

Understanding the “Practice Method”

- **How Your Child Should Be Practicing**

By this time your child has been introduced to, what I call, The Practice Method. This method is designed to give each child a set of goals and an order of events during their practice time at home. It is a step-by-step system intended to help master their music in the fastest and most efficient way possible.

Here is how it works and what you can observe while your young instrumentalist practices.

- **Fingerings**

For young players, the most challenging aspect of learning a new song or exercise is being able to perform the correct fingering (slide position for trombone) at a speed matching the note length and the tempo (speed of the beat) of the music. This is why I ask the students to master this first. The way the kids do this is to call out the name of the note and press the corresponding keys/valve/slide position. Only after this is mastered is it possible to move on to the next step.

- **Play The Pitches (Notes)**

The second step adds playing the notes. **Attention to rhythm is not the goal here yet.** The student plays each note in order so as to learn the highs and lows of the tune. For brass players this step is very important because many pitches are possible on even just one valve or slide position.

- **Add The Rhythm**

At this point it is possible to add a steady beat and the note duration. This step can take a lot of concentration. Unless all of the previous steps are mastered first, rhythm accuracy becomes too much of a challenge. Rhythm is usually the aspect of mastering a new song students succeed at last. Consequently, practice time can become a drag and is usually the number one cause for loss of interest in that piece.

The Practice Method is very important. By knowing and observing what should be applied during every practice session you will know whether success will come or what the source of frustration may be.

Remember, nothing is more motivating than success.