

Handbook for Success!

2017



Practice

Students must maintain a regular practice schedule throughout the week in order to progress. Learning to play an instrument or sing is hard work and requires time and repetition in order to gain proficiency. In our era of modern technology and instant gratification, the ability to maintain focus and work consistently toward long-term goals seems to be gradually diminishing. The good news is that this crucial ability can be strengthened through studying music! The faculty at Flourish do their utmost to teach students how to practice. However, it is also imperative for **parents to be actively involved in helping students develop and maintain a weekly practice schedule at home**. This will have a greater impact on their success than talent or aptitude. As students grow and attain the required discipline, the parent can gradually decrease their influence.

Here are some tips to help your student practice successfully:

Consistency

Consistent practice is more important than overall time. Aim for 5-6 days a week of practice. Younger students may even benefit from multiple short practice sessions per day (e.g. ten 15-minute practice sessions a week) depending on their ability to maintain focus.

Quality

Focused, efficient practice will result in much more progress than the aimless repetition of material or only playing through favorite pieces. Slow practice in small sections, isolating one skill at a time, will be the most efficient method to master a piece. As notes are learned, practice will transition more towards practice for fluency, always with a listening ear to add dynamics, articulations, phrasing and other means for expressive playing/singing, while still going back to the slow chunking of hard spots until they can be consistently executed.

Time

Rather than requiring students to practice a certain number of minutes a day, we ask that students practice for as long as it takes to finish their whole assignment. However, here are some guidelines to how long it should generally take. If you finish the assignment in much less or more time than the guidelines, please speak to your teacher.

Elementary: 20-30 minutes per day

Middle School: 25-40 minutes per day

High School: 30-45 minutes per day

Keep in mind that you can always practice more than this to see faster progress!

First 24 hours after lesson

Studies show that retention of new material is 90% if practiced within 24 hours. However, if you wait 72 hours, retention drops to 0%. Always plan a practice session within 24 hours of your lesson!

Scheduling

Scheduling a regular practice time is the best way to create a practice habit. Have your child help determine the best time of day to practice so that they feel like they have had a say in their schedule. Make sure to schedule practice sessions at a time when they are not completely drained mentally, because practicing is a workout for the brain!

Practice Journal

Keeping track of practice sessions is another great way to turn practice into a habit. Your teacher may ask you to keep track of your time on your lesson sheet or online on mymusicstaff.com

Limit Distraction

Limit any noise or mental distractions. It is better that phones or other unnecessary technology be put away during a practice session to allow the student to focus.

Catch Your Child Doing Something Right

We do not guilt or shame students into practicing. Rather, we strive to make every lesson a positive experience, celebrating the achievements and efforts that were made during the week. At home, you can reinforce good habits and delight your child by offering praise as you notice your child doing something well or trying very hard.

Give Yourself a Break

Life happens, and you don't always get the perfect practicing you had planned for. You may get sick, or go on vacation, or have another life event that keeps you from practicing much. Don't beat yourself up about it. There will be a natural ebb-and-flow; the key is to make sure you don't get stuck not practicing much. The next week, work to get back on track, and maybe even add extra time so you still see the progress you dream of!

Have FUN

Though diligent, focused practice is essential for progress, it is important every so often to just have fun with your instrument. Play all the songs you played in recitals last year! Try to pick out a tune from YouTube! Just play whatever note comes to your head at that instant! Even though this type of playing does not seem like "practice" it fosters creativity, gives motivation for the focused practice, and reminds us why we are studying music in the first place! So enjoy it!

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Instrument

In addition to practicing consistently and well, it is important for your child to have a quality instrument on which to practice. There are many places where you can find high-quality instruments. For pianos, there are several piano dealers in the area. For other instruments, check with our partner Music Depot

(located in Cottonwood Square) for rental and purchase options. If cost is an issue, please speak with us as we might have some creative solutions, at least in the short term, to get your student practicing on a great instrument. As you are making an investment in your child's music education by enrolling them in private lessons, you will want to be sure that their instrument is not holding them back!

