

How to Practice

Did you know that studies say that to become an expert in something, you need to practice that something for 10,000 hours? That's definitely true for a lot of things, and playing an instrument is one of them. But where do we start? This guide will give you the tools you need to build up a practice routine that will help you log in those hours and achieve your musical goals!

Step 1. Make a warmup routine- Before you even look at the music on your stand, make sure you do a warmup. This could be anything you want. Going through some scales slowly is a great place to start. I love spending some time on open strings-just playing long tones, rhythms, and string crossings is a great way to keep check on your bow hand and rhythmic coordination. If you know you'll be playing for a long time, do some hand and arm stretches to make sure you stay flexible. What's most important is that you spend this time engaging your brain. Choose a technique to focus on like intonation, tone consistency, or rhythm and keep your ears open so you can improve on the technique you decided to focus on.

Step 2. Find the hard parts- Take some time to look through the music to plan out what parts you need to spend the most time on. Circle all the passages that you have tripped you up or look like they will trip you up if you're looking at a new piece. Look for fast passages, complicated-looking rhythms, and accidentals-these are all clues that it is a hard passage.

Step 3. Break it down- What is hard about the passage? Are the notes challenging? Is the rhythm confusing? Does it have string crossings? Is it just really fast? Let's break it down to deal with all these issues. Try practicing the passage in this order:

Rhythm- Clap out the rhythm. If you have a metronome, awesome, use it! Set it to a slow tempo, count yourself off and get clapping. If not, be your own metronome by tapping your foot and saying the count out loud while you clap.

Notes- Say the name of the note out loud as you pluck it on your instrument. This could be tough to coordinate, so go slow! This might be easy for you, or it might seem impossible. Either way don't skip this step, I know you can do it!

Bowing- Air bow the passage. This is especially crucial if there are slurs. If you ever have a hard time with a bowing, make sure you write the bowing in above the note and practice air bowing it. Sometimes, seeing the bowing is enough to remind us to do it, but we should still practice it!

Step 4. Put it all together...Slowly- Once you've went through the whole breakdown of the passage, try playing it in a slow tempo. If it's a really long passage, go measure by measure until every measure is easy.

Step 5. Bring it up to tempo...Gradually- Once it's easy to play the passage in a slow tempo, try it in a slightly faster tempo. Every time it's easy in one tempo, take it a little faster, and faster, until you can play it in tempo.

Whether you are just starting out on your instrument or you have been playing for years and are playing big repertoire, these steps will work for you.

Follow this guide and you will be learning your pieces and improving on your instrument in no time!