

The Amazing List of Practice Techniques!

(In no particular order)

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Intonation

- If an individual note is out of tune, start at the beginning of the measure, line, or phrase and stop on the note in question. DON'T ADJUST if it's out of tune: make a mental note of whether it was too high or too low and try again. Once you get it, try to get it perfectly in tune at least 5 times *in a row*.
- If a shift is out of tune, play the open string it's on and then try to play the note in question in tune without playing anything that comes before it. DON'T ADJUST if it's out of tune: make a mental note of whether it was too high or too low and try again. Once you get it, try to get it perfectly in tune at least 5 times *in a row*.
- Play the note, then drop your hand as you continue to play the open string with your bow. Bring your hand up and try to get the note perfectly in tune (finding it "from the air"). DON'T ADJUST if it's out of tune: make a mental note of whether it was too high or too low and try again. Once you get it, try to get it perfectly in tune at least 5 times *in a row*.
- Sing the passage. If your voice is out of tune, your hand will be, too.
- Sing the next note before you play it and then match your finger to your voice.
- Practice with a drone (a continuous pitch). To choose the drone note, pick Do in whatever key you're in or the note that seems the most important or prominent in the phrase.
- Play the passage super slowly, making sure you can hear the pitch and its resonance in your head before you play it.
- Play any notes that come one after the other on two adjacent strings as a double-stop to check the intonation between them and to feel the hand shape.
- Record yourself and listen back, making note of where it's out of tune. Audio Stretch helps immensely with this.

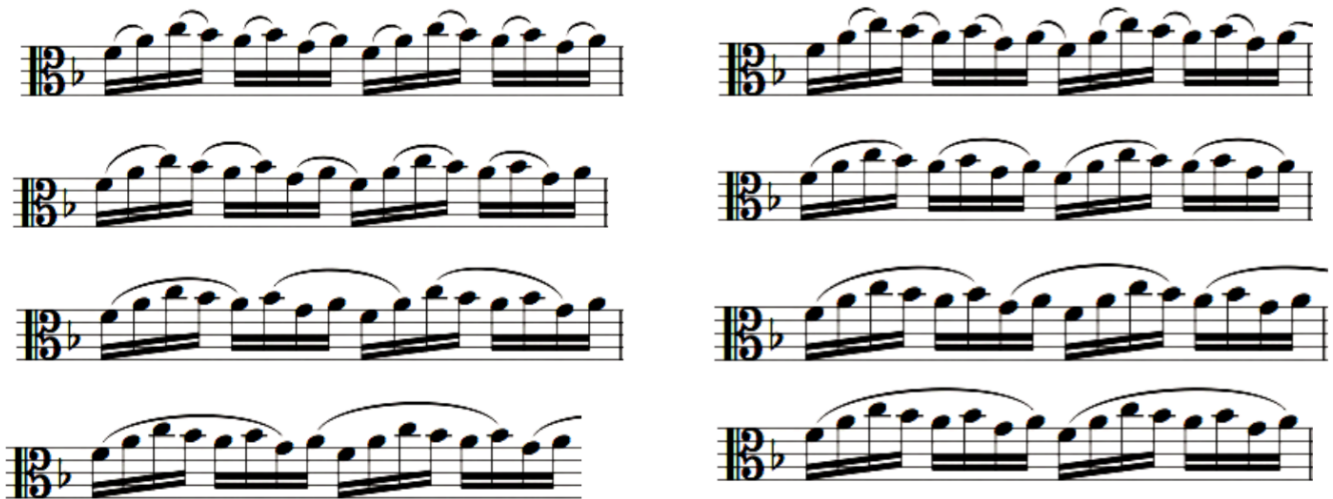
Rhythm

- Clap the rhythm.
- Sing your part and conduct along.
- Put the metronome on and walk in tempo while you play. Then turn off the metronome, but continue walking.
- Practice with the metronome on offbeats.
- Have the metronome click only on the downbeats.
- Make the clicks further and further apart. Start with every other beat, then just downbeats, then every other down beat, then every third downbeat, etc.

