



Ten Best ways To Practice



Practicing music is a daily routine (like eating food) and nothing done everyday is fascinating every single time. Set out with the understanding that there will be good and bad days with practicing being everything from exhilarating to occasionally agonizing. The following strategies can help make your practice more deliberate and music more fantastic:

1. DIVIDE & CONQUER

Break your music into many smaller sections. Use numbers to indicate these sections. This will help with learning and memorizing.

2. LEARN ITALIAN

Define every musical term in your piece. This includes all the Italian and other language markings. Make a separate list or write the definition directly in the music. Grazie!

3. FINGERINGS BEFORE FINGERS

Incorrect fingerings often lead to big problems (e.g. steady beat, speed). Solve all the finger puzzles for your difficult sections first by writing in fingering numbers. This is especially applicable for **chords** and **scale-like** passages.

4. PLAYING ≠ PRACTICE

Short, daily goals are the most important. Instead of just playing through the whole piece, work on small sections with exact goals in mind. Make each small section great instead of a bunch of sections just good enough.

5. SLOW PRACTICE = FAST LEARNING

Practice slow and in great detail. Use a tempo that allows you to play the music perfect and beautiful. The right tempo will yield ZERO mistakes. **Don't think of it as playing slow, think of it as learning fast.**

6. HIGH FIVES

Practice a small area FIVE-TIMES-IN-A-ROW with no mistakes. If an error occurs go back to zero. Do the same with the next area. Then, connect the two parts together FIVE-TIMES. Keep linking areas together this way. Pennies, marbles, or candies are a fun way to keep track.

7. OUT OF ORDER

Start your practice in a section that is not the beginning (e.g. the middle or the very end). You can make this practice fun by rolling dice or pulling numbers out of a jar to see what sections you practice.

8. TECHNICAL (UN-) DIFFICULTIES

Daily technique practice is an investment that pays off by making the music easier (e.g. strength and freedom). Scales, arpeggios, Czerny, and etudes are excellent ways to improve technique. **Don't miss a daily chance to be better.**

9. OUT OF FOCUS

Feeling your attention wander? Then change things up: a) listen to a recording, b) watch a video of your piece, c) play a musical practice game, d) practice two octaves apart, e) memorize something new in your music, f) sightread something new, g) perform for someone in the house, or h) record yourself and send it to Dr. Huang

10. PICK UP THE P.A.C.E.

- Patience: Take delight in the good practice days and be patient on the rough times. Your work will pay off!
- Attention: Keep the room quiet and turn off all your electronic attention grabbers. Focus on your sound and goals.
- Curiosity: Make a habit of quizzing yourself. When a problem occurs start asking questions immediately! Good questions are: *What happened? Why? How can I fix it? How did that sound? Was it better than before? If so, how? If not, why? Was that my best? What are my goals today?*
- Ears: To be sure your music is worth hearing you must listen to your sound. Ask yourself "Would I want to hear this sound in a concert or on a recording?" One excellent item to listen for is a *beautiful tone*.

-Practice with only your fingers and you'll need all day; Practice with your mind and you'll need just a fraction of that time-



Ten Awful ways To Practice



1. AUTOPILOT

Just start from the beginning and fumble through to the end. Be sure not to listen, look, or think - use fingers only.

2. BROKEN RECORD

Repeat step 1 with even less steady-beat and more mindless playing. Play like a zombie would!

3. BROKEN WORLD RECORD HOLDER

Just keep repeating step 1 ad nauseum! You will soon win the gold medal in BAD piano.

4. MISTAKE, WHAT MISTAKE?!?

Make mistakes and continue without stopping and correcting troubled areas.

5. ONE TRUE LOVE

Practice only the parts you like or can already play well. Skip over the challenging sections. Maybe they'll go just away!

6. NEED FOR SPEED

Practice fast. Better yet, practice really fast and get pulled over for speeding.

7. FINGERS = TOES

Forget about the fingerings! They are too bothersome and not really that important, right? You have ten toes too and don't use numbers for them - so what's the difference? Blah to fingerings.

8. SEE NO EVIL, HEAR NO EVIL

Be sure not to listen to your sound. Balance and tone are too much trouble so just play everything loud or everything soft. Mezzo-blah is an option too.

9. TECHNICAL TANTRUM

Skip all technique work including scales, cadences, arpeggios, and/or Czerny. These exercises just make you feel tired anyhow, right?

10. SKIPPING BEHIND

Skip many days of practice and making music. Instead, cram in a session now and then - or crazier yet, practice *only* the day before your lesson.

Additional sources used:

"Practicing the Piano" by Nancy O'Neill Breth | "A Better Way To Practice" by Nao Kageyama

www.huangpianostudio.com
