

# HOW TO PRACTICE

**PURPOSE:** Everyone who wants to be good at something needs to do it regularly. Playing in a band is no different. You need to set up a schedule for yourself to follow everyday. A little PRACTICE EVERY DAY is better than a lot of practice every two or three days. So, be sure you have a regular schedule set up. Have your parents help you set up a practice schedule. Write it down on your practice card.

## WHERE TO

**PRACTICE:** The best place to practice is a small room - possibly your bedroom. It is best to practice alone or with your parent's help. If one of your friends from band can come to your house and practice with you, this helps both of you.

## I. Posture and Set-up

A. Try to have your set-up at home as much like your set-up at school. All wind instruments need a good straight-back chair and a music stand. Percussionists stand all the time and try to keep the weight balanced between feet.

B. Sit on the edge of the chair with your best posture. Percussionists concentrate on stick position - getting the proper hand positions (check your book, if necessary).

## II. Time to Practice

A. Students need 30 minutes of practice time each day to do a top-notch job.

B. Plan to practice on Saturday and Sunday if you want to be the best.

## III. How to Practice

A. Everything you play should have an even rhythm or beat. Every count needs to be at the same speed as the count before it and the count after it. Tap your foot lightly on each beat to help keep the counts even. (Example: on a quarter note you tap one time, on a half note you tap two times; in other words you tap on every count or beat).

B. Make every sound the best you can. Wind players take a full breath of air everytime you play. Percussionists should make all sticks sound as much alike as possible; and count outloud all the time you play or rest.

## IV. What to practice

#1 (3 minutes) Winds: Warm up by playing long tones softly. Hold them as long as you can trying to develop your breathing habits. Take a full breath of air every time you play.

Percussion: Practice alternate sticking evenly on your knee to get your wrists warmed up. If necessary do this in front of a mirror to be sure only the wrists and arm muscles are moving the sticks - not the entire arm.

#2 (5 minutes) Winds: Finish your warm-up by tonguing any pitch 12 times in a row without missing one. If you goof start over; and do this you can tongue 12 times in a row without a mistake. This helps you to learn to tongue all the time and to get the right pitch when you want it. Work on all learned scales/arpeggios and rhythm sheets.

Percussion: Play 12 quarter notes all with the right hand. Then play 12 with the left hand. Make all notes sound the same. If they don't, start over again. This helps develop strength in both wrists. Work on all learned rudiments and rhythm sheets.

#3 (20 minutes) All: Practice your assignments for lessons and for band. Work especially hard to keep the rhythm and beat even. It is the best slow and when you can play the exercise - then speed it up evenly. If one measure is more difficult than others, go over it several times to work it out. Then, go back and see if you can perform the entire exercise. When you only have 1 or 2 errors go on to the next exercise and do the same. When you practice the next time try to play these exercises perfectly - with no mistakes.

#4 (5 or more minutes) All: Play or review some exercises that you enjoy playing that we've already had in band. Play more than one if you like.

#5 (Sight-reading) All: Turn to the next page in the book where you will probably know most of the notes and pick one of the exercises you've never seen before and try to play it the best you can. This develops the eyes and develops the skill to play new music easily. It will help your lessons go much easier in the future - trust me.

**Note: The type of habits you have now will probably be the same type of habits you have years from now when you are in the senior high school ensembles.**