



Stephen F. Austin State University
J.D. Salas, Instructor of Tuba/Euphonium

Perfect Practice!!!!!!

It will help, but it can drive you crazy if it's not efficient..

Goals

You always want have goals set for each of your practice sessions to create the most efficient environment and try to set manageable ones such as a four measure phrase. This will help you gain momentum and not foster a frustrating session that will not be productive. If possible try to maintain a practice journal in which you list these goals.

Tools

Always use the necessary tools during your practice session. Failure to do so will only create further performance issues. Below are some of the required tools for an effective practice session:

- Metronome
- Tuner
- Pencil
- Recording Device
- Piano

Efficient Practice Techniques

- Air & Tongue
Once you realize that your sound begins with air, it is easy to see the most important factor to your playing. Many times missed notes and range issues are due to not having a direct air flow. Try practicing music without the instrument and mouthpiece and work only with your air & articulation. Once you have achieved a steady air stream and clear articulation then try working with the instrument.
- Mouthpiece Buzzing with Piano
There is so much truth to that saying “if you can buzz it, you can play it”. Don’t take buzzing lightly; it will help diagnose pitch problems, tension issues, and greatly improve your ear training skills. Always try to use a piano or keyboard to help you stay on pitch.

- **Slurred Practice**
This method of practice will help you improve playing with a direct air stream and avoid a “choppy” sound. Once you master playing a passage slurred, you can slowly add articulation back with a well supported air stream.
- **Isolated sections with constant repetition – “The Penny Method”**
This method of practice can be very frustrating but it is the most effective way of perfecting a passage of music. I do not recommend using this method with passages larger than 12 measures. The Penny method involves using a stack of 5 pennies or coins. Once a passage is effectively performed, a coin is moved over. This is repeated until all of the coins have been moved. If there is a mistake, the player starts over from the beginning. One can see how this method can help.

Strength Training

- **Separate your practice into multiple sessions to help build endurance**
You should ideally aim for 3 practice sessions lasting no longer than 1 ½ hrs. Many people start to lose focus after a longer amount of time. You can probably stretch this out if you take consistent breaks.
- **Set a weekly practice schedule and try to follow it.**
Organizing your practice time will help you keep track of what needs to be covered week to week. Keeping a practice journal will give you a visual frame of reference and a record of what you’ve accomplished.

Self – Evaluation

- Always evaluate yourself and be creative in your practice

Things to keep in mind as you practice

- Always over-exaggerate the dynamic contrast in your music.
- Always remember to play musically at all times.
- Don’t let your performance be the first time you play in front of people.