

Practice Tips

Routines and Strategies

Minutes	Activity	Focus	Why?
5-10	Warm-up	Play Long Tones Play All Notes (Full Range Possible) Articulation & Tonguing Drums: Rudiments	These isolation activities allow you to focus on tone quality, intonation, muscle memory, and aural (listening) skills
10-20	Technique	Scales Faster exercises Etudes	This is your most focused concentration... the time where you will work the hardest to improve your playing. Play with a purpose.
10-20	Book Songs Band Music	Concentrate on the songs in your book and your band music using the strategies listed below.	Work on your band music at home so that you know your part well for band rehearsals. Your method book is where you will make the most improvement as a musician. It's all in the technique.
5-10	Warm-down	Play something you enjoy for fun. This should be less challenging and less stressful music that is easier to play. Brass: play the low range to relax.	Give your brain a break and enjoy the success of your hard work.

Practicing Strategies

Strategy	Title	Description
1	Slow Motion	Slow the tempo down and make sure you can play it accurately before speeding up.
2	Count & Clap	Write in your counting and practice clapping the rhythm before playing it.
3	Patterns	Look for rhythm patterns first. Then, look for melodic patterns. Steps? Skips? Leaps? Practice those patterns before playing the whole passage.
4	Slur motion	Slur articulated (tongued) passage first, listening for tone quality, evenness of notes and accuracy. Then go back and tongue the passage.
5	Mark-it	Use your pencil to mark areas where you are having difficulty.
6	Metronome	Practice with a metronome to improve your timing (steady beat). The metronome will keep you honest with speeding up, slowing down, and overall rhythmic sense.

More Strategies

Strategy	Title	Description
7	Mirror, Mirror, On the Wall	Practice with a mirror. You can watch embouchure, posture, stick height, breathing and tonguing. This is excellent for flute players!
8	Double the Fun	Practice with a friend. You can help each other.
9	Divide & Conquer	Break your music up into small chunks to practice short sections at a time. Slowly put those sections together as you gain confidence with each small section.
10	Technology Truth	Record yourself with your chromebook. You can use the audio and/or the video recording features to evaluate your own playing.
11	Are you listening?	Listen to yourself for good tone quality. Winds- are you using the correct vowel shape? Brass- are your teeth apart. How can you make it sound better? Do you like the way you sound?
12	Do you hear what I hear?	Try to hear the note before you play it. Visualize how the note sounds and how your muscles should feel when you play a certain note.
13	Just Sing!	Sing your part before you play it.
14	Divide and Conquer 2: The Sequel	Focus on only one aspect of your playing: 1. Articulation 2. Breathing/sticking 3. Dynamics 4. Expression 5. Fingerings 6. Intonation (using a tuner) 7. Music Reading 8. Phrasing 9. Rhythms 10. Technique 11. Tempo 12. Tone Quality
15	High Altitude (Brass & Woodwinds only)	Try changing the vowel shape in your mouth: As you play higher from low to high your mouth/tongue should move- oh, ah, eh, ih (for clarinets: eh, ih, ee)
16	Bumble Bees and Snakes (Brass & Woodwinds only)	Brass: Buzz your mouthpiece to imitate a kazoo for your songs. Woodwinds: Hiss your music to get a feel for the rhythm and wind pattern.

Additional thoughts...

Take a break: Get a drink of water; Floss like a boss; Do something nice for your family;
Our brains need a rest after 30 minutes of strenuous mind exercise.
Frustration is part of learning, so **come back to it when you are calm.**

Aim for a specific goal: Hit your target by taking careful aim and **stick with it until it sticks.**
If you get it right, do it again to prove it wasn't luck.
Take time to learn it correctly and **achieve your goal every practice session.**

Play with a purpose: Instead of practice, **think of everything you play as a performance.**

Make it a routine: Schedule the **same time to practice each day** and make it a routine. 30-60 min.

Give full attention: Spend time on **music that needs your full attention**, especially if it's not easy.
Going through the motions reinforces muscle memory, so remember...
Practice makes permanent - even if it's permanently wrong. Get it right!

Use your chromebook: When you **record yourself on any device**, it provides instant feedback!