

Got a minute?

Quick ways to practice when you don't think you have the time.

Often we think that in order to have meaningful practice we must clean off our desks, have a glass of water handy, sharpen all of our pencils, clear our schedule for the next 2 hours...but this just isn't the case *all of the time*. While we need to have several practice sessions that are of a sufficient length in the right environment for practice to be worthwhile and to get substantial work done, there are many other ways to "practice" away from the metallophone and feel good about our work, even if it's just a couple of minutes.

1. Keep an extra set of the assignment in your child's backpack or in the car. Practice reading rhythms quietly or reading note names to pass the time when you are waiting for dinner, waiting in line, waiting for a sibling to finish a game, going to and from events, etc.
2. Practice singing songs the child knows from memory.
 - a. Try to come up with the rhythm words that go with those songs. Try to write them down!
 - b. Step rhythms to songs your child knows. Come up with new patterns you like. Step them together. Make mistakes on purpose, and have your child try to figure out the mistake. Change roles!
 - c. Try to sing songs on numbers.
 - d. Try to sing songs on letter names if you know the key.
3. Practice note reading using your hand. Place your hand, palm facing you, and spread your fingers so that they look like the 5 lines on the staff. Pretend you're in the F-clef or the G-clef and point to different notes and have the child try to read them as fast as possible. Change roles. See who can name more notes without any mistakes!
4. Practice saying the Musical Alphabet as fast as possible.
 - a. Do it forwards.
 - b. Do it backwards.
 - c. Leave out a specific letter and replace it with a clap. For example do each grouping, but leave out the note C and replace it with a clap (*):
AB*DEFGA, B*DEFGAB, *DEFGAB*, DEFGAB*D, EFGAB*DE, FGAB*DEF, GAB*DEFG
5. For Rhythmic-Solfège III and above, do the same thing as 4, but with the sequence of 3rds!
FACEGBDF, ACEGBDFA, CEGBDFAC, etc...
6. Make music a part of your every day vocabulary. Quiz your child on different musical questions: Where are the half-steps in major keys..in minor keys? For RS II and above: What are the note names of the half-steps in the keys you know. What are the tonic, dominant, sub-dominant notes in the keys you know. How would you build chords on these notes? Of course, you'll have to learn right along with them, but that's half the fun! The kids love 'informing' their parents of the things they're learning (especially if the parents aren't as familiar with the material!)

Try out these ideas, or better yet, make up your own! Make practice a real part of your everyday life...2 minutes here...or 3 minutes there; you'll find your child is improving all the time!!!

Happy Practicing!!! ~ Jeremy