Here are some things to keep in mind when looking for an instrument:

Piano

All pianos should be kept in tune and in good working order. This means at least an annual visit from a qualified piano tuner, depending on how quickly your instrument goes out of tune. Generally, older pianos or pianos that have not been properly maintained will not stay in tune for as long as a newer piano or a piano that has been properly maintained. Due to the dry climate in Colorado, a humidifying system is a very good investment to help keep your piano in tune and in better condition over the years. This will decrease your future maintenance costs. As students progress in playing ability, the quality of the practice instrument becomes increasingly important. For beginners, almost any upright acoustic piano or a full-sized digital piano/keyboard with **weighted keys** will be sufficient. Please note that the term "weighted keys" is very important. Touch-sensitive or semi-weighted keys will not provide the proper resistance to allow you or your child to develop the muscles in their hands and forearms necessary to play the piano with control and nuance. As students reach intermediate and advanced levels, a baby grand or high-quality upright piano is the best option. The longer strings on a grand piano allow for a wider range of sounds and nuance. Plus, grand pianos have an "awesome" factor that is sure to motivate students to practice! Be careful, however, about getting the cheapest baby grand piano because they often are not as well-made as a high-quality upright.

Voice

A voice student's instrument is inside them, but they will also need a piano for reference, and to practice the basic piano skills that we teach all voice students. A keyboard can work in a pinch, but a full-size digital or acoustic upright is better.

Strings

Stringed instruments come in student sizes to fit children as they grow. Your student's teacher will help you to decide what size your student needs and will also provide guidance as to any other necessary gear. Renting an instrument from a music retailer such as our partner, Music Depot, can be a good option for a beginning student. Music Depot can also work with you so that you can trade purchased instruments in as your student goes up in size. Once a child reaches the intermediate level with a full sized instrument, consider upgrading quality. Be wary of Craigslist "bargains" or even passing down an old instrument that has sat unused for a long period of time. Often, old instruments will need repairs that end up costing more than buying a new instrument or renting a used but well-maintained instrument from a music store.

Brass

Your student's teacher will provide recommendations for finding a quality instrument, mouth piece, and other necessary gear. Renting an instrument from a music retailer such as our partner, Music Depot, can be a good option for a beginning student. Music Depot can also work with you so that any purchased instruments can be traded in as your student progresses and needs or wants a higher-quality instrument. Be wary of Craigslist "bargains" or even passing

down an old instrument that has sat unused for a long period of time. Often, old instruments will need repairs that end up costing more than buying a new instrument or renting a used but well-maintained instrument from a music store.

Woodwinds

Your student's teacher will provide recommendations for finding a quality instrument, reeds, and other necessary gear. Renting an instrument from a music retailer such as our partner, Music Depot, can be a good option for a beginning student. Music Depot can also work with you so that any purchased instruments can be traded in as your student progresses and needs or wants a higher-quality instrument. Be wary of Craigslist "bargains" or even passing down an old instrument that has sat unused for a long time. Often, old instruments will need repairs that end up costing more than buying a new instrument or renting a used but well-maintained instrument from a music store.

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Logistics

Drop-off and Pick-up

To make the best use of your allotted lesson time, please arrive on time and ready to focus. For older students, this will mean warming up on your instrument/voice before you come. If you arrive late, we cannot extend the lesson time. We do our best to end every lesson on time so that you can get to your next activity.

Parents at Lessons

A waiting area for parents/siblings is provided if you would like to wait outside the studio during the lesson. A parent may sit in on the lesson at the teacher's discretion, but is asked to remain quiet and not interact with the teacher or student during the lesson. This generally works better for elementary students rather than older students.

Food and Drink

Food and drink are strictly prohibited in the studios. Water bottles are allowed but they must not be placed on top of a piano or other instrument.

Hand-washing

All students and teachers must wash their hands thoroughly before lessons, classes, or using any of our resources to discourage the spread of germs. A hand-washing sink is provided in the reception area.

