

Survival Tips for the Practicing Parent

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- Give yourself a pat on the back. Your time and love are priceless gifts.
- Realize that regular practicing is hard for anyone of any age.
- Don't expect the kind of cooperation that the teacher gets from your child.
- Establish, as much as possible, a regular practice time and place.
- Don't even try to practice when you or your child are too tired, frazzled, or sick. It just isn't worth it.
- Turn on the CD.
- Rather than saying "You must practice now." try opening up the case, sit near it and/or start playing yourself. Your child will show up sooner than you would expect. Then say "Let's play some."
- Enjoy and praise what your child can do, and don't harp on what he can't
- Asking is often better than telling.
- Turn on the CD.
- Work on one technique/idea at a time. As much as possible, ignore all unpleasant renditions.
- Correct objectively and cheerfully.
- Give your child a million chances to succeed.
- Never stop believing that your child can succeed. Enjoy your child's attempts.
- Don't compare your child's progress with another's.
- Expect plateaus in your child's rate of learning.
- Turn on the tape.
- Don't be in a hurry.
- Try not to overcorrect. Give your kid a chance to correct his own mistakes. If he's not able to correct his own pitch and intonation errors, turn on the CD.
- If a practice ends abruptly in a disaster (crying-screaming), call it quits matter-of-factly, and play the CD twice.
- A successful practice can often be defined, as a happy time together while trying to carry out the teacher's assignment.
- If you're getting all hot under the collar, take a deep breath, step back, and pretend she's not your child (yet have responsibility for her).
- Trade places with the child. You play and let her correct you.
- Invent silly games and funny analogies.
- Let your child end the practice when he's had enough. The practices will eventually get longer.
- Use rewards.
- Make practice charts.
- Put on a home recital for family, friends or stuffed animals.
- Turn on the CD.
- Clap/sing the pieces your child is studying.
- Use spinners for choosing review pieces.
- Use a die for selecting the number of repetitions.
- Draw a picture in steps, one step for each task completed.
- Put together a puzzle, one piece for each piece, phrase, or task completed.
- Pick pieces out of a hat.
- Make a tape to send to a long-distance relative.
- Turn on the CD.
- Talk to other practicing parents.
- Let the child see older players perform.
- Go to a Suzuki workshop.
- Read "Mommy, Can we Practice Now?" by Marie C. Parkinson and other books about motivating young violinists.
- Give yourself a pat on the back. Good things take time and effort.
- Turn on the CD.