

## 10 Ways To Practice Piano With Less Pain

Let's face it, learning to play the piano well requires practice, practice, practice! But who wants to practice more than they have to? Here are the top 10 ways to get the most out of your piano practice:

- 1) Looking for the top 10 ways to effectively practice piano? Let us start by admitting piano practice isn't always fun. At times, it can be as grueling a task as mopping the floor or teaching your York Terrier to roll over (even when he hasn't done it for the hundredth time). The key thing about piano practice however, is that it isn't really supposed to be fun -- it's supposed to improve your skills. That doesn't mean that practicing the piano **can't** be fun. We've even written an article describing how to **make** it fun. This article however, focuses on how to make practice more effective. And effective practice often accompanies a little thing we like to call, "dedication."
- 2) Plan your practice time and set goals. Yup - as with every thing else under the sun, perfection at the piano requires a dedicated set time of practice. So take a look at your schedule and **make** time (don't 'squeeze' time) to practice. Make sure that this time slot is uninterrupted and void of frivolous phone calls or visits from friends and family. Put the terrier in the back yard and unplug the phone. This is how to build "you" time, or more correctly, time to strengthen the love affair between you and your instrument. On such a lovely date, you may want to finally figure out a passage that has been troubling you, or you may want to build your basic skills. If it will help, write into your schedule book, the task that you'd like to master on each day that you practice. That way when you look at your planner, you'll remember how even Beethoven started out!
- 3) Play With Your Metronome. Don't forget the metronome. Metronomes are designed to strengthen your rhythm skills and if you insist on playing without one, you're destined to produce inconsistent music (no matter how well you can count). Put your trust into the mechanics of a metronome and you'll stay on beat, every time.
- 4) Get Smooth After a while, you may notice that your metronome is getting on your nerves. If so, chances are you've either got it turned up too loud, or you've advanced so much, you're ready to concentrate on other aspects of piano music -- like smoothness for example. During this phase of your lessons, your rhythm and timing have obviously improved, and now you're more interested in playing with emotion than following a steady beat. This doesn't mean that the metronome is useless however. It simply means that you can start focusing on letting your music flow. Turn the metronome down to its lowest level and refer to it only when you're nervous about getting off beat.
- 5) Practice in front of others. Talk about getting nervous! Failing to regularly play in front of others will only turn you into a master among one: (yourself)! Get used to entertaining small crowds and you'll eventually gain the courage to play for a crowd of a thousand. With just a few more years of experience, you'll soon solo at the symphony!
- 6) Kill the mistakes. This is where practicing in front of others really pays off because if you make a mistake, you can be sure you'll hear about it. And as daunting as this may seem, it's actually a good thing. You certainly want to catch and correct mistakes before you solidify them as a permanent fixture in a public performance.
- 7) Practice Every Day Yes, even when you're tired, grumpy, or just plain don't feel good, you must practice every day. You don't have to produce a masterpiece every time you sit down to play the piano, but you can at least run through the drills. This will help keep your fingers limber and your pedal-work coordinated with your hands. Of course when you're feeling up to it, go on and rock the house! Just don't skip a day. Not even one. The masters didn't!
- 8) Work the Right Hand. Since the right hand often plays the most intricate part of a song, you'll want to exercise it as much as possible. Take it slow if need be and then speed up to the right tempo when you're ready.
- 9) Speed It Up There's an interesting theory in the piano community that claims playing faster, increases skills. This is a theory of course that only works after you've mastered a piece at tempo you're comfortable with. And it's idea claims that "speed playing" makes music appear easier to play than it really is.
- 10) Chill You'll never master the piano if you continuously play it while tense, angry, or nervous. Certain pieces of music require that its musicians relax. If you never learn how to relax during practice, your tense, angry, or nervous condition will eventually become your personal playing style. And the music that you play will instill the same condition within your audience. Yikes! Learn how to relax your wrist, hands, shoulders and arms. Find a comfortable position and learn how to smile while you're playing. Yes, playing the piano is hard work, but it should never be forced. Record Yourself. Strengthen both your playing and listening skills by recording yourself playing the piano. Depending on how good you are, you may be in for a pleasant or terrifying experience. If the former - don't stop improving. If the latter - don't give up. After enough practice, you'll improve on your own without the aid of a tape recorder -- and you'll do so the instant that you press a key.

### About the Author

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