



The Music Parent's Guide

Me, my child and practising at home!

Every parent whose child is taking music lessons have been nagged, begged or even had to urge their child, starting with music lessons.

You made it this far, so how do you continue assisting your child to achieve those dreams of becoming a competent player?

This booklet is to help every parent, whether you are brand – new at this or have been involved in music lessons for a few years already, to ensure a good routine, not having to build sound-proof rooms or having tears and frustration when exam time is around the corner.

1. What do you need to supply your child with to have the lesson run smoother?

- ♪ An instrument to practise on at home!
This is vital for continued and steady progress.
Usually the school will have smaller type instruments (like guitars/flutes/violins) for hire for the first year, but thereafter ensure that your child has his/her own instrument. This teaches them to properly preserve and respect the instrument from an early age.
- ♪ A plastic zip-bag or multi-folder to protect the music books.
These little guys & girls can get quite rough with their books if the lesson was before break and they want to go play!
- ♪ An A5 hardcover homework book.
This is an essential item in your child's book bag. Let your child decorate its cover with pictures of his/her favourite instruments.
Please check and sign the homework book regularly. Often teachers will write important messages for the parents in there as well.
- ♪ An A4 hardcover book for pieces OR a flip file (depending on the teacher's preferences).
Again, have your child decorate it any way he/she wants.
- ♪ Plastic book covers to cover any music books used.
- ♪ Clean hands and clean, short nails. For string instruments advanced soloists do grow the one hand's nails longer for technique, but generally good hygiene is important.

2. How do you get your child to practise frequently?

- ♪ Firstly, you as parent need to remember that he/she must practise! This might sound silly, but believe me, parents tend to forget that there must be set practise times at home.

- ♪ Get a practise routine going.
Depending on how long your child must practise, try to find a time which will suit the whole household best. (See suggested practise times below.) If your teenage son/daughter needs to study for exams, it is not going to go down well if it sounds like a cat has been stepped on in the room next door!
Suggestions for practise times could be just before or after supper time, before screen/device time or even early in the morning.

- ♪ How often does your child need to practise?
At least 4 days a week.
Build in a catch-up day for those days when he/she was supposed to practise but something came up and you just could not get a practise fitted in as well.

- ♪ Lengths of practise time per instrument:
 - Beginner - 10 minutes a day
 - Beginner Intermediate (2nd year of lessons) – 15 minutes a day
 - Beginner Advanced (3rd year) – 20 to 30 minutes a day
Your child might start with external Pre-grade examinations towards the end of the third year.
 - Intermediate - 30 to 40 minutes a day
 - Advanced – 45 to 60 minutes a day

3. How must my child practise?

The saying “Practise makes perfect”, is not just an old wife’s tale!
Your child needs to learn to repeat, repeat, repeat. It is the only way. It is not going to help to just play the piece or scale through once.

Remember those finger and arm muscles need to remember how big the jump must be or how far the stretch to the next note is. We call this muscle memory and it takes quite a few times for the brain to consolidate that, to recall the movement during the next lesson or practise session.

If your child is doing voice lessons, breathing exercises, using the diaphragm is very important. The voice and lungs need to get singing fit, which takes a while.

Take it little bits at a time. Rome wasn't built in one day!

Reward your child if he/she really struggled with some notes, but managed to have it even just a little bit more fluent after a few repetitions. Positive reinforcement is vital for a child to want to continue and being able to play like his/her teacher or that rock star one day.

When it gets closer to an examination or performance, have a house concert on family night. This really helps them to settle the nerves before having to play in front of strangers.

Remember: The more time your child spends with his/her instrument, playing all kinds of songs, not only the school or exam pieces, the better he/she will play. One almost builds a relationship with the instrument. If it becomes a part of them, they will make sure to spend time with it and take good care of it too.

4. General

- ♪ Explain to your child that it takes a long time to really master an instrument. It takes a good 5 to 10 years before one really plays well.
- ♪ Respect the teacher's teaching methods. He/she did not get to their level by just playing 20 minutes a day, once or twice a week. It took them years to be able to teach someone else. To teach your child a love for the instrument, like they love their instrument.
- ♪ Communicate with the teacher, rather discuss concerns early, because often other learning problems are picked up through music lessons.
- ♪ Be patient with your child and help him/her to be patient with themselves.
- ♪ Expose them to the kind of music they like, take them to concerts to see others perform on the instrument they are learning to play.
- ♪ Enjoy your child's development as a musician and as a person at his /her own pace, because music will allow your child to become a top scholar and individual one day. As educators we see proof of that every day, every year.



“Music
speaks what cannot be expressed
soothes the mind and gives it rest
heals the heart and makes it whole
flows from heaven to the soul.”