

# How to Practice

“How good would the band be if it were only as good as me?”

Playing a musical instrument is a physical activity and like any physical activity, the body needs repetition for strength and accuracy. Every musician uses tiny muscles in his or her mouth and those muscles need conditioning – an act that merits daily repetition. Even practicing the same pieces help strengthen a student’s embouchure.

Along with the tiny muscles in the mouth, daily practice helps with the student’s accuracy. Ability could be defined as “being able” to duplicate without mistakes over and over again. Daily practice helps students become more accurate in playing the intended note.

## **Where does your son/daughter practice?**

Since practicing involves hearing, reading, and focusing, it is best to practice in a place with the least amount of distractions possible. Most elect to practice in a bedroom with the door closed. If at all possible, try to practice in the biggest room available and try to fill the entire room with a big, beautiful sound.

## **When does your son/daughter practice?**

When to practice is not nearly as important as setting a practice schedule for every day. If you eat that day, you should practice that day. Decide the best time for practice and stick to your schedule. Even during busy times, a few minutes at least can keep the muscles in shape as well as the instrument. Unlike other machines, some parts of musical instruments get better the more they’re played (as long as they are maintained). The worse way to treat an instrument is to leave it in its case.

## **Do you hear these things...?**

- |              |            |  |
|--------------|------------|--|
| 1. Warm-Up   | 5 minutes  | Breathing, long tone, mouthpiece vibrations, lip slurs, etc... |
| 2. Scales    | 5 minutes  | Perfect the Bb, F, C, Db, Ab, and Eb scales first              |
| 3. Chromatic | 5 minutes  | Work on extending your range (at least 2 octaves)              |
| 4. Rhythm    | 5 minutes  | Rhythm charts, Sight Reading                                   |
| 5. Music     | 10 minutes | Concert and marching music, honor band audition material       |

The times are estimations of the length it takes for these areas to improve. They are meant to be used as guidelines for student practice and can vary according to necessity. One suggestion is to have a certain goal in mind for every session and cater the other elements around that goal.

## **How to practice?**

1. Break down each phrase into rhythms and notes
2. Practice each rhythm on a single pitch
3. Find all accidentals and think through each rhythm
4. Put together the rhythms and notes
5. Put each measure together
6. Put each phrase together
7. Put each section together
8. Add style, dynamics, phrasing, etc...

True practicing does not occur until after a piece is learned. Do not quit after playing something once without mistakes. Only after a piece is without mistakes should it be played over and over again multiple times.