage the student to try to solve this problem the next time that they start to practice and to also identify new problems at the end of each practice session to continue to fix after taking a break. This way the student has something to go back to and a puzzle to immediately solve when they pick up their instrument.



- Practice Sprints
  - People are more likely to maintain a high level of focus when they know that they only have to do it for a short amount of time. Therefore encourage your student to set a timer for ten minutes but with a definitive goal of what they would like to accomplish.
- Eliminate Distractions
  - Encourage your student to practice in an area that is the least distracting to them and to put away electronics.



- Iterative Practice
  - Iterative practice is the idea of going from a bigger picture to smaller details. It help ensures that students don't get caught up in details before they deal with larger aspects like tone production or basic rhythm and pitch.

# Source

"8 Practice Hacks." *Bulletproof Musician*. Genesis Framework, 2014. Web. 4 Jan. 2015.



## Contact

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with any  
questions!

