

A Self-Study for Music Majors
Read This Once a Week

1. Do I have the motivation to achieve and excel in music?
2. Am I committed to achieving and excelling in music?
3. Am I committed to developing and practicing good time-management skills?
4. Am I committed to developing and practicing good concentration?
5. Am I committed to developing and practicing good music listening skills?
6. Do I truly enjoy challenging myself in music?
7. Am I committed to developing and practicing good skills of self-evaluation?
8. Am I committed to developing and practicing good goal setting skills?
9. Do I have the discipline and patience to perform the necessary repetitions that constitute effective practice?
10. Do I have the discipline and patience to work regularly on long-term goals as well as short term ones?
11. Do I truly enjoy working independently?
12. Am I committed to taking responsibility for my improvement in performance?
13. Am I committed to taking responsibility for effective problem solving?
14. Am I truly open to learning about *all* art music—even music I may not like?
15. Do I really believe that music is important?
16. Am I committed to understanding and promoting the difference between art music and entertainment?
17. Do I truly have a desire to communicate the value of art music to all listeners?
18. Do I believe that music is a vocation?

Excerpts from

Musical Excellence: Strategies and Techniques to Enhance Performance

The notion of what constitutes a “normal” frequency and volume of practice for students across the performance programs in higher music education seems to be fairly consistent. First of all, students are expected to practice regularly—that is, every day or most days of the week. This means that they have to manage the distribution of practice sessions throughout the week and during a practice day within the context of a busy study schedule.¹

There is no universally applicable answer to the question of how much to practice. For students in higher education, however, an unwritten norm for the amount of individual practice seems to average around 20-25 hours per week. There are pronounced variations in both directions from this average, primarily depending on the nature of the instrument. . . . These differences are partly related to the restrictions posed by the instrument’s physical and technical demands and partly on the aspirations and motivation of the performer, which is why such large differences can be observed in the amount of individual practice among students who play the same instrument.²

Effective practice is not a question of “filling time,” but of filling the optimal amount of time with the optimal quality of practice, which means employing carefully selected strategies.³

Musicians learn to practice more effectively as their skills develop over many years.⁴

Practice must be practiced! Observe your practice sessions regularly, and concentrate your observation on one or two specific features at a time. For example, try to register how much time you spend on specific tasks during a practice session, what types of errors you produce, how you include repetition of previously rehearsed repertory into your practice schedule, etc. The number and range of issues are limitless. The main point is that practicing must be taken seriously, as the *professional* musician is dependent on a *professional* level of practicing.⁵

Suggested reading:

Chapter 2: General Perspectives on Achieving Musical Excellence

Chapter 5: Strategies for Individual Practice

Musical Excellence: Strategies and Techniques to Enhance Performance

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¹ Strategies, p. 90

² Strategies, p. 90

³ Strategies, p. 91

⁴ General Perspectives. p. 23

⁵ Strategies, p. 99