



Practice Tips by Sean Reusch

www.trombone101.com

"The grass is greener where you water it." - Joshua Medicalf

Practice makes permanent.

PRE

1. Make short, medium, and long-range goals for yourself to help evaluate progress.
2. Have a plan for practicing **BEFORE** you practice - you will be so much more efficient. Try to set time limits to keep your practice session varied.

3. Practice things on which you don't sound good - we tend to play what we can already play well.
4. Relax! We perform at a much higher level and for a longer period when relaxed.
5. Practice in a place with as few distractions as possible (never practice in front of the TV or computer). Put your phone on airplane mode!
6. Listen to as much music as possible (live concerts, television, recordings, and movies), particularly of great musicians. Be sure to listen to singers and other instrumentalists (not just brass!). Always try to go to live concerts as often as possible!
7. Have fun! Be grateful and remember how amazing it is to be a musician!

DURING

1. Posture - sit balanced! Bring your instrument up to your face, not your face down to your instrument.
2. Record yourself! You will be amazed at what we don't hear and let slip by! Take notes.
3. Practice in smaller increments - take breaks! Set a clock to help keep track of time. Playing straight for a long time usually leads to bad habits because of physical and mental fatigue. Most people have a hard time focusing for long periods. Take breaks so you may maintain that great focus. Also, by taking breaks, your endurance will increase and you will be able to practice more throughout the day.

4. Break the piece up into smaller sections. Find the most challenging spots and begin working on them first. Make any licks that are challenging or intimidating your friend! Look to see if the composer ever repeats any of those spots!
5. When you very first learn a piece, play it slowly! This enables you to program things correctly from the very beginning (i.e. intervals, articulations, rhythms, notes). Itzhak Perlman, the incredible violinist, said, "If you want to improve quickly, practice slowly. If you want to improve slowly, practice quickly."
6. Make flash cards for any challenging lick to isolate it further. To fix a specific problem (example: rhythms, intervals, articulations), isolate it and make several exercises out of it (5 exercises per flash card).
7. Use some of the following strategies when learning a new piece:
 - Slow down tempo - play 1 note at a time!
 - Speed tempo up slightly - play all rhythms as quarter notes.
 - Drop a high lick down an octave.
 - Raise a low lick up an octave.
 - Play an entire phrase all on 1 note (to work on rhythms, articulations, dynamics and phrasing).
 - Play an entire lick with no tongue.
 - Sing!
 - Buzz!
 - Play a lick backwards slowly.

- Analyze a lick - is it a pattern that you might recognize such as a scale or arpeggio? Is it a sequence?
- Make a sequence out of a lick - raise it or lower it by half step.
- Isolate a challenging interval. Invert the interval
- Listen to recordings and then play along with them if you are able.

8. At some point in every practice session, play straight through a piece - don't stop! Be sure to play it at whatever tempo allows you to be successful. *SLOW IS GOOD!* This practice gives you a realistic idea of how well you can really play the piece. After you finish playing straight through, assess how well you did. Where were your problem spots? Next run-through, anticipate those spots and focus on them ahead of time.

9. Have fun! Be grateful and remember how amazing it is to be a musician!

POST

1. Listen to your recording and record your thoughts about your practice session. Did you accomplish what you intended? What things could you do differently or better?

2. Listen to as much music as possible (live concerts, television, recordings, and movies), particularly of great musicians. Be sure to listen to singers and other instrumentalists (not just brass!). Always try to go to live concerts as often as possible!

3. Have fun! Be grateful and remember how amazing it is to be a musician!