

## **Important suggestions for parents:** **How to help your child succeed...**

While most students are initially excited to begin piano lessons, please be aware that they will face challenges and sometimes frustrations. As initial enthusiasm is replaced by awareness of the discipline and commitment required to attain excellence, **your encouragement, praise and involvement will be essential to your child's success.**



Parents please...

- Set aside a scheduled practice time for your child. Realize that your child will never play an instrument well without practicing. **The most important part of practice is regularity.** Try not to schedule practice when other important activities are taking place. It should be a normal part of the day – like brushing your teeth.
- Encourage siblings and friends to respect practice time as something special, not to be interrupted.
- Provide an adequately-lit place for practice that is free from distractions such as the TV and Computer. Do NOT expect your child to practice “around” when others want to watch TV or play noisy computer games. Practice has priority over recreational time.
- Sit in on lessons periodically (however, **please** do not interject comments during lessons).
- Many children are not self-motivated to practice. They may need to be reminded each day.
- Practicing after the lesson or on the day after the lesson is important to avoid forgetting things that were done and said in the lesson.
- Help the student organize the practice sessions by reading the assignment first to establish what needs to be done. You may need to read directions from the books to young beginners or tell older students to read the instructions before doing the assignments. Encourage the child to follow the written assignment, but do not discourage experimentation and improvisation.
- Supervise home practice sessions, making sure your child completes all assignments. Practice is not always playing the music straight through. It may include practicing sections of a piece, working them out slowly, skipping from one part of the piece to another, playing hands separately, analyzing, memorizing, and working on details such as dynamics and articulation (staccatos, legatos, accents and such).
- Practicing may include playing things for fun as well as playing the assigned lesson (but not instead of).

- **Help the student develop a positive approach to practicing through encouragement, praise for achievement and enthusiasm for music. Maintain a relaxed emotional climate related to practice.**
- When tension occurs and you need to “back off” of the practice routine, help get the practice started and then leave; listen to the end of practice only; guide the practice only on the first day after the lesson to get things started correctly; sit in on the practice right before the lesson to help your child pull it all together; be an encouraging audience for your child’s practice.
- If you are not sitting with your child during practice, ask for an occasional demonstration of what he/she has done at the end of the practice session.
- Accept the fact that students practice for a variety of reasons, including rewards, consequences (can’t play, watch TV or play computer games until practice is done), human relationships (to please others, get attention), feelings of self-worth (to be as good as others) and inherent joy (love of music and the reward of doing it well).
- Accept the fact that most kids do not always like to practice. If the child doesn’t want to practice, acknowledge those feelings. Agree that he/she may not want to do it, but try to explain the benefits to reorient him/her. [Practicing is a discipline that carries over into many aspects of daily life.](#)
- Expect some frustration from your child – tears are sometimes unavoidable. Tears may mean that the child doesn’t know exactly how to achieve a goal. Try to help them out in this or let the teacher know what’s happening. Tears sometimes occur when the child does know what is expected on a piece, but doesn’t want to take the time to accomplish it – don’t we all want things to be finished faster, whether it is housework, our jobs or practicing? Help the students to realize that sometimes persistence is needed.
- Work to avoid tension from practice carrying over into other parts of daily life, or visa versa.
- Provide feedback and suggestions for the teacher that will increase the effectiveness of each lesson
- Never, ever point to a child and say “He/she did this” or “He/she didn’t do that” with criticism in your voice, especially in front of the teacher. Always remember that every single child has a potential to become a fine musician. Make sure they know that you have confidence that he/she will get better at performing and practicing every day.
- There is no such thing as a “perfect” amount of practice time. The assignment that takes one student 20 minutes may take another student 40 minutes. The basic goal in practicing is to learn something new, and learn it well, on each piece every day. When assigned, ear-training, sight-reading and theory assignments should also be done daily.
- Play quality music in your home and car. Don’t restrict your listening to just one kind of music. Be an eclectic listener.