

Fast section

- Double or triple each note so bow is practicing correct stroke but left hand is slowed down - giving time for left hand to think
- Rhythms: long short long short, slsl, lssl, sls, lsss, ssl, llss, sssl, etc.
- Practice in chunks (for example only play one measure up to speed then the next measure, then add the two together when doing this always add one extra note so you are also practicing the transitions)
- Metronome tempo work, start slow and speed up the metronome 5-10 clicks until it is too fast make a note of the fastest tempo you can play clean then try to beat it the following day
- Take one measure at a time and before playing stop, look and play the measure in your mind fast then stop before the next measure then repeat with larger chunks
- Turn on a metronome play the passage but insert a measure of rest between each measure (play measure 1, rest 1 measure, play measure 2, rest 1 measure)
- Record yourself playing the passage fast (even if its sloppy), watch your left hand and see if there are any weird movements or extra movements that could be “tongue-tying” your fingers up or slowing you down.
- Practice adding one note at a time - play the first note then the first with the second, then first, second, third, etc.
- Practice up to tempo even if there's mistakes - finish the section

Intonation

- Play with a drone (open string or drone on a device/piano)
 - Practicing scales and arpeggios with a drone is also great
- Sing
- Sing the phrase in your head (if you aren't hearing it in tune in your head it won't be in tune on your instrument)
- Before playing a passage play the scale of the key you are in to remind yourself the finger pattern
- Pause on out of tune note without adjusting and take a mental note on how it needs to be adjusted, try again
 - Then try to hit the note in tune in context (try not to slide around too much to find the correct note)
- Slow practice so you can hear each note and take a mental note of what isn't in tune
- Play slowly with the piano accompaniment
- Practice without vibrato so you can clearly hear the pitch and if it is in tune
- Record yourself playing a section, listen back and circle the notes that were out of tune
- Find notes “from the air” play the note then drop your hand and continue playing the open string, put hand back trying to find the note perfectly by plopping hand back onto fingerboard
- Play notes next to each other that are on different strings as double stops (ex. If you have a 3rd finger on A followed by a 2 on D play them together as a double stop)

String Crossings

- Doubles at the tip - this enlarges the string crossings so you can feel how it should be in your right arm
- stop bow before string crossing to isolate the motion, then play all the notes on the next string then stop for the next string crossing
- Practice the pattern on open strings without any fingers to just focus on bow arm
- Focus on where the string crossing is coming from, are you lifting your elbow for the string crossing or just your wrist? Should it be the other way around?
- Practice birds wing or rainbow bows a few times to get the correct feeling in the right arm
- Practice a double stop between notes of the string crossing (ex. If first note is a 2 on D and the second a 3 on A you should play "2 on D, double stop of both notes, 3 on A) showing you how small the string crossing should be. Try not to make it any bigger than it needs to be

Shifts

- If double stop shifts practice slurred and syncopated so the shift is in the middle of the bow and very exposed
- Map out the shift - old finger or new finger? What bow is it on? What position are you starting in? What position are you going to? Is there an intermediate note?
- SLOW and LIGHT
- Is your arm doing the work or are you trying to just slide your finger?

Double Stops/Chords

- Separate, separate, together
- Bow weight - play the double stops but on open strings to get the correct bow weight, bow should not get any heavier just because fingers are added with left hand
- Practice the double stop with harmonic fingers to work on decreasing squeezing in the left hand
- If both notes are fingered practice only one note at a time with the other being an open string
- Play one note of the double stop while "ghosting" the other (have the finger down but don't play the note)
- Play each line separately with correct fingerings, bowings, and dynamics (bottom line first)
- Play one double stop then tap the fingers of the next double stop

Bowing Issues

- Slurred section
 - practice separate (especially if all notes are equal value to hear the evenness of the rhythm) then with hooked bows then slurs
 - practice with different bowings (2 slurred, 3 slurred, 4 slurred, 2 slurred 2 separate etc.)
- Spiccato or other fast strokes where fingers aren't up to speed - double or triple each note so the bowing can be practiced without worrying about the notes being fast

- Practice the bowing you are struggling with on something familiar such as a scale or easy etude you already know or even open strings

Phrasing

- Sing the phrase, how you want it to sound
- Listen to different recordings of the piece from different artists to get ideas
- Play the section with really exaggerated dynamics
- Try opposites - phrase it one way then phrase it the opposite
- Pick certain notes you think should be “highlighted” or brought out
- Follow the line - not sure what to do follow the line, if the line goes up dynamic goes up

Hard spots

- Roll a dice for how many times in a row to practice it
- Use a board game and every time the tricky spot is played correctly move the piece forward on the board, have a reward when the end is reached (or same thing but roll a dice to allow for more than one space at a time)
- Card games can be used by practicing a skill before drawing a card or playing a turn. You could also practice a skill, piece, etc. the number of times that is shown on the drawn card.
- Use Legos to construct something, adding a piece after each time played correctly
- Tic-tac-toe, dot-to-dot, hangman, or any drawing game can be played by allowing a turn after each correct time
- Sticky note practice - see below
- Interval Timer Practice - Set the interval timer to go off every X number of minutes (say, every 5 minutes), Practice in your normal way, Every time the timer goes off, immediately stop whatever you’re doing and play your trouble spot just once, no matter how bad it is. Go back to whatever you were working on before the timer went off. Repeat until the end of your practice session.

