

TIPS FOR PARENTS

1. Even if the thought of listening to "Twinkle, Twinkle" one more time makes you want to climb the walls, try not to show it in any way to your child. BE PATIENT!! So many teaching approaches emphasize rapid accumulation of skills and competition with other students in class. The SUZUKI approach insists on pacing adjusted to the music-learning rate of the individual child.
2. If you basically don't like the sound of the violin--pretend you do. You might even grow to like it eventually.
3. In general, don't speak of your own disbelief that your child will ever learn a piece in the presence of the child. Call the teacher on the telephone or arrange another meeting without the child, if you want to discuss his progress.
4. Don't discourage a child at the lesson or at home. One mother I know often ruins the rest of the lesson by exclaiming, "Oh, honey, what's the matter? You played it so much better at home!" The children usually are trying their hardest to play their best, and if you dampen their sense of accomplishment with the hint of failure, you are doing them a disfavor.
5. On the way to the lesson, talk to the child about the lesson: get him thinking about the teacher, about the pieces he is going to play. Talk about the importance of listening carefully to what the teacher says: if he tries very hard to do exactly what the teacher tells him to do, he'll be able to play the piece better, faster. Try to develop the habit of not needing to tell the teacher everything that happened at school that day; let the lesson be first, and then after the lesson tell the important events.
6. Don't exclaim in irritation: The child might not have any idea he was doing anything wrong and he might spend five minutes of the lesson time vainly trying to figure out why you are angry at him. During those five minutes he will be less than receptive to what the teacher is saying or doing, and so will you.
7. Be creative! If you feel reasonably sure of what the teacher wants the child to do during the week, make it fun to do -- practice time should be happy and exciting. Make up stories about what the fingers are doing, what the bow should do. Make up words to the music. Play games to the music.
8. Establish a pleasant practice time approach. You have seven days to practice with your child -- seven days to have temper tantrums or seven days to have fun. For some of you, it will be the first time you'll be concentrating together with your child on a common goal over a long period of time. It's a unique opportunity. Make the most of it.
9. If you have a pre-schooler, try to practice any time the child wants to--in addition, try to establish a regular practice time at a specific time of day when the child is feeling his best.
10. Both teacher and parent should constantly be aware of the child's physical condition. A child that is extremely tired or has a cold or fever cannot play well. It is better to cancel a lesson if the child is ill, rather than waste the time of all concerned. Most teachers will make every effort to make up lessons missed because of illness.
11. Try to learn all of the "Twinkle, Twinkle" variations yourself. Sacrifice your finger nails for this one time, and feel foolish, but try. You'll understand what your child is going through much better, and you'll also understand the problems of good tone and finger placement. Practice hard on the violin before it is given to your child, so you may have a better understanding of what your child will

- be doing. You will become a better teacher and your child will respect you and be a better pupil at home.
12. Listen to the recordings at all possible opportunities --DON'T FORGET ABOUT IT! The SUZUKI recordings should be played daily, over and over. Train and encourage your child to listen to his SUZUKI recordings whenever he wants. Listening should take half of your child's daily practice time for best results. Make violin music part of his every-day existence.
 13. Don't be afraid to ask questions about any aspect you don't understand, and keep asking until you really do understand. If you don't understand the week's assignment, you're going to have a frustrating seven days at home.
 14. Take an assignment book to the lessons and take notes. Take the violin book, too. Be alert and attentive. This is not the time to knit, catch up on correspondence or sleep.
 15. Try to stress care and perfection in other things at home. This is one of the many underlying ideas that will need great cooperation at home if we are really to succeed. Remember, just memorizing the fingering of a piece is only the first step, not the last, of learning a piece. It takes time and effort to really play a piece musically.
 16. So many parents forget and begin to compare their child with another child. RESULT: Terribly unhappy parents, whose unhappiness and discontent is easily perceived by the child. Try to look at yourself and your child objectively. Some mothers are better teachers than others; some children have a better ear, right away, and are better coordinated than others. But you can improve, both of you if you remain optimistic and open. You two as a team are probably working as best you can at present, but there will always be room for improvement. Look for it!
 17. Listen to fine music at home. Take your child to concerts. In general, expose him to as much music (especially string music) as possible. You will be surprised at how attentive he will become once his curiosity is aroused.
 18. Teach your child to be proud of his violin, and to take good care of his instrument and bow. Be sure the violin and bow are in good playing condition. New strings are put on every six months. Bows should be rehaired every 6 months. Rosin dust must be wiped off the strings after each practice session.
 19. Encouragement and good humor are needed. You are dealing with a very young child learning to play a difficult instrument. Praise him for any accomplishment, no matter how trivial or insignificant it may seem to you.
 20. WHAT YOU ARE WILLING TO INVEST IN TIME AND EFFORT WILL EVENTUALLY BE RETURNED, AND WHATEVER VALUE YOU PLACE ON THE GIFT OF MUSIC YOU WILL IN TURN GIVE TO YOUR CHILDREN.