Fingernails

Piano students should keep fingernails trimmed to no longer than the end of the finger. Not only do long fingernails cause you to "click" on the keys, but long fingernails prevent you from playing with a proper hand position, which will limit dexterity, cause students to develop poor technique, and possibly cause tendonitis in the long term. Clippers are provided for use in the waiting area if you forgot to trim at home.

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Events

Performances

Flourish Music Academy offers a variety of exciting performance opportunities. Participation in events is strongly encouraged; however, if you would rather have a brain aneurysm than perform in front of people, speak to your teacher about how you could participate in other ways, such as writing up a blog report of the best performances of the day!

Our fun performances are designed to enhance the student's experience and provide a way to show off how you have progressed.

Halloween Recital	<i>Dress up in your Halloween costume</i>
Holiday Recital	<i>Play a holiday favorite and bring cookies to share</i>
Composition Festival	<i>Your own composition is showcased</i>
Achievement Day	<i>Perform 2-3 pieces for an evaluator at GAMTA's largest event and see all the other kids who are studying music in Greeley</i>
Spring Recital	<i>Our fanciest recital</i>
End-of-Summer Party	<i>Share the duets/trios you worked on over the summer</i>

Teachers at Flourish are members of Greeley Area Music Teacher's Association so that students can participate in other GAMTA events such as Competitions and Ensemble Performance Activity. If you are interested in any of these extra events, speak to your teacher to see if they are a right fit for you. Additional fees may apply.

Location of Events

Students at Flourish perform throughout the community. Events will take place across town, and we usually try to perform for at least one underserved community in the year. Specific events and their locations will be outlined in the annual calendar.

Performance etiquette

Generally students wear nice but not-too-dressy clothes for performances. Our one formal event is Spring Recital. For this event, students are welcome to dress up as much as they want!

Please arrive at the performance venue 5-10 minutes early if you can, but don't feel like you have to sit quietly while waiting for the performance to start. We want everyone to have fun, so find a friend to talk with or make a new friend!

The Holiday and the Spring Recital are followed immediately by receptions, so bring goodies to share as we celebrate together after a successful performance!

Concert Outings

Throughout the year, we provide multiple concert attending opportunities for students. Attending concerts is an important way to diversify your musical experience, find inspiration, and enjoy great music! Specific concert information will be provided at the beginning of the year. Some concerts may have separate ticket fees.

Your entire family is invited to attend concerts with us. We do request that at least one parent come along if you send any other children besides the Flourish student. If only the Flourish student can attend, we are happy to provide supervision during the concert. Parents will be responsible for transportation to and from the event.

Each concert outing will have a sign-up deadline in order for us to purchase tickets in a timely manner. If you miss the deadline we encourage you to attend but you will need to make your own ticket arrangements.

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Communication

Website

We have posted a lot of helpful information on the website for your convenience. On our website, you can find this handbook, the studio calendar, FAQ's, and other pertinent information. If you still cannot find the information you need, please do not hesitate to contact us with your questions or concerns.

MyMusicStaff.com

The website also has a student portal to mymusicstaff.com. This is where you can find resources and information specific to your student: assignments posted by your student's teacher, recordings and demonstrations uploaded for the student to view at home, account information such as your invoices and payments, individualized lesson schedule, and more!

School Newsletter

The monthly newsletter keeps you updated on studio happenings, upcoming events, and other studio-wide news. You will receive both a paper copy and an e-mail copy. We do not want to take up precious lesson time to communicate this information, so please read the newsletter carefully and contact us if you have any questions.

Blog

Watch the blog for student achievements, helpful articles, student-written posts, and more!

Parent/Teacher Conferences

Every 6 months we will have a 15-minute conference with parent, teacher, and student to review where we have been and discuss where we are going. This would be a great time to bring up any of your questions or concerns for discussion. The conference will be scheduled at the beginning or end of the student's lesson.