Rhythm

- Subdivide the rhythm (especially helpful for syncopated sections)
- Clap and count the rhythm
- Add slash marks to your music on the beats of the measure
- Practice with a metronome
- Practice with a metronome on subdivisions, only downbeats, only offbeats, etc
- Stomp, clap, sing, tap the rhythm
- Practice the rhythm on open strings
- Sing part while conducting along or listen to a recording while conducting
- Put on metronome and walk to the beat while playing the section, then turn off metronome but continue to walk while singing or playing the section

Memory

- Play along with recording without using your music, star or circle any parts that you forgot
- Sing the part from memory
- Color code sections
- Random number practice - number each section of the piece then use a random number generator to select which passage to play from memory
- Sticky note practice - see below
- Study the score (piano part) - follow the score while listening to recording, look at the score and hear your part, play your part but hear the piano part

Mental Practice

- Imagine yourself playing as vividly as possible. Feel exactly what your fingers have to do: are they touching or not? what string are they on? which position? Feel exactly what your bow has to do: up bow or down bow? slurs? which string(s)? what part of the bow are you in? bow speed? contact point? What does the bow feel like on the string? What do the pitches sound like? What is the quality of sound you want? Are you holding tension anywhere? Do you tense up or feel anxious right before a big shift? The more vivid your imagining, the bigger the benefit. Once you identify things you want to fix, imagine yourself doing it the right way as vividly as you can.
- If you are physical practicing and are having trouble with a certain spot, stop and imagine yourself doing it correctly. If anything is “fuzzy” (you can’t imagine it clearly), take the time to really focus on it in your mind and make it clear. If you can’t imagine it clearly, you won’t be able to play it accurately.”
- Build mental practice in layers - “hear”/”see” everything slower than it is when played. Begin with just hearing the notes if anything is unclear study the music, play your part, sing your part, play your part on piano. Once you can hear your part in your head then try to visualize what finger is playing the note on what string and in what position. Then what rhythmic value. Then up or down bow. What kind of bow stroke. Bow weight. Right elbow height etc. Keep adding layers and studying your part when things get fuzzy.

Overall Practice Tips

- DO NOT just play through the piece and be done (playing through the piece should be last after trouble spots, phrasing, shifts, etc. have been worked on)
- When doing a run through of a piece do not stop and fix a mistake or else you are training your brain to do this in a performance. Make a mental note of where the mistakes were and then go fix them once your run-through is done.
- Trouble spots should be played until it can be played multiple times in a row correctly not just until it is played correctly once. (should be played correctly more than incorrectly)

- Go slow - especially when starting a piece, many bad habits can be avoided when learning a piece slow. As well as multiple things can be learned at one time instead of just focusing on notes or rhythm or bowings etc.
- Lots of listening - Have your child listen during routines like getting ready, walking to school, in the car, during homework, etc.
 - Try accompaniment tapes (piano only) for variety. Sometimes try to play along with the accompaniment part.
 - Engage your child in critical listening. Follow along with the music in hand or discuss different parts of the piece after listening.
- Record yourself playing and take notes on what you need to work on as well as what you did well
- Bite size pieces - work on small sections
 - Work in small steps. If you are having trouble with a section, try a line. If a line is problematic, try a measure. If a measure is too difficult, try a note. Find something that the student can do and reinforce that behavior. If you get stuck, make notes of places that the teacher can help with during the next lesson.
- Take breaks - you'll be able to stay focused if you take breaks throughout the practice session
- If you get bored move on to something else, you can always come back to what you were working on later
- Work on things in layers, not everything at once. Example: once the notes are correct make sure rhythm is correct, then bowings, then articulation, then dynamics, then speed etc. (doesn't necessarily need to be in this order this is just an example - older or more advanced students can often do a few of these at a time)
- When taking a section of a piece out of context always put it back in context before playing through the piece. (ex: if you worked on m5-10 before playing from the beginning play through m3-12 to see how what you worked on fits into the piece)
- Performance Practice is important - set up stuffed animals or dolls to practice performing, call grandparents or other family members to perform over facetime, invite neighbors or friends over for performance practice.
- Quality is more important than Quantity. If your child practiced 15 minutes and was very focused and productive that is better than practicing 45 minutes and they are distracted and unproductive.
- Let the student set goals - which piece he/she would like to be playing by a certain date, how many practice mins that week, how many times to play a section correct etc.
- Ask the child questions about their playing so they are learning to LISTEN to what they do. Was that more in tune? Did that time have better tone? What kind of tone did you play with? Did that rhythm sound correct to you? Etc.
- Avoid 3-step learning. The quality of the practice determines the quality of the outcome. It is an established fact that we remember what we have done the most times. If we have practiced a passage with a wrong note or a wrong fingering more times than we have played it correctly, then we have learned very thoroughly how to play it wrong. This is why careful practice is important. The 3-step process, learning, unlearning and relearning takes three times as long as learning something correctly the first time.

- HAVE A PLAN!! Have clear goals/objectives for each practice session (using the practice journal I provide along with these strategies should give you clear objectives for the week)

Sticky Note Practice

- Pick at least 3 trouble spots (5 is optimal, more than 10 is too many at once) and put a small sticky note in your music at each spot.
- Play the first spot. If it's correct, put a tic mark on the sticky note. Go through and play each spot, putting a tic mark if you do it correctly.
- Once you've gone through all of them, go back to spot #1 and play it again. If it's right, give yourself another tic mark. If it has a mistake, erase the tic mark from the first time and start over from 0. Keep going through all the spots, giving yourself tic marks when it's correct, and erasing all the tic marks you've earned for that spot if there's a mistake.
- The goal is to get 5 tic marks on each one.

Practice ideas from: Hasse Borup, Kasia Sokol-Borup, Donna Fairbanks, Jack Ashton, Dee Martz, my own brain, and many online articles. Feel free to research or make up your own ideas for practicing trouble spots!