

APPENDIX A

Complete List of Practice Strategies

Section I

Chapter 1: Good Practicing and How It Changes the Brain

- Start with your hard spots:
 - Figure out *why* you are having trouble as precisely as you can.
 - Break the problem down into smaller, manageable parts.
 - Solidify the solution using one of the methods below:
 - Play it correctly at least five times in a row.
 - Overlearning: If it took you 10 tries to get it right, do at least 5 correct repetitions (50% overlearning); 10 is even better (100% overlearning).
- Ask: “Which pathway am I reinforcing by how I’m practicing?”
- Intonation:
 - Stop on the note in question.
 - *Don’t* adjust.
 - Figure out whether it’s flat or sharp.
 - Stop on the note in question until it’s perfectly in tune without adjusting to achieve at least 50% overlearning.

Chapter 2: Practice Like a Pro

- Keep going when you feel frustrated.
- Use the Three Step Model:
 - Step 1: Set specific goals.
 - Step 2: Monitor your progress toward those goals closely.
 - Record yourself and listen back to help with this step.
 - Step 3: Evaluate how you did and precisely why things did or didn’t go well.
- Divide your music into Red, Yellow, and Green sections. Start with the Red sections.
 - Red = emergencies.
 - Yellow = not great, but not emergencies.
 - Green = acceptable for now.
- Work backward.

Chapter 3: Use Errors to Your Advantage

- Amplification of error:
 - Exaggerate the main cause of the bad habit.

- Old way/new way:
 - Step 1: Watch a video of the old way and the new way.
 - Step 2: Perform and describe the old way.
 - Step 3: Perform and describe the new way.
 - Step 4: Alternate between the old way and the new way (perform and describe).
 - Step 5: Do the new way several times.
- Instead of practicing in front of a mirror, video-record yourself and watch back.

Section II

Chapter 4: The Fastest Way to Learn Music: Take More Breaks

- Practice for shorter amounts of time with breaks in between.
- Microbreaks:
 - Do three correct repetitions.
 - Take a 10-second break.
 - Do three more correct repetitions.
 - If any of the repetitions had errors, start over and repeat the process.
- During longer breaks, practice contrasting music.
- Avoid retroactive interference:
 - Take a 6-hour break between practicing two very similar passages when they are new.

Chapter 5: Can You Learn Music in Your Sleep?

- Get a full night of sleep to enhance performance the next day.
- Take a short nap or just rest quietly after practicing to boost learning.
- Take a nap between practicing similar passages to mitigate retroactive interference.

Chapter 6: What's the Perfect Schedule of Breaks?

- Err on the side of longer breaks.
- Breaks should be shorter when music is new, longer when you know it better:
 - Microbreaks.
 - Revisit the same passage two to three times within a day when new.
 - Once something is comfortable, take a day or two off from practicing it.
- My practice schedule for new music:
 - Three days in a row then take a day off.
 - Every other day three times (Monday, Wednesday, Friday), then take a week off.
 - Three days in a row, then take two weeks off.
 - Three days in a row.
 - Three is the average: sometimes it's two days, sometimes four.

Chapter 7: Be More Consistent in Performance

- Use interleaved practice to help prepare for performance.
- Serial practice:
 - Make a list of hard spots and perform each spot, one after the other.
 - A good performance gets a tick mark for that spot.
 - A poor performance means you must erase any tick marks you've already gotten for that spot.
 - The goal is to get five tick marks per spot.
- Interval timer practice:
 - Every time the timer goes off, perform your chosen spot.
- Time-constrained practice:
 - Switch what you're working on every two to five minutes.
- Perform in a random order:
 - Divide your music into sections, number them, and then draw numbers at random.
- Interleaved practice for new music:
 - Return to spots practiced previously after working on other music in the interim.
- Late night/early morning mock performance.

Chapter 8: Why Exact Repetitions May Not Be the Best Goal

- See Appendix C for instrument-specific ideas.
- Practice at a variety of tempos.
- Practice with different expressive parameters (separately or combined):
 - Articulations.
 - Tone colors.
 - Dynamics.
 - Vibratos.
- Play with opposite articulations and/or dynamics.
- Create a skeleton version of the piece.
- Fill in longer note values with subdivided repeated notes.
- Play a passage with a variety of different emotional intentions.
- Play a passage as if you were different famous musicians.
- Alternate between physical and mental practice, one bar at a time.
- Introduce small physical challenges:
 - Eyes closed.
 - Walking in a circle.
 - Walking backward.
 - Standing on one leg.
 - Bend knees/going up on tip-toes.

Section III

Chapter 9: The Power of Mental Practice

- Try to feel and hear everything you need to be aware of while playing, but inside your head.

- Try dynamic mental practice: move slightly while you hear/feel the music inside your head.
- Try AOMI: watch someone (or yourself) perform what you're working on while practicing mentally at the same time.