Bow issues

- Play open strings only. Make sure it is clean before you add your fingers back in.
- Play backwards bowing (if it starts down, start up and vice versa).
- Play everything at the extreme frog.
- Play everything at the extreme tip.
- Play it all up bow.
- Play it all down bow.
- If there are slurs, play it first separate bows. Then play with hooked bows. Next play with “mushy hooks” - not smooth slurs, but not really hooked either. Finally, play with smooth slurs.
- Before each string crossing, stop on the new string, wiggle the bow back and forth on the string without making a sound to make sure you can feel the string. Then play the new string.
- Before each string crossing, stop and say “Cross” out loud very enthusiastically. Then play.
- Practice with the following bowings:

- 2 through 8 slurred:




Eight musical staves arranged in two columns of four. Each staff shows a sequence of notes with slurs, representing bowings for strings 2 through 8. The notation includes a treble clef, a key signature of one flat (B-flat), and a 3/4 time signature. The notes are grouped into pairs, with slurs indicating the bowing direction for each pair.

- Different combinations of slurred and separate:



Six musical staves arranged in two columns of three. Each staff shows a sequence of notes with various combinations of slurs and separate bows, representing different bowing techniques. The notation includes a treble clef, a key signature of one flat (B-flat), and a 3/4 time signature. The notes are grouped into pairs, with slurs and separate bows indicating the bowing direction for each pair.

Playing Faster

- Play the section in dotted rhythms (original: )



The image shows four staves of musical notation. The first staff is in 3/4 time with a dotted rhythm. The second staff is in 6/8 time with a dotted rhythm. The third staff is in 6/8 time with a dotted rhythm. The fourth staff is in 6/8 time with a dotted rhythm.

- Change the rhythm in the following way:

- First note of each group long, the others fast



Musical notation for the first variation: first note of each group long, the others fast.

- Second note of each group long, the others fast



Musical notation for the second variation: second note of each group long, the others fast.

- Third note of each group long, the others fast



Musical notation for the third variation: third note of each group long, the others fast.

