

Excerpts from an article by Jenny Jackson, Suzuki violin teacher. “Practicing can be Pleasant”

The most important thing you can do to motivate your child to practice is to GET INVOLVED.

- Attend lessons with your child
- Take notes
- Practice with your child
- Be interested in their progress

TYPICAL STAGES KIDS GO THROUGH WHILE STUDYING MUSIC ARE:

- AGES 4-7 “I practice because my mommy wants me to”
- Ages 7-14 “I practice because I have to.”
- Ages 14-18 “I perform a lot and realize I need to practice.”
- Age 18 - “I love music and want to play”

NOTHING YOU DO FOR A CHILD IS WASTED – EVER

How to get your child to practice

- EXPECTATIONS...at our house we practice (children will test you over and over to see if you really mean it)
- GIVE CHILDREN CHOICES...be willing to negotiate some things (but not whether practicing is done or not)
- CONSISTENCY...have a set time each day for practicing and stick to it
- PRIORITIZE PRACTICING...children learn to judge the importance of practicing by how easily it can be set aside
- TEACH YOUR CHILD HOW TO PRACTICE...and then do it with them
‘PERFECT PRACTICE MAKES PERFECT’
- SET A GOAL FOR EACH PRACTICE SESSION...build a piece one small step at a time
 1. understand what the goal is
 2. get the body to do what the mind understands is wanted
 3. repeat the task correctly until the skill is learned, and then do it some more

CHANGE THINKING FROM ‘practice until you get it right’ to practice “WHEN” you get it right...figure out what kind of learner your child is ...visual, aural, tactile

PROCESS vs. PRODUCT...enjoy and praise the process of learning and not always the end product (new piece or new book, etc.)

BE CREATIVE...figure out what motivates your child (age appropriate) and use it... (see below for ideas)

HELP YOUR CHILD LEARN NOT TO WHINE AND COMPLAIN...we can do the fun stuff with our practice if it is without whining and complaining, but we will practice either way. Be fair, firm and friendly (in that order). Note from Mollie: If the whining won't stop, that might be a day to lie down and listen to the songs on the CD.

LET YOUR CHILD KNOW IT IS OK TO MAKE A MISTAKE...acknowledge your own mistakes so they know you make them too

EXPECT GOOD DAYS AND BAD

HELP YOUR CHILD RECOGNIZE PROGRESS

ENJOY YOUR CHILD'S MUSIC...and let it show!

One idea doesn't work forever. Be creative.

WAYS TO PRACTICE WITH YOUR CHILD

1. Put a finger puppet on the tip of the bow and practicing gets more fun.
2. Earn a new book or movie...write down one letter of the book/movie title after each good practice time.
3. Charts with interesting pictures (dinosaur theme, ocean them, etc. spell words or color after each practicing task). Use coloring books or internet to find pictures.
4. Memory game cards: Decide how many cards to use and line them up. Put out matching cards after each task/song practiced/each time they remember bow lift, etc.
5. Stamps/stickers on charts
6. Make practice bracelets – use bells, beads and pipe cleaners
7. Make jumping jacks or other exercises in between tasks and songs
8. Draw mystery cards from a bag. Good for review pieces. Throw in some silly cards too, like stand on one foot, kneel and play, etc.
9. Add links to a paper chain for each piece/task accomplished
10. Hide names of review pieces or tasks in plastic Easter eggs and have child choose one.

11. Put names of pieces on small jars. Pick a jar, play the song and put the lid on. Done!
12. Eraser Game: Take x number of small items (cute erasers, etc.) and put them in a middle pile. For each correct repetition, an eraser goes to the student's pile. For every incorrect repetition one goes to the parent's pile. When there are no more items left, the student must earn the parent's items back which FIRST go to the middle for a correct repetition and THEN go to the student's pile. The student must earn all the erasers. The will increase the number of correct repetitions in a row.
13. Invite an audience of friends, family, stuffed animals, etc. Play for them. Make a recording for yourself/grandparents, etc.
14. Practice every day for the 100 day club. Get a special treat to celebrate.
15. A parent comes home from work and is tired. He needs to sit down and unwind before dinner... Parent sits down and asks the child to play for him to help him relax. Child plays and parent sits quietly smiling and with eyes closed. When child stops, parent says "Thank you so much. Now I can begin my time at home with the family." Parent never corrects or comments, just smiles and says "thank you. Do this often and you might experience amazing moments! This is not practice, it is making music!"

What to do when your child doesn't want to practice

- Be firm
- Don't nag, argue, make threats, or make them feel guilty
- Don't give in (might be a day to listen to the CD)
- Remember the big picture
- Lighten up the mood with humor, games, etc.

Tips for older students

- Don't take everything they say seriously ("I hate this")
- Study different kinds of music that appeals to child
- Group playing with others is a magic motivator and fun
- Take kids to live performances
- Provide opportunities for performing (home evening, church, recitals, for family, etc.)
- Set the stage for continued study – make a pact or contract
- Involve the whole family

Another GREAT RESOURCE with a great title: "How to get your child to practice without Resorting to Violence!!" Written by Cynthia Richards, Published by Advance Arts and Music, copyright 1985