Chapter 10: Mental Practice and the Brain

- 20 minutes of mental practice seems to be the optimal amount of time before taking a break.
- Try alternating between mental and physical practice.
- Try to hear the exact quality of sound and intonation you want.
- For kids: imagine watching yourself playing on a big TV on the wall.

Chapter 11: How to Focus to Play Your Best

- Focus on quality of sound and expressive intent rather than the details of what your body must do.
- Focus on what the instrument has to do rather than what the body has to do.
- A focus closer to the body is better at lower skill levels; a focus farther from the body is better at higher skill levels.
- Give feedback that focuses on the effect of the action rather than the physical mechanics of the action.
- Use analogies instead of language that focuses on body mechanics.

Chapter 12: The Most Effective Ways to Memorize Music

- Chunk your music for deeper encoding.
- Use performance cues to help with encoding:
 - Structural cues (best).
 - Expressive cues (best).
 - Interpretive cues.
 - Basic cues.
- Have multiple copies of your music marked differently:
 - Structural landmarks.
 - Harmonic analysis.
 - Expressive words for each phrase/section.
- Solidify muscle memory, auditory memory, and declarative memory separately:
 - Muscle memory
 - Play without sound (from memory).
 - De-tune your instrument and play from memory.
 - Auditory memory
 - Sing from memory (neutral syllable, solfège, note names, finger numbers).
 - Sing then play one note at a time.

- Declarative memory
 - Draw a formal diagram from memory.
 - Write out your music from memory on a blank piece of staff paper.
- Work on developing the auditory/motor coactivation:
 - Figure out something by ear every day on your instrument.
 - Play something from memory every day on your instrument.

Chapter 13: Boost Confidence in Memorized Performance

- Get enough sleep for optimal consolidation.
- Practice the hardest section to memorize last before sleep and first thing the next day.
- Practice retrieval until it is automatic.
- Aim to have all your music memorized at least six weeks before the performance.
- Start testing your memory from the very beginning of learning something new.
- If you can't remember what comes next, try to figure it out by listening to a recording rather than looking at the music right away.
- Mental practice from memory.
- Use the serial practice list technique to test memory (Chapter 7).
- Play from memory in a random order.
- Use an interval timer to test memory.
- Video-record yourself playing from memory in the practice room.
- Play from memory while thinking about big picture things:
 - Sound.
 - Expression.
 - Phrasing.
 - Character.
 - Musical intentions.
- Play from memory for others often leading up to the performance.

Section IV

Chapter 14: Improving Rhythm and Tempo

- To improve sense of pulse, have the metronome click:
 - On off-beats only.
 - Every other beat.
 - Every downbeat only.
 - Every other downbeat only.
 - Every third downbeat only.
 - Use TimeGuru or TonalEnergy with the random mute function.
- Walk in place to develop an internal sense of pulse.
- Walk in place musically, so step depth shows metrical/musical hierarchy.

Chapter 15: Improving Pitch and Intonation

- Use a pitch discrimination app like InTune to improve your ear.
- Practice singing the individual notes of dissonant intervals out loud while playing both.
- Sing what you are playing out loud.
- Use a drone instead of a tuner.
- Work to develop your audiation abilities:
 - Sing scales, intervals, and simple songs in your head.
 - Sing a drone in your head while playing.
 - Play a scale and don't go to the next note until you can hear it in your head first.

Chapter 16: How to Play Faster

- Play in different rhythms.
- Play in different slurring patterns.
- Click up the passage with the metronome.
- Use interleaved clicking up #1 to learn fast passages.
- Use interleaved clicking up #2 to simulate playing at tempo.
- Use at-tempo chunking to simulate playing at tempo.
- Use at-tempo chunking for runs in asymmetrical triplets.
- Practice in multiples (8, 4, 3, 2) for techniques that don't work at slower tempos.

Conclusion: Bringing It All Together

- Use a practice journal to write:
 - Goals.
 - Problems and their solutions.
 - A list of what your teacher said in your lesson.
 - A list of what to work on in your next practice session.
- Scheduling:
 - Don't practice more than five hours a day.
 - Take at least a 5-minute break every 25–30 minutes.
 - Take at least a 90-minute break every 60–90 minutes.
- Focus:
 - Put on a timer for a short amount of time and gradually increase to work on the ability to focus.
 - Give yourself an uncomfortably short amount of time to work on something.
 - Set a timer to go off every 5–10 minutes and when it does, explain out loud your goal in that moment, what strategy you are using, and why.
- Motivation
 - Figure out ahead of time when you are going to practice. Put it in your planner.
 - Be flexible: if your schedule gets disrupted, don't throw it all out the window.
 - Start small: do one tiny thing that feels manageable.

- Use the Red-Yellow-Green method (Chapter 2) to combat overwhelm.
- Use habit-bundling to link something you like to do/are already in the habit of doing with practicing.
- Find a practice buddy and hold each other accountable.
- Prioritize rest: if you're exhausted and burnt out, you won't feel like practicing.