

Why Practice?

Practicing is simply the only way to get better. It is obvious that, much to our dismay, *not* practicing just doesn't work. (It's a real bummer, I know.) Occasional practicing or very inconsistent practicing also doesn't work well.

A common way people try to improve their playing is by throwing money at it. Buying books, videos, having lessons and going to clinics does not improve your playing. Only *practicing* what is presented in them improves your playing.

With that said, keep the following things in mind:

- Don't think about practicing – **Practice!**
- Don't buy more stuff to practice – **Practice the things you have!**
- Don't buy more equipment – **Practice on the equipment you have!**
- Don't put it off – **Practice now!**

You've got to practice. It's the only way to get better. If playing an instrument didn't require practice, everyone would be able to do it. Think about how few people you encounter that can play a musical instrument well. Playing well is not easy to come by. It takes a lot of work. And, it is work anyone can do if they want it badly enough.

Practicing will be one of the most rewarding things you will do for yourself. The skills you develop are yours through hard work. They can't be bought. They can't be taken away from you.

Many other daily activities in which we engage don't have the same lasting results like practicing gives us. There is little reward for watching TV or playing video games. I'm not suggesting you shouldn't do these things. But, I am suggesting for you to evaluate the things you do in your day-to-day life. Ask yourself if you are getting something you want for the time you contribute to each activity. If you want to relax, you could watch TV. But if you want to play your instrument well, you need to practice your instrument.

Set your priorities. How good of a player do you want to be? How good you can be depends on how much time you can put into it and focusing on the right things to study. Once you know what you want to achieve, ask yourself if it is a reasonable goal. Will you have enough time to achieve your aim? If you're going to school, have two jobs and a child, you're going to have a hard time fitting in the necessary practice to become the best musician in the world.

Raise or lower your expectations based on your situation. This may not sound motivating but, if your expectations are too high and you don't achieve them, you may be severely disappointed and quit all together. Be reasonable and do what you can. Push yourself, but don't make your goals impossible and don't set yourself up for defeat.

Once you have an idea of how good you want to be, you must develop a practice routine that will get you there. Your actions must match your desires. A lot of students say they want to achieve great heights, but then don't perform the actions that will get them there.

Learn to balance your other commitments and activities with your practice time. If you're serious about learning to play, you're going to have to sacrifice more than if you just want to play a little for fun. This can be hard to do. Ask

yourself with every activity in which you engage, "Is this more important or more rewarding than becoming a good player?" Sometimes it is, and many times it isn't.

One of my favourite musical anecdotes:

A famous musician performed yet another brilliant concert. After the concert a woman backstage said to the musician, "Sir, I would give my life to play like you play." The musician replied, "Ma'am, I did."

Practicing is a necessary sacrifice you are going to have to make if you want to play your instrument and be a musician.