

The Mastery Practice

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- **What is our goal when we practice?**
 - Our goal when we practice is to, step-by-step, learn to play an instrument, developing all aspects of musicianship alongside the ability to play the instrument. Learning an instrument requires all sorts of life skills, and some times what we are working on developing during our practice is those life skills, like how to focus our brain on a specific task or how to work together with other people, all while leading back to our central goal of playing the instrument we are studying. Therefore, for everything we do when we practice we can ask the question...
 - Will this, in the end, help me play my instrument?

- **How do our muscles and mind work together when we practice?**
 - Learning an instrument is a complex blend of using the mind to train muscles and using the mind to hear, understand and create rich and complex music. Mindless practice is playing without thinking and can lead to lifeless music, can cause frustration when practice seems to have no end, and can ultimately weigh us down. Thoughtful practice sets specific goals that help us develop our ability one step at a time, and developing our ability one step at a time can provide the motivation we need to continue the cycle from thoughtful practice to meeting goals.

- **What is a mastery practice?**
 - A mastery practice turns a regular practice session into a sort of meeting that gives a chance for student and practice partner to talk about what is working well during practice and what parts need refinement or are not working well. This meeting can help you “master” your practice either as something you interject at regular intervals or on an as-needed basis. Both student and practice partner can request a mastery practice.
 - We are all learning! A mastery practice is a chance to help each other learn and to talk about our needs and how we might meet those needs together.
 - Your teacher will likely be interested to know the results of your mastery practice. Informing your teacher of the outcome of the mastery practice will help your teacher learn about what is working at home and what solutions you are trying to help things work better. Be sure to ask your teacher for their ideas, too! And if you come up with some radical ideas you want to try, be sure to run them by your teacher first to get their input.

- **How do we have a mastery practice?**
 - In place of your regular practice, or simply at the beginning of your practice, talk through the Mastery Practice Notes and write down each of your responses, with the student being invited to talk first.
 - It may be helpful to ask the following question before beginning the regular practice that follows a mastery practice:
 - What goals did we set in our mastery practice and how will we use them today?

Mastery Practice Notes

Date _____

Student is given the first opportunity to respond.

What is (name of student) good at playing right now?

What is going well during our practice these days?

What do I/we want to change with our practice?

What can I/we try to help change this?

When will I/we try it?
