



MUSIC INSTITUTE
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Here are some tips to help make practicing easier and more effective.

"Mom (or dad)...I don't want to practice piano today..."

I am sure all parents who have kids taking music instrument lessons get this at some point!!! I often get the following questions from my students and parents: Did you have problem practicing when you were growing up? Or how do I get my kids to practice?

Good news and bad news. The good news is that you are not alone and it is very normal for children to not want to practice occasionally. The bad news is that there is no way around it. Practicing is such an integral part of learning any instrument and consistency is the key! There's a saying among musicians, "you don't have to practice everyday, only the days you eat." However, Here are a couple tips to keep your child engaged:

1. Instead of setting a time limit, set a goal that is not time oriented. For example, instead of asking your child to practice 30 minutes per day, you would say, "Today's goal is getting these two lines correct." As long as your child can play that section correctly with all the markings on the music, and instill the expressiveness of the music, he/she is done for the day. If your child practices this way, he/she will be focusing more on perfecting the piece instead of looking at the clock. We are teaching the value of "making things right no matter how long and how hard it takes." Another trick for those who knows how to follow the metronome is to start with a very slow tempo, and slowly, one click at a time, bring the tempo up. By using these techniques, most students are able to get things right under the time you usually set because they are so focused and practicing becomes a "getting it right" game for them.
2. Create the musical culture and environment for your family. Find friends who also have children playing an instrument and have them practice when you bring your child to their house. Casually point out that other children are practicing as well. By doing so, you are showing them that their peers are doing the same thing and he/she is not doing this alone. This is positive peer pressure!
3. Make practicing piano a part of their daily routine. It usually works best if your child can practice at the same time every day, either after dinner or before bedtime, for example.
4. Try to put the piano in the part of your house where there are no distractions. I have been to some houses where the child is practicing while the parent is watching TV right next to the piano! This certainly does not allow the student to focus on practicing piano.
5. Practice the "3 times in-a-row" game. I do this all the time with my students. They get to go on to the next section if they can play the previous section correctly 3 times in-a-row. They may get frustrated at times, but the feeling of being challenged keeps them going.
6. For kids with short attentions span, it may be more beneficial to divide up the work in two short practice sessions. Instead of having your child sitting in the chair for a long time with multiple goals, divide the work up into two practicing sessions. You may choose to practice a session before dinner and one more session before going to bed. This way, your child would not be as overwhelmed.
7. Practice by dividing music into small sections. Do not practice from beginning to the end all the time. Your child has to be able to identify the problematic section of the music and focus on those spots specifically. The length of the music does not matter in this case. I even have my very beginner point out where is the hardest part of his two liners. It is a very good habit. Otherwise, the students who practice from beginning to the end of music will always stop at the same problematic spots.
8. Reward your child for having a great lesson, not just great practices. If he/she has a great lesson, reward your child because he/she has achieved the "goal" of the week. One has to enjoy the sweetness of success in order to want to work for it.

The goal for most music students is to enjoy the end product, a learned piece of music and the feeling of achievement of performing a piece that is well learned. The feeling of being able to immerse oneself in a piece of music and instrument is exhilarating. It does take dedication and practice, for musician of all levels, to achieve that goal. I hope that the above tips will help your student on their musical journey.

Lastly, visit practicespot.com for practice more ideas and games.