

Laura's Top 10 Practice Tips for Pianists (and parents)

Young beginners (ages 5-8): Practice at least 5 days every week. The amount of time isn't as important as getting into the habit of daily practice. Fifteen to twenty minutes daily may be enough.

Ages 9 and older: Practice at least 5 days per week for 30 minutes minimum, 45 minutes is better, and an hour a day is best! Students should refer to their practice binder/assignment page to see exactly what to practice.

1. Piano should be located where you can practice comfortably without interruptions or distractions. Keep clutter away from the piano, have books nearby and organized. Piano should be tuned at least once a year. For tuning, and regulation, I Paul Burleigh at Sodo Pianos, piano technician: <http://www.sodopianos.com/service.html>
2. Practice at the same time of day, if possible. Make practice a daily habit! For me, early morning works great! For you, right before or after school may be an ideal time.
3. Sit at the bench and take a few slow breaths to clear your mind before launching into practice. Look at the practice page to see what you are supposed to be practicing, work methodically, and thoroughly through your weekly assignments!
4. Start with scales, technique, finger exercise, sight-reading or an assigned warm-up.
5. Work on new material first. This requires the most brain power and concentration. Don't try to play all your new material at once, break it into bite sized pieces during the week. This may require tapping out rhythm, working hands alone, and putting hands together very slowly.
6. Listen for sticky places in your music, devote extra time to *wood-shedding* problem areas. Don't just speed through those mistakes while thinking problems are going to fix themselves. Roll up your sleeves and get to work!
7. Devote the middle of your practice time to pieces that are underway, but still need some work. Strive to include as much musicality as possible: expression, articulation, tempo, dynamics, tone, mood. Check for correct fingerings and notes!
8. Make friends with the metronome. Use the metronome as a tool to help you check yourself for even and appropriate tempo. Gradually increase the speed of your piece when necessary. (The metronome is particularly important for intermediate and advanced students, beginning students may be confused by the metronome in the early stages.)
9. The end of your practice is your reward for working hard. This is the time to review your polished pieces, play your favorite repertoire, also known as your back pocket pieces. The "Back pocket List" is a list of songs that have been completed, polished and ready to perform at a moment's notice.
10. If you only have 10 minutes.... Learn a few measures of new music and play a piece from your review list or your back pocket list to stay in shape!

For more in depth articles on practicing, I suggest these excellent articles from my good friend, and professional pianist, Rhonda Rizzo of the website: [No Dead Guys](#). While you're there sign up for musical posts delivered directly to your in box.

[“How to get inside a piece of music.”](#)

[“5 Poor Practice Habits and How to Change Them by Doug Hanvey”](#)