

**JMU SCHOOL OF MUSIC**  
**TIPS FOR EFFECTIVE AND EFFICIENT PRACTICING**

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Whether your goals are simply to enjoy playing the flute as a pastime, to perform in some kind of public performance setting, or to become the best flutist you can be, whether you are working with a teacher or teaching yourself, practicing is an important part of learning an instrument.

Here are a few tips to make your practicing more efficient and effective.

- ❖ HOW, WHEN, and WHY you practice are all important considerations.
- ❖ When you practice, you are enforcing habits, physical, mental and aural, so it's important to be solidifying GOOD habits.
- ❖ Be disciplined and focused about your practice. Make the time that you're spending on practicing count.
- ❖ Have a plan. Before you begin, have a good idea about what you want to accomplish. Your plan may change after you get into it, but if your time is limited, tackle the toughest things first.
- ❖ Keep a notebook or journal of your practice sessions. You'll have a record of what you've accomplished and will help you keep track of what you still need to do.
- ❖ Balance warm-ups, technical exercises, sight-reading (!), etudes, and repertoire.
- ❖ Keep a notebook of lesson notes. Having a record of what you and teacher discuss can help keep your practice focused and help you to remember key suggestions or improvements from your lessons.
- ❖ Pretend that your teacher or a performer that you admire or respect is in the room with you. Try to listen to yourself objectively.
- ❖ Stretch!
- ❖ Take breaks every 20-25 minutes, or sooner if working on difficult technical passages.
- ❖ Concentrate on posture. Have an awareness of tension, pain, etc. Stand in your practice if you're accustomed to performing while standing. If you sit for part of your practice session, sit on a supportive chair, not your bed! Practice with a stand at a height that won't force your neck to be out of alignment.

- ❖ Record your practice sessions. This is especially important if you are not currently working with a teacher.
- ❖ Isolate technical problems.
- ❖ Don't continuously play through pieces. This method helps with stamina, but technical problems don't get any easier or better.
- ❖ Technical passages that are difficult in the practice room will be even more precarious under pressure in a performance, so it's important to REALLY work them out in the practice room.
- ❖ When learning a new piece, try to grasp the overall idea of the piece as soon as possible, not just notes. Get as many of the dynamic markings and correct notes the first time through. Remember that a "first reading" only happens once.
- ❖ Use a metronome and tuner regularly.
- ❖ Be careful about doing senseless repetitions without goals or concentration.
- ❖ Visualize. Practice mentally. Hear in your head exactly how you want to play a passage. Consider how you want to turn a phrase or where you want the line to go.
- ❖ Be creative! Find alternative solutions to problems. Explore new musical ideas. Try a phrase in many different ways so you have options. Then decide what works, and what feels and sounds the best!