

Practice Tips:

The most important thing when studying any musical instrument is regular, daily practice. Typically, for beginners, 15-20 minutes per day is enough to make good progress without causing injury. As you progress, you will want to work your way up to 30-45 minutes per day. Advanced players should be practicing for an hour or more each day. You should not miss more than one or two days of practice in a week.

Maximize Your Practice Time:

First, it is a good idea to have a dedicated location that is free of distraction. You should have your tuner, metronome, music stand, and a pencil handy so you're not stopping to search for anything.

It is also a good idea to have a fixed practice time. After breakfast or after dinner are common practice times that work well for many. If you can, you should practice within 6-8 hours after a lesson. It has been shown that reviewing new material within 6 hours and again within 24 hours will maximize your retention of any new information.

Warm Up:

It is always a good idea to warm up for about 5 minutes before working on anything new or demanding. Play a few familiar pieces, ideally from memory, to warm up your fingers.

Follow your warm-up with a few scales and/or exercises. Really focus on your technique and listen carefully to what you are playing. Don't spend any more than 5 minutes on scales and exercises as, done right, they demand a high level of concentration.

Work On Your New Repertoire:

When working on a piece, play through the whole piece (or a whole section in longer pieces) once, then go back and focus on problem areas. Repeat difficult passages slowly with a metronome and gradually build up speed as you get more comfortable.

Once you can play a piece comfortably, work on memorizing it. Often with complex pieces, you will find that you already have it memorized before you can play it comfortably.

When learning or memorizing a piece, try starting from the end. Work on the last two bars, the last line, the last two lines, and so on. This way, when you perform the piece, you will be increasingly familiar with it as you move through it.

Finish up your practice time with something that you enjoy playing and can play well.

Perform:

Finally, one of the best ways to improve your playing is to perform for people. This can be with family, or friends, or, if you are really brave, at a local "open mic" night. If you aren't ready for that, try recording or video taping yourself.