

## How To Practice

Rehearsal at school where we learn how our parts fit with other musicians' but to learn our own, we need to practice on our own. Practicing needs to be a regular habit and a regular routine will help reinforce the work you do. Here are a few points to make your practicing most effective.

**Practice at least 5 days a week:** It's better to have many short sessions than one long one every week. Learning to play an instrument is like training for a sport. You can't cram last minute, you need to prepare a bit every day. *Hint - If you don't take your instrument and music home, you likely are not practicing enough.*

**Schedule a regular practice time:** Put aside 30 minutes (even if you don't use it all!) to work every day and stick to the schedule. If you have to miss a session, make it up, don't skip it. *Hint – A failure to plan is planning to fail. Use the Practice Schedule assignment to schedule time based on your commitments and make adjustments as you need throughout the year.*

**Set short and long-term goals:** Think about what your goals are for this year, this term or this week. Then set what you want to accomplish during your practice session. Remember to review from your last rehearsal and prepare for the next. Remember these 3 questions: 1) What's not working? 2) How can I fix it? 3) What should I look at next? *Hint – Use a pencil in rehearsal to mark what you need to work on. Erase sections once you've fixed them and move on.*

**Let your goals set your practice time:** 30 minutes is a good guideline, but as long as you're being productive, 15 minutes of focus is better than 30 minutes of clock-watching.

**Focus on the hard parts:** Try to figure out what's difficult about that part (are the notes high, low, slow or fast, have you memorized the fingering/sticking/slide position?) and focus on one problem at a time. *Hint – If you sound good when you are practicing, you're working on the wrong material. Get comfortable with sounding bad as you improve*

**Concentrate:** Be mindful of what you're playing at that very moment. If your mind wanders while you work, you won't remember what you've practiced. What does your instrument feel like in your hands? How is your tongue hitting the reed? Find specific details to concentrate on if you find your mind wandering.

**Practice Slowly:** Slow and steady really does win the race. Practice as slowly as you need to get it right. Sometimes that's rrrreeaaallllyy sssllloowww. Once you can play something right, then try to speed it up. *Hint – Use a metronome!*

**Have Fun:** Finish off with something you enjoy. As you get better, you get to learn more challenging music that is more interesting to play and listen to. That is the point in the end, right?

## Suggested 30 Minute Practice Routine

Post this at home where you will see it and remember that 30 minutes is only a guideline. 15 minutes of focused and mindful practice is better than 30 minutes of clock watching.

- **Set-up – 5 minutes**
  - Find a quiet spot to practice. Put your instrument together carefully and be sure to moisten reeds, oil valves and grease corks.
  - Use a music stand. If you don't have one, get one
  - Sit in a good chair with no arms or stand so you can work on good posture and proper breathing.
- **Fundamentals – 5 minutes**
  - Practice Long-Tones, New Notes, Scales, Technique Builders
  - Breathe deeply, play slowly and listen carefully. Are you getting a good sound and are you in control? Are you using good posture?
- **Repertoire (our music) – 15 minutes (more or less)**
  - Work on the music that you have been assigned. Play along with the recordings online. Are you playing the right notes, rhythm and articulation?
  - Start with pieces assigned in rehearsal, then go on to sections you find particularly difficult.
  - Work slowly! Don't practice mistakes – if you have problems, stop and focus on them. Work in small chunks: one or two bars, then three or four – even start with one or two notes if you need to.
- **Fun Stuff – 5 minutes (more or less)**
  - Pick your favorite piece you know. Try something from later in the book. Try to learn something by ear.
  - Your choice – have fun with it!

### My Planned Practice Schedule

	Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
Time of Day							
Location							