

## How to have a good lesson every week:

1. **Practice EVERY DAY.** I can't stress how important this is. Even if it's only 5 minutes a day, it is absolutely crucial to get some playing time in. For every day you don't touch your instrument, it takes a proportionate amount of time to get your mind and body back into a state that's receptive to playing. Here's the reason why: Music is both a physically and mentally demanding activity. It takes time and effort to get the fingers loosened up and to get the mind trained to think in terms of pitches, harmonies, rhythms and melodies instead of just words and numbers. We call this process "warming up" and it's something every musician does during the first 5 minutes of any playing session. If you're in the habit of doing it every day, the time it takes to get yourself up to speed is only about 5 minutes or so – but, each day you don't touch your instrument adds another 5 to 10 minutes onto that time. Which means that if you only touch your instrument once a week, or every 7 days, that's  $7 \times 5 = 35$  minutes of warm-up time. If your lesson is only 30 minutes long, you can see how counterproductive this can be. Also, if you only have a certain block of time during the week to get the majority of your practicing done, as most of us do, you'll want to maximize this effort by getting as much out of your practice session as possible. If you only have 30 minutes of practice time available to you, and you spend that entire 30 minutes doing warm-ups because you haven't touched your instrument in a week, you're really not gaining anything. If, on the other hand, you're at least doing a little playing every day, then your longer practice sessions will be of more use to you.
2. **Warm Up before your lesson.** As stated above, it takes time to get yourself physically and mentally prepared to play. If you spend your entire 30 minute lesson doing warm-ups, there's not much time left to learn anything new. Translation: You'll be taking the same lesson every week. Even if you practice your lesson material during the week, it's still important to warm up before your lesson. A good thing to do is to arrive a few minutes early, assemble your instrument, and find a quiet corner or room to play a few long tones, scales, etc.
3. **Come mentally prepared and focused.** Spend a few minutes thinking about the music you expect to play in your lesson, about what you want to cover in your lesson, about any questions you want to ask, etc. Mental focus is important!!! Distractions exist everywhere in life, but that doesn't mean you necessarily need to pay attention to them. Your lesson is your time to be musical. (This will translate later in life into having a good mental focus and blocking out distractions when performing a concert or recital, taking a test in school, working at a job, etc. Learning the mental discipline it takes to come into a lesson focused and prepared will help a student succeed in all aspects of life, not just music.)
4. **Don't bring distractions to your lesson.** These include cell phones, radios, videogames, math homework, etc. It's impossible to have a good lesson if your mind is on something else. It's ok to have these things with you or on your person, but please don't let them be a distraction during the lesson.