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| PRACTICING TIPS FOR PIANO STUDENTS | Mr. SEBASTIAN’S STUDIO |

Every person has a different tolerance for practice time. Some people like the meditative quiet of it, working patiently to improve a new skill. Some people need to be gently persuaded through incentives like chocolate and model airplanes. I was the second kind of person as a child, and now I’m the first kind of person. No matter how you go about it, there are three common factors to successful practice.

First, find a regular time of day. When are you most at peace? In the morning, after school/work, on the weekends? Find that time of day and stick with it. A routine is the best way to build muscle memory.

Second, use a timer. I have a simple egg-timer that marks out 5 minute intervals, but any smartphone will do. Set your practice time (see below for suggestions of length) and try to keep to it.

Third, try to practice at least two times a week. This is true no matter what level you are at: practice times will lengthen as you improve and take on more challenging music, but the number of practices need not vary. Twice a week should be fine.

Practice is an important part of learning to master any skill. A soccer player will kick a ball against a wall for hours; a learner driver will go to the parking lot to practice parking; a bird will fall out of its nest several times before learning to fly. Nothing comes naturally, and learning how to make art and music is no different from learning math and reading. It takes time and practice.

If you are a parent, you will need to decide with your child whether this should be alone time or time with a parent. If the child practices alone, they should know 1) how to fold a book to make it lie flat on the music stand 2) how to sit properly on the piano bench, with fingers curved, back straight, and feet planted on the ground or on a firm resting place, and 3) what pages they are to practice. It will also help if they can focus on the task at hand without getting too distracted. If the child practices with the parent, let the child direct the practice. This isn’t about adding another teacher – I will try to give clear practice instructions so that the child can work things out for themselves. Be positive and reward good effort. You will know that any sharpness in tone will backfire (I know this from painful experience both as a parent of two children learning the piano and as a child myself!).

Here are some guidelines for practice times. If the time goes too quickly, it’s certainly OK to practice more, or more often. As the great violinist Isaac Stern once said, “Nine hours a day is enough. After nine hours, the value of daily practice decreases.” 😊

Guidelines for Practice Times (children):

**Level Practice Time**

Piano for the Young Beginner A/B No need for practice between lessons

Piano Adventures Primer (Purple Book) 5 minutes each practice

Bastien Piano Level 1

Piano Adventures 1 (Red Book) 10 minutes each practice

Bastien Piano Level 2

Suzuki Book 1

Piano Adventures 2A (Blue Book) 15 minutes each practice

Suzuki Book 2

Piano Adventures 2B (Orange Book) 20 minutes each practice

Suzuki Book 3

Guidelines for practice times (adults and older beginners):

**Level Practice Time**

Alfred Piano Course Level 1 10 minutes each practice

Accelerated Piano Adventures 1 (Gold Book)

Suzuki Book 1

Alfred Piano Course Level 2 20 minutes each practice

Accelerated Piano Adventures 2 (Bronze Book)

Suzuki Book 2

Alfred Piano Course Level 3 30 minutes each practice

Suzuki Book 3