

Putting Structure to Independent Practice

Playing outside of class/lesson time can be difficult (time, place, etc.), but is truly the key to self-improvement and mastery. Even with limited time, understanding how to manage a productive session will get you there.

Of course, access to a decent mallet instrument to rehearse is also a huge consideration. Even if you have a piano at home, go over notes and rhythms.

- Focus on the development of 2 and 4 mallet technique, flexibility through rhythm and scale studies, and be very particular with stickings, phrasing, and technical facility.
- Challenge yourself for accuracy (details) every time you practice.
- Try something different every time you practice.
- Use a metronome!

Adjust times proportional to the time you have. Don't skip a decent warm up ever.

Warm Up (5 to 10 minutes)

Try to cover each item, even if it's just 1 exercise.

- Hand, finger stretches (loosen up) Check height of instrument
- Single strokes on each hand (flexibility, consistency)
- Basic scale/rhythm patterns

GOAL: Relax hands, check grip, repetition and consistency

Technical Development (10 to 20 minutes)

Choose one a week and concentrate mostly on that area.

- Varied stroke patterns (L-R, R-L, all one hand, crossovers)
- Scale patterns – (memorize, alternate hands)
 - chromatic, major-minor, arpeggios, overtones
- Technique (speed in all keys)

GOAL: Improve necessary skills, develop endurance.

Prepared Pieces (10 to 20 minutes)

Use this time to rehearse performance pieces.

- Performance pieces (concert repertoire)
- Playing assessment pieces
- Recital/audition material

GOAL: Be productive! Work on improving weaknesses instead of playing through music you've already mastered.

Sight Reading (5 to 10 minutes)

Play through something you haven't played before.

In a variety of styles, difficulties, time and key signatures.

- This is when songbooks, method books, Etudes are useful.