

## How to Practise

There are two varieties of Practise - **Chunked and play-through**.

Most practise should be of the chunked variety, which is where you take a bar, a phrase, a scale etc, and make sure that it works.

The best practise always takes place at a **variety of speeds**. Try your chunks slowly to begin with, then when you feel you can play them, faster to check. When you're working on something start slowly and build up.

**Find the speed at which you can play fluently and speed up from there.** Use a metronome and make notes in the margin of the fastest you've managed a difficult passage if you're working it up.

In your first practise session after a lesson, make a note of the tricky bits, either with stars in the margin, or in a notebook. Practise these first, at the beginning of the session when you have maximum concentration, then move on to easier bits.

Force yourself to read ahead. That way, you'll be prepared for what's about to happen, and give your brain more of a chance to tell your fingers what to do.

When working on tricky bits, aim for a minimum of 10 correct repetitions before you move on. Challenge yourself and don't cheat! If you make a mistake, start again. This can be frustrating, but if you do it, it will change your life!

Pay attention to the "form and structure" of your piece. If you have two identical sections, make a note of this and don't waste your time playing it twice, just copy in the bowings and fingerings and move on.

## Look and think before you play

Treat every piece like a piece of sight-reading until you know it really well. Start by checking:

- key signature, and how this will affect the fingering - # means more 3 or x4, b means more 2 or x1.
- time signature, and whether the piece starts on a down-beat or an up-beat. When you start, count yourself in!
- any complicated rhythms....tap them or sing them, keeping a steady pulse in your other hand/foot/heart
- any changes of clef
- bowings – make sure these are logical – ask if you're not sure!
- dynamics – you should aim to build these into your practice as soon as possible

## Main points to think about:

### Left Hand

- Intonation
- Co-ordination - Practise as dotted rhythms.
- Best fingering?

### *Right Hand*

- Articulation
- Amount of bow

### *If the problem is:*

#### *Shifting*

- Just do the shift back and forth. Slur across to really hear the shift. Just the notes either side of the shift
- Play the whole run, but stop just before each shift and shift slowly
- Play the whole run, stop just after each shift.

#### *Tuning*

- Make sure you know the distances: tones and semitones
- Always use full sound to really hear the tuning
- Check any notes that you can with open strings or harmonic - notes that are an octave, 5th or 3rd away make nice intervals

#### *Sound quality*

- Bow needs to follow LH if going high – the higher you are, the closer to the bridge you need to be!
- When string-crossing, think about using more index finger on the bow to really pick out the string crossings. Think about which string you need to balance over. Try various options until you find one that's easy and comfortable.
- Remember: Speed, weight and position. Mix and match those three until you have the sound you're looking for. Try to imagine the sound you want to hear, then work until you can hear it.

**REMEMBER – Dotted Rhythms are Magic! If you're struggling, try playing the passage with dotted rhythms... Usually, that'll help!**