- Last note of each group long, the others fast

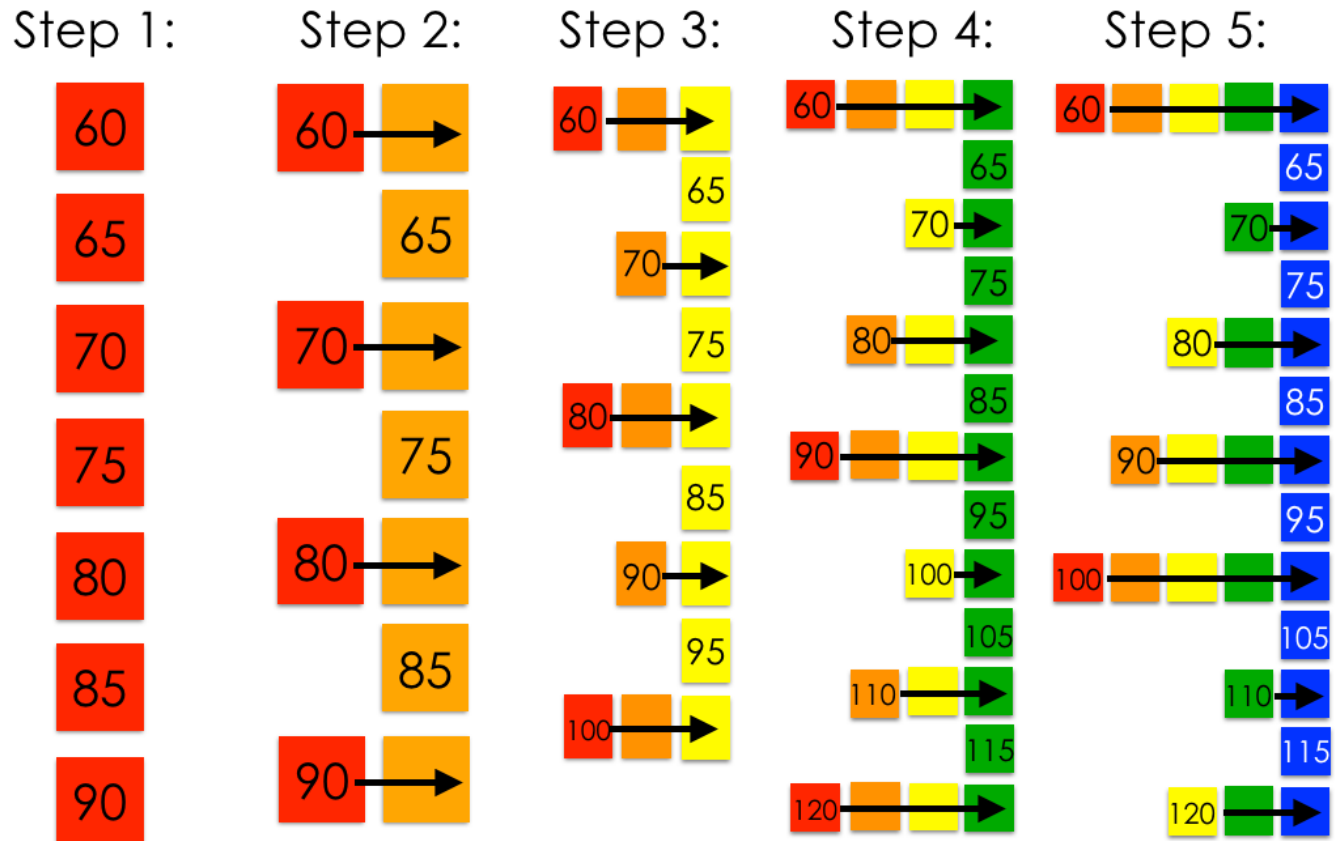


Musical notation for the fourth variation: last note of each group long, the others fast.

Note: the passage should be done in these rhythms both with separate bows and also with the printed bowing.

- Play the passage using the Gingold scale rhythms (see last pages). Again, do with separate bows and also the printed bowing.
- Play the passage in different bowings (under “Bow issues”).
- Click the passage up with the metronome (basic way):
 - Start at a tempo so slow you couldn’t possibly make a mistake (60 or slower).
 - Make it faster very gradually, going up by 5 or 10 at a time (no more). It shouldn’t really feel perceptible faster if you are going gradually enough.
 - Click up as fast as you can play cleanly.
 - Make a note of how fast you got and try to beat that tempo the next day, if only by 1 click.
 - Click up to faster than your goal tempo.

- Interleaved clicking up #1:
 - Each box below represents a single beat or a single measure.
 - Start by clicking up the first bar by 5s, starting at a slow tempo and working up to the your tempo.
 - Then go back to the start tempo and play the first two beats/bars. Then do the NEW bar/beat ONLY at 65. Then both beats/bars at 70, etc. until you reach the goal tempo.
 - Go back to the start tempo and play the first three beats/bars. Then do the NEW bar/beat ONLY at 65. Then the 2nd and 3rd beats at 70. Then the new beat at 75. Then all three at 80. Continue this pattern until you reach your goal tempo.
 - Continue this pattern, as illustrated below, until you've done the whole passage.
 - This works equally well working forward or backwards (so starting with the first beat/bar and working forwards, or starting with the last beat/bar and working backwards).



- Interleaved clicking up #2:
 - Click up passage A by 5s, then passage B by 5s, then passage C by 5s.
 - Click up passage A by 10s, then passage B by 10s, then passage C by 10s.
 - Click up passage A by 20s, then passage B by 20s, then passage C by 20s.
 - Click up passage A by 30s, then passage B by 30s, then passage C by 30s.
 - Play passage A at the start tempo, a tempo exactly half way between the start and the goal, and then the goal tempo. Click up passage B the same way. Then click up passage C the same way.
 - Play passage A at the start tempo and then the goal tempo. Play passage B the same when. Then play passage C the same way.
 - Play passage A at tempo, followed by passage B at tempo, followed by passage C at tempo.

- Chunking method #1:
 - Play a beat + a note as fast as you can CLEANLY.
 - Play two beats + a note as fast as you can cleanly. Make sure to do beats 1 & 2 and then 2 & 3. Don't just skip right away to 3 & 4.
 - Play three beats + a note as fast as you can cleanly.
 - Keep going on this way until you can do the whole thing.
- Chunking method #2: (thanks to Dr. Cora Cooper at Kansas State University for this idea!)
 - Step 1: Play each beat plus a note followed by rests at a slow tempo with the metronome. Click up until you reach your goal tempo. Click up until you reach your goal tempo.
 - Step 2: Same as step 1, but now two beats plus a note.
 - Step 3: Same as step 1, but now three beats plus a note.
 - Keep going until you have done the whole passage with no rests up to tempo.
 - You can increase the number of rests in between chunks from what is written in the example, but keep the number of rests between chunks consistent for a given step of the process.

