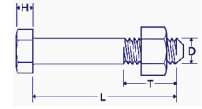


The Nuts and Bolts of a Practice Session

This is one of the under-explored secrets to musical success. Most musicians spend years practicing inefficiently or (gulp) not at all. Here is a simple structure to follow:



<p>1. WARM-UP: ➤ Technique Maintenance</p>	<p>This is just like an athletic warm-up. Check your form and get your muscles warm and firing. What should you play? Mindfully executed <u>Finger Exercises</u>, <u>Scales</u>, <u>Left Hand Patterns</u> or <u>Bowing Patterns</u>.</p> <p>CHECK YOUR</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Body Alignment, Instrument to Body ✓ Left Arm, Hand & Fingers ✓ Bow Arm, Hand & Fingers <p>➤ Many people find practicing in front of a mirror helps them “see” their technique. Fine tune your motions and listen for a robust tone.</p>
<p>2. SKILL BUILDING ➤ Medium-term Goals</p>	<p>This is where you work toward your “this month/this semester” type goals for yourself. The most common vehicles for this work are</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Exercises and Etudes 2. Solos 3. “Play-along” recordings 4. Professional Recordings/Videos 5. Books/Periodicals 6. Computer programs or websites dedicated to music learning.
<p>3. WOOD-SHEDDING ➤ Short-term Goals</p> <p><i>(i.e. getting away from everyday distractions - for example, out in the woodshed - to do focused work)</i></p>	<p>This is problem-solving, fine-tuning and polishing problem spots in specific pieces of music.</p> <p>KEYS TO SUCCESS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ WHOLE - Play the trouble phrase ✓ PART - Isolate the problem and use the most appropriate practice tool/tools (see reverse) ✓ WHOLE - Put it back into phrase context



Tools of the Trade:

Troubleshooting in the Practice Room

RHYTHM/METER

- Clap & Count - with a metronome
- Conduct & Count - with a metronome
- Play it Pizzicato - with a metronome
- Practice JUST the Bowing - with a metronome
- Practice JUST the Fingering - with a metronome

PITCH

- Sing the line
- Sing the line in Solfege
- Play the line on the piano
- Play against a Tonic Drone
- Play fingered pitches against an open string
- Check your hand pattern/handframe for correct whole step/half step relations.
- Play pitches together as a double stop (when the line crosses two or more strings)
- Play slowly with a tuner

PITCH IN POSITION WORK (same as above AND)

- Play nursery rhymes in the position to acclimate your fingers and ears to the smaller whole-steps & half-steps

TEMPO/AGILITY

- Play SLOWLY with a metronome. Be very deliberate about your motions, playing as efficiently as possible--no extra motion.
- Use the “3 Penny” Method (or practice beads). Move the metronome up 2 clicks each time you get all three pennies to the other side of your stand.
- Practice in Rhythm Patterns:

1 -2-3-4, 1 -2-3-4

1- 2 -3-4, 1- 2 -3-4

1 - 2 - 3 -4, 1 - 2 - 3 -4

1 -2 -3 - 4, 1 -2 -3 - 4

SHIFTING

- Isolate the shift and practice sliding smoothly, slowly and lightly from the starting note to the “shifting note” and back.
- *Ghost* the slide slowly and add the target note.
- Perform the shift under-tempo with a metronome. Slowly click up a la “3 Penny Method” (*see above*)
- Upper Strings - check that your octave handframe (1st & 4th fingers) is shifting as an octave in real time.
- Try other fingerings. Sometimes in the course of trying many options you discover a better one, or in trying to do harder ones, find you can execute your original fingering.