

Tips on how to Practice

If a passage is hard, slow it down!

Don't be afraid to slow the passage down as much as you need to! Playing at slower speeds will help you make sure that you're hitting the right notes. Then, gradually bump up the tempo as you get more comfortable with the music.

Play the three penny game!

If you think you have a song or passage perfect, this is the test to make sure. Put three pennies on your stand. Play the piece of music. If you get it correct, move one of your pennies to the other side of the stand. Play the piece again. If you play it perfectly, move another penny to the other side of the stand. If you mess up, all the pennies you've moved have to come back to their starting point and you begin again! Play this way until all pennies make it to the other side of the stand. If you can do this, you've got that piece of music down!

A little bit at a time.

Practicing isn't just running through the pieces. When you practice, you play little bits of the piece that you have trouble with. Be sure you end with something you're good at, though!

Break it down!

If you're having trouble with a section, try breaking it down. Try clapping through the rhythm or playing the rhythm on a single note. OR, try playing the pitches and not worrying about the rhythm. Once you have both going well separately, it will be easier to put them together!

Remember the Details!

Pitches and rhythms are great to practice, but don't forget about the details. Aspects like dynamics, articulation, phrasing, and tempo are what make your performance musical!

Consistency.

Practicing 20 minutes each day of the week is much more productive than practicing 140 minutes in one day. Plus, it doesn't tire you out as much! Think of yourself like an athlete; they get better through consistent practice, not a bunch of practice one or two days a week.

Play with the CD that accompanies your book, recordings on jwpepper.com, and SmartMusic

You have a CD that comes with your book. Don't be afraid to use it! It plays accompaniments for each piece. Practicing in this way will give you both a better sense of consistent tempo and a better sense of intonation! Besides the CD that comes with your book, almost all of our concert pieces can be found on jwpepper.com and/or SmartMusic. Listening to the pieces and playing with the recording are both incredibly beneficial!