

Practice Without Your Instrument?

Much of playing music and being a musician is mental, not physical. That means you can practice music anywhere you are. You don't need your instrument to practice a lot of the things there are to master. In music there are many technical things to memorize. There is ear training. There is rhythm. There is harmony. Learning all these things, and many others, doesn't always require an instrument in your hands. Don't miss out on the constant learning opportunities you have all day, every day.

Visualization

One of the most powerful ways you can practice is mentally visualizing plucking the strings or pressing down the notes on the keyboard or trumpet, sax etc. You will be surprised how effective this can be. Sometimes it's as good as practicing with your instrument. Visualize yourself practicing something and then pick up your instrument and see how well you can play it. You might be surprised at how well it works.

Down Time

Whenever you have some down time during the day, use it to mentally rehearse something. Maybe you're stuck in traffic, waiting for a bus, waiting in line at the grocery store or any of the other time wasting situations we get caught in every day. Use that time to practice!

My Cue Practice Method

The difficult aspect of practicing mentally is remembering to do it throughout the day. The Cue Practice Method helps students remember to practice throughout the day. The way it works is you pick some event that occurs often during your daily life. Make that event a cue reminding you to practice something quickly in your head. Anything can serve as a cue. Every time you look at your watch, when you drink from a water fountain, when you turn a doorknob — practice for a moment. Pick something you do frequently throughout the day and use it as a trigger to practice. Short and frequent repetition is essential to effective memorization. This really does the trick. And, it's easy and painless.

Eventually doing this becomes a habit. I would always pick one simple thing to practice for a few days or all week. Perhaps hum a particular arpeggio.

Listen, Listen...It's Music!!!

Music surrounds us everywhere we go — shops, restaurants, etc. Use that music to practice! It doesn't matter whether you like the music or not. You can try to find examples of concepts you are studying. You can identify if it's a major or minor key. You can identify a song's time signature. You can mentally transcribe the chords or rhythms. Any musical concept you can think of can be listened for. What about things that aren't traditionally considered music? You can use that, too! Sing harmonies to the hum of car's motor. Drop some silverware on the floor? How would you transcribe the rhythmic clatter? All these great sounds are occurring around us all the time. It's all waiting to teach you something.