

# Handbook for Success!



## 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 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 teach students how to practice during the lesson but we cannot control what happens at home. This is why it is imperative for **parents to be actively involved in helping students develop and maintain a weekly practice schedule at home**. Parental involvement has a greater impact on a child's musical 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: 15-30 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! The same day as your lesson (before you go to sleep) is even better!

### **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](http://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.

### **Offer Praise and Encouragement**

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 Denver and Northern Colorado 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. 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 ideally they will also have a piano for reference, and to practice any basic piano skills that are beneficial for all voice students. A keyboard can work, 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.

### **Guitar**

Your student's teacher will provide recommendations for finding a quality instrument. You can find a selection of guitars to purchase at Music Depot as well as other music stores in Fort Collins or Denver. You can start with either electric or acoustic guitar. You may want to try several out to find one that fits your child well (younger children may not be comfortable with a full size guitar).

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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 are not psyched about performing 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.

<b>Fall Celebration</b>	<i>Win prizes in our costume contest!</i>
<b>Holiday Concert</b>	<i>Play a holiday favorite</i>
<b>Composition Festival</b>	<i>Write your own song and have it showcased</i>
<b>Achievement Day</b>	<i>Perform 2-3 pieces for an evaluator in collaboration with the Greeley Area Music Teacher's Association and see all the other kids who are studying music in Greeley</i>
<b>Spring Student Showcase</b>	<i>Our fanciest recital</i>
<b>Summer Music Fest</b>	<i>Share what 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 the Ensemble Performance Activity.

We also are a participating school with the Royal Conservatory Certificate Program; every year you have the option to take the Royal Conservatory assessment for your level. 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 will 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!

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## **Communication**

### **MyMusicStaff.com**

Your account on MyMusicStaff.com will give you tons of info that you need to know! 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! This is where you can reschedule your lessons as needed, and let us know if you will be gone. You can also download copies of our policies, studio calendar, this handbook etc. You can log in right at [mymusicstaff.com](http://mymusicstaff.com) or through the student portal on our website.

**Your Music Lesson Guide**

Once you join Flourish you will start receiving a series of emails to help you get the most out of your lessons here! This information will make sure you know how to reschedule lessons when you need, specifics about different parts of our program and how to take advantage of them, info on how to help your child establish a practice routine, and much more! If for some reason you do not start to receive these emails, let us know.

**School Newsletter**

The monthly newsletter keeps you updated on studio happenings, upcoming events, and other studio-wide news. You will receive the newsletter as an email at the beginning of the month. We do not want to take up your 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!

**Progress Reports**

We send out monthly progress reports so you know how your child is doing and how to best encourage and challenge them at home.

**Parent/Teacher Communication**

One of the keys for student success is for parents and teachers to work together as a team with lots of open communication! We try to keep in touch with you regularly about what is happening in the lesson, and we appreciate information about how things are going at home, and any other information that will help us reach the student better. We always love to see parents come in and talk to us at the end of lessons or you can call or email at a time convenient for you!

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