

How to Practice

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This practice routine has some ideas on practicing, particularly when not playing for someone regularly.

1. Maintenance (20-30 min.)

In this part of your practice, try to briefly "hit" as many aspects of playing as possible. By doing a routine similar to the one shown on page two, you can clearly evaluate what needs to be worked on and what doesn't. Don't get bogged down in this part of your practice--play many different things briefly, and use this information as the basis for what will be done in part 2 of your practice.

2. Specific Technical Practice (60-90 min.)

Assign specific technical studies for a reason. Put a date on assigned material, and do it regularly for 6-10 practice sessions. Keep a record of your assigned materials in a notebook, with the date. Try to jot down some comments on your practice in this notebook. Go on to new material after 6-10 sessions even if the material is not perfected. Set modest goals for yourself and achieve them. Setting big goals tends to be frustrating. Improvement at anything is done in small steps---not big leaps.

3. Musical (30-45 min.)

Remember that Nos. 1 & 2 are done for a reason--to perfect a technique that will allow us to express ourselves musically in an effortless way. Technique should be improved out of a need to have more resources to use musically--not just for the sake of improvement. An enormous vocabulary is not useful unless we can express thoughts more concisely by having it.

Play easy material regularly and beautifully---without technical considerations. If an Arban song or Concone study can be done in this way, then more difficult material---like solos and orchestral excerpts--will also be able to be played easily with practice. Make technique a natural expressive tool, not an end in itself. Play with others as often as possible. Music is a social and communicative art and we should relate musically to others easily. Making music requires more flexibility and thought than practicing, and needs to be done regularly.