

Bad Practice Habits



Do you find that your students are telling you they're doing lots of practice, but they don't seem to be improving? It might not be that they're lying about how much practice they're doing, maybe they're just practicing poorly!

Here are four types of poor practice you might be seeing in your students, and a few tips on how you can help!

From *The Practice Revolution* by Philip Johnston

Chopping Wood with a Spoon



What it looks like:

- Always using the exact same practice techniques for every practice session and piece.
- They only know 2-3 different practice techniques, so they use them for everything!
- Or maybe they don't really know *any* practice techniques.

How to help:

- Offer some different practice techniques for different situations
- Have students reflect at the end of their practice sessions, and identify what practice techniques they used and why



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Clock Watcher



What it looks like:

- They think that more practice is always better
- There's a false perception of effort and dedication
- They will tell you how much they practice, but you won't see improvement relative to time spent

How to help:

- Challenge them to set clear goals for their practice sessions, and not allocate time
- Have them reflect on how much they have improved each session, and what they need to focus on.

Polishing the Silverware



What it looks like:

- Spending a majority of their time practicing what they can already play well
- Some sections are extremely polished and played confidently, while other sections are not

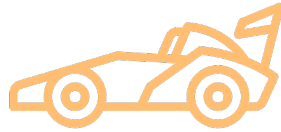
How to help:

- Remind your students that it's ok to sound bad while practicing!
- Help them set practice goals instead of allocating time
- Encourage students to reflect and be honest, so that they know what sections need the most attention

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Speed Demons



What it looks like:

- They practice everything too fast!
- They make a lot of mistakes, but just keep playing
- They feel confident because playing fast is rewarding

How to help:

- Remind them that to play something fast, you need first to play it slow
- Start practice sessions slowly and focus on accuracy, before gradually increasing in speed

Ignoring the Map



What it looks like:

- They memorise pieces early on
- They don't refer back to the sheet music
- The piece tends to mutate and change from the original

How to help:

- Remind students there is a place for memorizing music...
- *After* they have learnt it properly!

