



MUSIC INSTITUTE
OF NORTH TEXAS

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Important Issues to Consider Before Choosing the Appropriate Music Lesson

These Guidelines will help you to have a successful and rewarding experience learning an instrument. These are practical tips that we have discovered from our extensive teaching experience.

1. Study with a qualified professional music teacher in a professional teaching environment.

We believe that it takes a true professional musician to teach the appreciation and art of music. At Music Institute of North Texas (MINT), teaching is not just a hobby or a side-line job for the teachers, but a responsibility which is taken very seriously. Our faculties are college graduates who passed rigorous exams, have years of teaching experiences and pedagogical training, then successfully complete an extensive training process conducted by MINT, and constantly update their skills. Learning to play the piano or other instruments is not just a matter of having a qualified teacher, but having an environment that is focused on music education. In a professional music school environment, students won't be distracted by television, siblings, pets, phones, or other possible interruptions. With only ½ to one hour of lesson time per week, a professional school environment can produce better results since the only focus at that time is learning music. Students in a school environment are also motivated by hearing peers who are at different levels and by being exposed to a variety of musical instruments. We have spent over one million dollars in building our state of the art facility that is designed and dedicated solely for the best music learning environment.

2. It is never too early to start music lessons. Your child doesn't have to wait until he knows how to read to start music learning.

Research has shown that very young children can develop an awareness of pitch, rhythm, and musical concepts. If left untapped, this natural musical ability may never be developed. Not only children, but people of all ages can benefit from musical training. It is extremely important that the curriculum and teaching techniques are appropriate to the age level of the students. Music Institute of North Texas understands the importance of having age appropriate programs that suits every stage in your child's life. Therefore, we are proud to offer a wide variety of programs including Harmony Road Music Program, Kindermusik, as well as private lessons and other group lessons to meet every age's learning style and developmental needs.

Equally as important, adults can start any instrument at any age. It is never too late! We have beginner students in their 60's, 70's and even 80's! Their success is based on the individual's commitment to practice. Of course, we understand that most people have busy lifestyles and finding time to practice may be difficult. Even casual learners can benefit from structured and professional music lessons. For adults who are interested in learning piano in a more supportive environment, The Piano Street curriculum has been developed especially for adult and teenage beginners.

Infant to 18 month old

Recommended Program: Kindermusik's Village or Family Time

It is apparent that babies love music. Attending a group program that focus on all aspects of child development, including physical, emotional, cognitive, language, social and musical, is your best choice. Kindermusik program offers all of the above aspects and more! Every activity and music chosen in the curriculum serve a learning purpose. Parents and caregivers also learn special ways to bond and learn with your baby.

18 month old to 4 years old

Recommended Program: Harmony Road Music Program's Toddler Tunes and Music and Me, or Kindermusik's Family Time

If a toddler or preschooler has a keen desire for music, a group preschool music class will give them a good foundation in music basics that will be helpful later in private lessons. At this age, private lessons generally are not the best options as the child has not yet experienced the formal learning environment of kindergarten or school. They usually learn more effectively through the game oriented preschool, group environment.

Piano/Keyboard

Recommended Program: Private Lessons, Harmony Road Music Program

Starting at age 4, children have begun to develop longer attention spans and can retain material with ease. They may be suitable to start private lessons, or choose to attend our Harmony Road Group Keyboard Program. There are advantages for both private and group lessons. In private lessons, students will receive the complete attention of the instructor and usually progress faster. However, group lessons, such as Harmony Road, can help children through the difficult start-up process by making the music class an enjoyable activity rather than a solitary pursuit. Through a diversity of musical activities the student experiences consecutive small successes cheered on by peers and the parents who attend the lessons. Group lessons also provide the format to learn ensemble playing with its additional skills of reading orchestral-type scores, listening to the multiple parts while performing their individual part simultaneously, developing a strong sense of pulse and rhythm, and following a conductor. Students in group lessons generally have greater confidence and less performance anxiety when performing in recitals, as they have multiple opportunities to perform for their class. Therefore, we do have many students who choose to attend both group and private lessons. This way, they get the best of the both worlds!