Original

Step 1

Step 2

Step 3

Other Practice Ideas

- Play last bar of the passage as clearly as possible. Back up one bar and play the last two bars as cleanly as possible. Continue working backwards until you've gotten to the beginning of the passage.
- Record yourself playing a short passage. Listen back immediately and notice what you would like to be better. Play and record again. Keep doing this until you're happy with how it sounds.
- Mental practice: imagine yourself playing the passage as vividly as possible. Feel your fingers on the strings, feel the space between them, where you are on the string (which position, which string), feel what your bow has to do (bowing, which string), hear the pitch, hear the quality of sound, etc. As many things as you can imagine, the better. Once the passage is crystal clear in your head, then try to play it again.

- Sing how you want it to sound for phrasing and dynamics.
- Play the passage with hugely exaggerated dynamics.
- Play the passage with the opposite of what you think you should do for phrasing/dynamics. This will often help clarify what you *should* do.
- Pretend you are the teacher and are helping a student play the passage. What would you tell them? What would you have them do?

Good general practice habits

- Create a practice routine. Try to always practice in the same place at the same time for the same length of time so it becomes part of your day.
- You should start every practice session with a clear goal or goals for what you want to accomplish and how you think you will go about accomplishing them.
- **The WORST possible way to practice is to play from the beginning, play until you make a mistake and then either fix the mistake and go on or start over.** All this does is reinforce your mistakes. You need to locate where your trouble spots are, isolate them, and work on them using the suggestions in this list. Only once they have been perfected in isolation can you go back and put them in context.
- Playing through your piece is a LAST step after weeks or months of work, only to be done when you are getting ready for a performance. If you're running through your piece everyday (and it's more than 2-3 weeks before your concert), you're not practice well and are only reinforcing your mistakes.
- ALWAYS ask yourself, "Why am I playing this right now? What do I hope to accomplish?" If you're practicing, never just play. Always have a reason, especially if you are playing something again. Someone should be able to interrupt your practicing at any point and ask you these questions and you should have a good answer immediately. If you tend to practice mindlessly, set a timer to off every 10 minutes or so to remind yourself to ask this question.
- Keep a practice journal. Write down your goal for each practice session. Never practice without a goal!
- At the end of your practice session, write down how well you achieved your goal so you can monitor your progress. Write down what worked and what didn't in solving the problems you hear in your playing.
- Make sure you practice at least a little bit everyday. It's MUCH better to do 10 minutes everyday than an hour once a week.
- Use random/interleaved practice to allow your brain to practice performing.
- Use breaks strategically to allow your brain to do the necessarily reorganization it needs to in order to consolidate what you practiced in the last session.

Advanced Scale Rhythms

1

2

3

4

5

Detailed description of the musical exercises: The page contains five numbered exercises, each consisting of four measures. Exercise 1: Bass clef, key of D major (two sharps), 3/4 time. Measures 1-2: Bass clef, 3/4 time, eighth notes. Measure 3: Treble clef, 3/4 time, eighth notes. Measure 4: Treble clef, 2/4 time, quarter note. Exercise 2: Bass clef, key of D major, 2/4 time. Measures 1-2: Bass clef, 2/4 time, eighth notes. Measure 3: Treble clef, 2/4 time, eighth notes. Measure 4: Treble clef, 2/4 time, quarter note. Exercise 3: Bass clef, key of D major, 3/4 time. Measures 1-2: Bass clef, 3/4 time, eighth notes. Measure 3: Treble clef, 3/4 time, eighth notes. Measure 4: Treble clef, 3/4 time, eighth notes. Exercise 4: Bass clef, key of D major, 3/4 time. Measures 1-2: Bass clef, 3/4 time, eighth notes. Measure 3: Treble clef, 3/4 time, eighth notes. Measure 4: Treble clef, 3/4 time, eighth notes. Exercise 5: Bass clef, key of D major, 6/8 time. Measures 1-2: Bass clef, 6/8 time, eighth notes. Measure 3: Treble clef, 6/8 time, eighth notes. Measure 4: Treble clef, 6/8 time, eighth notes.

