

Helping Parents to Help Their Children

Parents and Home Practice: A Key to Student Success

Music study is a three-way partnership composed of the teacher, student, and parent. The role of the parents is extremely important. The successful instrumental music student is invariably supported by interested, engaged, and progressive parents. Some ways parents can help their child be successful follow.

- *Patience* in repeatedly reminding the student to do his/her daily practicing, and doing this kindly, but firmly.
- *Encouragement* when the going gets rough (and it will!). Some things in music are easily learned, others require intensive and repeated application. Parental sympathy and understanding are important.
- *Imagination* in creating a musical atmosphere in the home by tuning in to interesting musical programs on television, radio, and the Internet. Invite friends who play instruments into your home, and have them play for your child. Purchase and play recordings of prominent performers on your child's instrument (ask the teacher for recommendations). Take your child to live musical performances.
- *Common sense* in avoiding undue stress on musical work. All healthy children want and need a variety of activities. Try for a balanced schedule of interests into which music practice fits as a natural and compensating element.
- *Provide* for the appropriate practice conditions. As a young person advances in his/her music study and is presented with increasingly difficult problems in thinking and playing, the regularity and quality of his/her preparation become more and more important. Regularity and quality can be promoted if parents will assume the responsibility for seeing that favorable practice conditions exist. Here are some suggestions as to how this can be achieved:
 - SCHEDULE A REGULAR TIME FOR PRACTICE. The best time for practice is when minds are fresh and receptive.
 - SEE THAT PROPER PHYSICAL CONDITIONS PREVAIL. A quiet room, adequate lighting, sufficient ventilation, and comfort are necessities. Every music student needs a folding music stand for his/her use at home.
 - KEEP ALL INSTRUMENTS IN FIRST-RATE CONDITION. Be sure that your child has valve or slide oil, the proper sticks, a good reed, etc. If something is wrong with your child's instrument, do not attempt to fix it yourself, as frequently this results in additional damage. Please bring the instrument to the teacher, and if it cannot be fixed, it will be sent to a reputable instrument repair shop.
 - PRAISE WORK WELL DONE. A congratulatory remark may be interjected during a practice session, or a complimentary comment may be made later.
 - NEVER USE PRACTICE AS A PUNISHMENT. It is advisable to occasionally reschedule a practice period to allow for important conflicting school events. But avoid always giving preference to activities conflicting with the practice schedule.
 - SPEND TIME LISTENING TO YOUR CHILD PRACTICE. Ask for your "favorite song" and encourage your child to play for others and family. When wrong notes and hesitation occur, suggest:
 - Practicing in short session, a few measures at a time.
 - Practicing more slowly!
 - Checking the written notes carefully to make sure they have been read correctly.
 - ATTEND A LESSON AT SCHOOL! You are always welcome to visit and sit in on a lesson.

If at any time you have questions about your child's progress or in how to help him/her be successful, don't hesitate to contact the teacher.

Adapted from *The Musical Partnership* (source unknown)

Sample Practice Strategies

Source: Barry & Hallam (2002); Jørgensen (2004)

- Goal Setting - Verbal or Written (e.g., a practice log or journal)
- Mental Rehearsal / Silent Analysis
- Mapping = playing through the entire piece and then addressing trouble spots
- Marking the Music
- Small Section Rehearsal through Repetitive Drill
- Simplification/Chunking
- Varying Tempo
- Recording or Listening to Recording
- Singing
- Modeling

Rehearsal Critique Form

Write down your observations of your own (and/or your section's) and the band's performance, indicating the MEASURES that were played particularly well or that need to be improved. Next specify the MUSICAL DIMENSIONS (such as rhythm, intonation, tone, balance, articulation, phrasing, dynamics, etc.) under question in those measures. Finally, state your ideas for PRACTICING the measures you've specified.

		Observations of Performance	Practicing Strategies
<i>Measure Numbers</i>	<i>Musical Dimension(s)</i>	<i>My (Section's) Performance</i>	<i>For Myself (My Section)</i>
		(filled out immediately after performance)	
<i>Measure Numbers</i>	<i>Musical Dimension(s)</i>	<i>Band's Performance</i>	<i>For the Whole Band</i>
		(filled out after listening to recorded performance)	

Adapted from Winner, Davidson, & Scripp (1992).

Practice Strategies

<i>Strategy</i>	<i>Say What?</i>	<i>Here's What You Do</i>
SLO' MO'	Slow Motion. Slow It Down. Get It Right.	Play each section as slow as you can. Try for accuracy in getting every note exactly right. Speed it up once you're awesome!
CHUNK IT!	Break Down the Music Into Small Parts	Break each section down into 1 or 2 note pieces. Once you play these two notes right, add 1 more, and then 1 more... and 1 more...
PENCIL POWER!	Write It In!	A two-cent pencil can save you hundreds of hours of frustration. Isn't there a pencil in your band folder? Why not???
FIVE TIMES BEATS THE GRIND!	Play Each Section Through Five Times Perfectly Before Going On	Play each section through five times without any mistakes. If you can't play it five times perfectly, go back and start at time number one and try again... and again...
THINK IT, SEE IT, DO IT!	Practice Without Your Instrument	Put your instrument in its case. Try tapping the rhythm on your lap (or coffee table at home). Blow an air instrument while fingering along. Try blowing as if you were going to play.
FORGETTA'BOUT IT!	Go On To Something You Do Well Then Come Back To The Challenging Section	Having trouble? De-stress by going back to something you can play really well (Hot Cross Buns, anyone?) and once you feel good again, hit the challenging sections.
IDOL AUDITION	Sing It Through. Make the Windows Shatter!	Maybe you're not the next Miley Cyrus or Nick Jonas, but singing the passage out loud as if no one is listening will make you better faster! Try to sing the same pitches as your instrument.
SIMPLE THOUGHTS REALLY ARE SIMPLE!	Don't Stress! Keep Your Wits About You. Go Back To Basics!	You're always trying to get away with doing less work anyway, right? Slow down your brain. Break everything down into its smallest part. Success comes quickly this way!
RECORD YOURSELF	Get A Computer, CD Player, Or Tape Player. Listen To What You REALLY Sound Like.	So maybe you're not going to impress your mom or record executives like Elvis did, but listening to yourself on a recording is a great way to hear what's really coming out of your instrument!

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