Guitar: Acoustic, Electric, and Bass

Recommended Program: Private Lessons, Group Guitar Program

5 to 7 years old is the earliest age we recommend for guitar lessons. Guitar playing requires a fair amount of pressure on the fingertips from pressing on the strings. Children under 8 generally have small hands and may find playing uncomfortable. Bass guitar students are usually 10 or older.

Voice

Recommended Program: Private Lessons, Group Beginner Voice Program, Theatrical Singing Program

6 years old is the youngest recommended age for private vocal lessons. Due to the physical nature of voice lessons (proper breathing techniques, development of the vocal chords and lung capacity), the younger body is generally not yet ready for the rigors of vocal technique.

Drums and Percussion

Recommended Program: Private Lessons, Ensemble Program

The average age of our youngest drum and percussion student is 7. This varies greatly depending on the size of the child. They have to be able to reach both the pedals and the cymbals.

String Instruments: Violin, Viola, and Cello

Recommended Program: Private Lessons.

We accept string students from the age of 4. Some teachers will start children as young as 3, but experience has shown us the most productive learning occurs when the beginner is 4 or older.

Woodwind and Brass Instruments: Flute, Clarinet, Saxophone, Trumpet, Trombone, French Horn

Recommended Program: Private Lessons

Due to lung capacity (and in the case of the saxophone, trombone and French Horn), we recommend that most woodwind beginners are 9 and older. A younger child can learn music concepts, reading and rhythm by starting with piano private lessons, or by taking one of our Harmony Road Music Courses, and then pick up a woodwind or brass instrument when they are ready.

3. Make Practicing Easier

As with any endeavor, progressing in music takes practice. One of the main problems with music lessons has been the drudgery of practicing and the ensuing fights between parents and students regarding their daily practice. Here are some suggestions to encourage daily practice:

- Set the same time every day for practice so that it becomes part of the student's daily routine. Generally, the earlier in the day the practice session can occur, the less parental reminding is required.
- For young beginners, we encourage the parent to participate in the daily home practice sessions as well as the weekly class sessions.
- Rather than setting the timer for 30 minutes, or insisting on playing each assigned exercise 5 times, setting (daily, weekly, monthly) goals (with input from student, teacher, and parent) can be much more effective.

Rewards can motivate students of all ages. Some adults reward themselves with a cappuccino after a successful week of practicing. Parents can encourage children to practice by granting them occasional rewards for successful practicing. Stickers can be very motivational to young students. Praises tend to be the most coveted reward – there is just no substitute for a pat on the back for a job well done.

4. Set Realistic Goals

Like learning anything else, setting realistic goals is an important element to success, and to prolong interest in learning. The journey of music learning will have periods of ups and downs. Setting goals will help children of any age ride out those periods of “downs” and focus more on reaching their goal. Children tend to work harder when they know they will be performing in front of an audience; and at the end of the performances, they enjoy the applause by their parents and audiences who are proud of what they do. They may also want to progress every year because they want to pass and advance to another grade in the National Music Certificate Program. Earning a ribbon at the end of a festival, or possibly winning a prize at the competition are also motivational incentives and suitable goals. We understand most of our students do not desire to become professional musicians. Music Institute of North Texas never pressures our students to attend events. However, we encourage our students and parents to use these events as “goals” for learning. We offer a variety of events for all levels and interests. Usually students are able to attend at least one or two events per year by the end of the first year. You will be very happy to learn that when your child does not feel pressured or overwhelmed by the events, they will find the experience more rewarding.

5. Most Important: Have Fun!!!

Music is something to be enjoyed for a lifetime. Try not to put unrealistic expectation on yourself or your child. Everyone learns at a different pace, and the various class activities ensure that the students will absorb the concepts and a fun and interactive environment!