



If your child is resisting practice at home, you may be worried that they don't want to keep learning their instrument. It can be like a sign that they don't want to continue lessons. While that may be true for some students, if your child likes other parts of playing their instrument (going to lessons, playing with other students, or recitals for example), that likely isn't the case!

Learning to practice and learning to play an instrument are two distinct skills. Your child can love to play their instrument and dislike practice at the same time. They can resist practice everyday but still love to play their instrument. Practice is a discipline and it takes a lot of mental energy and stamina. Practice is a learned skill. If we say to our children "go practice" they don't even know what that is, at least until we've taught them how.

We hear questions from parents asking if they should stop taking lessons because their child doesn't want to practice unless they remind them, or because they are resistant to getting started practicing. This is normal. Nearly every student we have ever taught has gone through this. Life is busy, we have a lot to do and a lot vying for our attention and getting started is hard. **We love to play but we don't always love to practice.** It's also important to know that starting practice without a reminder is more a function of personality and being a self-starter at things in general, than an expression of loving music.

So how do we teach our children to practice? We engage them in the process. We ask them questions. We have them tell you what their teacher asked them to work on. We have them think about if they heard an improvement.

If practice is totally led by us as the parent, they will not learn how to practice on their own in the future. We are developing a way of thinking about the process of practice when we have conversations and ask questions instead of just telling our children what to do in practice.

- It may feel less efficient but is how they learn to practice well, which is the long term goal.
- Notice what the teacher is doing in the lesson and use those same tactics at home.
- If your teacher asks you to work on a skill at home during the week, pay careful attention to how they are working with your child on that skill in the lesson.
- With your teacher's permission take a short video of what they are working on and refer to it at home together with your child during practice.

Here are some helpful ways to think about practice:

- Practice is making something easier.
- Practice is learning to focus.
- Practice is playing the instrument daily to build a foundation of skills.
- Practice is creativity and trying new ideas to add feeling and personality to our music.
- Practice is letting ourselves make mistakes so we can learn from them.
- Practice is building connections in the brain through high quality repetitions.

