HOW TO MAKE PRACTICING LESS HORRIBLE

By Erin Doyle

1. **Create a System**

Decide on a set amount of hours or a specific time each day that you will practice. This will help motivate you to practice. If you think you’ll need help following through with your system, tell it to someone else and have that person hold you accountable.

1. **Take Breaks**

You really shouldn’t be practicing more than 30 minutes at a time without taking a break. You need to give your hands and your brain a rest! You’re allowed to take breaks. You will also be more motivated to work hard if you know you have a break coming up. Spreading your practicing out into small chunks throughout the day is often more productive than trying to practice for hours at a time.

1. **Reward Yourself**

Try to get your practicing done before you do anything fun. Reward yourself. Sometimes I will practice 30 minutes and then take a break and watch an episode on Netflix. Sometimes I will save my most fun music for last, and only play it after I finish everything else.

1. **Don’t Watch the Clock**

Set timers to keep track of how long you’ve been practicing.

1. **Avoid All Distractions**

Turn off your phone!

1. **Set Goals**

Decide on a specific technique to focus on for the day (such as vibrato or intonation).

Decide which piece or which section of a piece will be your focus. For long and difficult pieces, divide them up into manageable sections and focus on one section at a time.

1. **Try New Ways of Practicing**

Here are a few things I do to keep my practice sessions interesting:

Play along with a recording.

Record myself and watch it.

Sightread something new.

Try to play something by ear.

1. **Play Music You Like**

Don’t forget why you became a musician in the first place! Yes, I know there’s some horrible stuff that you have to practice. But try to always be working on some piece that interests you. If you’ve lost your love for a piece, try playing it straight through once without worrying about playing it correctly. Allow yourself to get lost in the beauty of the piece and remember what made you love it in the first place.

1. **Remember the Point of All This Practicing**

Remember: you can practice for hours and make no progress. But every once in a while, you will experience a break-through moment. And light will break forth from the heavens! Look out for these amazing moments. They are rare, but they can be found if you practice smart. Don’t just play the same thing the same way, over and over again. Think about WHY something isn’t working. And fix it. ☺

It takes 10,000 hours to master something.

Your hard work will pay off!!!