

Fiddle Workshops

Practicing Effectively

How to Start:

1. Tune Up – if you aren't in tune, you are getting into a habit of playing out of tune
2. Stand like you mean it. Posture and positioning is a habit that you create each time you play.
 - a. Check your posture
 - b. Stand Strong
 - c. Relax
 - d. Breath with the Music
3. Warm up. Stretch, play scales and exercises to get your mind and body prepared. Warming up also helps you avoid injuries later on.
4. Play a song or two that you know to finish your warmup.
5. Now you are ready to tackle something new.
 - a. Listen to recordings of the tune you are learning if you don't have the tune in your head. Get familiar with the general structure of the tune.
 - b. Sight Read first to get the big picture. Leave out slurs and ornaments.
 - c. Work the tune up slowly with a metronome 5BPM at a time.
 - d. Break out sections that are technically challenging.
 - i. Play the measure or smallest pattern that you are struggling with.
 - ii. Master it by playing it at least 3 times correctly in a row.
 - iii. Add the measure before and after.
 - iv. Reincorporate the difficult section into the tune

Practicing Tips and Techniques:

- Isolate the things that you are struggling with and practice them independently. Ie. Bowings, Fingerings, Rhythm, Intonation, Execution (putting the pieces together). Your mind can only focus on one thing at a time.
- Focus, Focus, Focus. Focused time is productive time!
- Take your scales slow. Listen to your intonation on each note. Make sure you are perfectly in tune before moving on to the next note.
- Work up your speed a little at a time using a metronome. If you take it a little at a time, you can make large improvements more quickly. A keyboard that plays rhythms also works very well, and can be more interesting to play with than a metronome.
- Don't overdo it. If your body is in pain, take a break. It is better to break your practice up than to injure yourself. You can only focus for so long anyway.