



POLICIES AT MELODY MUSIC STUDIOS

Here are the policies for lessons at Melody Music Studios. Please keep for your records.

1. Monthly tuition is a flat rate per month regardless of a four or five week month. The extra lessons given during the year covers our holidays and vacation (Thanksgiving day/Friday, Christmas-one week, New Year's Day, and one week instructor vacation). However, the extra lessons given during the year for the 5-week months, minus any lessons used for our holidays or instructor vacation, will be billed to the responsible party in the month of December or the final month's billing if lessons are canceled before the end of the year.
2. If the student does not attend the first lesson and does not contact the instructor or MMS, that lesson will be billed to the responsible party, and future lessons will be canceled unless the responsible party contacts the instructor or Melody Music Studios about continuing lessons.
3. The first month's tuition will be prorated if begin after the 1st of the month for the number of lessons remaining in the month, and the responsible party's credit/debit card will be run **one business day after the trial lesson**. If lessons are canceled **by the next business day** due to not being happy with the lesson (with a valid reason), the lesson is free. If lessons continue past the trial lesson, starting the next month, tuition is charged to the responsible party's credit/debit card on the **1st of each month** (unless set up differently during registration).
4. Lessons can be reduced in length (2 hours per month minimum), canceled, or postponed by giving a 30 day notice, and the responsible party must call or email the office of Melody Music Studios to give notice.
5. No refunds or credits will be given for lessons canceled by the student/responsible party for a scheduled lesson with instructor. Make up lessons are not guaranteed; this is up to the availability of the instructor. Please contact the instructor directly for possible scheduling. Make up lessons must be given in conjunction with current lessons; lessons cannot be postponed in order to schedule make ups. However, during the months of June-August, lessons can be credited with a 2-week notice to the instructor or the office of Melody Music Studios.
6. If lessons are canceled by the instructor, the student is guaranteed a make up lesson or a credit if a make up is not possible. Please call or email the office of MMS to let know if any credits are needed. Once this is confirmed with the instructor, it will be credited to the student's account to be deducted from the following month's tuition.
7. Payments are made directly to Melody Music Studios. No tuition payments are to be made directly to the instructor.
8. If the lesson(s) was canceled due to bad weather by either student or instructor, the instructor has a period of two (2) months to offer a make up lesson(s). If the instructor is unable to offer several options within the 2 month period, the missed lesson(s) will be credited to the student's account. *Please note: if the instructor offers multiple times and the student does not accept any of them, the student forfeits the make up lesson(s) or refund.
9. The student can choose to be reassigned to another instructor at any time. If the reassignment was due to dissatisfaction with the instructor (with a valid reason), the 30 day notice will be waived, and any missed lessons during the reassignment will be credited to the students' account.
10. All referrals must go through Melody Music Studios. Please do not give the instructor's contact information to someone you're referring, however you can contact the office by phone or email with the name and number if you would like MMS to contact your referral for sign up. There is a one time \$10 discount to your account for each referral that signs up!!! Let your referral know they will also receive a \$10 discount on the first month's tuition just for mentioning your name when they sign up!!
11. For lessons given in the students' home, please allow 15 minutes before or after the scheduled time for the instructor to arrive, due to sometimes unavoidable factors such as traffic, weather, and/or previous lessons going over their time for special circumstances.
12. For comments, questions or suggestions, email us at info@melodymusicstudios.com or call us at 1/800-Melody1 (800/635-6391). Please feel free to let us know how the lessons are going to help us provide the best possible service to you.



Practicing Tips

You have always heard the saying, "practice makes perfect", but I have a better saying, "Only perfect practice makes perfect". By that I mean that the actual amount of time you practice doesn't necessarily improve your ability, it's how you practice that's important. In this article I would like to address things that I've done, or had students do over the years, that are both good and bad, and how to improve your practice habits.

Getting started

The most difficult part of practicing is getting started. For a young beginner student (ages preschool-6 or 7), I do not recommend having them practice at all. I know this goes against the grain of normal thinking, but there are reasons why practicing at that age should not be expected of them. First, the young student does not have the discipline, retention, or enough information to practice, and by forcing the young student to practice, will only cause frustration and discouragement to both student and parents. What I recommend for parents is to ask their child to "play" what they've learned in their lesson, taking just a few minutes. As the young student continues to take consistent weekly lessons, he/she will begin to learn and develop a skill over time. The important thing is to keep the idea of music lessons to be a fun and positive thing. It's also great to encourage their creativity at this age, by letting them explore on their instrument or voice.

Once the beginner student (any age) begin to develop a skill, then they have something to practice. And learning to practice is something that is learned over time, the same as learning the instrument itself. Once the student is ready to begin a daily practice regiment, here is what I suggest:

1. Keep the practice time realistic to the student's age and level. Don't expect a beginner student to practice for 30 minutes straight. It's best to keep practicing at short segments, but often and consistent. If the goal is 30 minutes per day, the student can break it up into 2-15 minute practices, with a break in between. Once the student gets to the "tired" point, he/she is no longer retaining what is learned. By doing shorter practices often, will help the student learn quicker. The suggested practice lengths will differ for each student, depending on their age and level. For beginners between the ages of about 7-9, the normal length of practice I suggest is 15-25 minutes, for an older child or adult beginner, it may be 30-40 minutes, and for more advanced levels, it may be 1-2 hours. These are only suggestions, as each student may require more or less time before getting to their "tired" point.

2. Keep the instrument and practice area in a place where it's easy to practice. The biggest barrier to practicing can often be getting to the instrument or area to practice. I suggest having the instrument in a place where it's visible, as a reminder to the student to practice, and in a room that is easy to practice in. Make sure the room is free from clutter and noise, where it may be difficult for the student to practice. Any hindrances to practicing should be taken away.

3. Schedule the practice just like the lessons are scheduled. It's easy to forget to practice with so much going on in the student's life, so setting aside a specific time to practice helps the student remember, and will eventually be a part of the student's daily life, just like taking the lessons, going to school or work, eating, etc. Each student needs to decide on the time that is best for them, but make it the same time every day to create consistency. For children, I suggest before/after homework, before/after dinner, etc, or even the same time as the lesson. For adults, this can be especially helpful, as life can get in the way, and before you know it, the week has gone by without practicing at all! For young children, the parents can make a chart where the student can check off after

practicing, and a little reward of some kind can be given after practicing for the week. This is a great way to help small children want to practice.

4. No guilt for not practicing. This applies more to adult students than children. There will certainly be weeks where practicing was just not possible, or it just didn't happen. When those weeks happen, don't beat yourself up over it, as there's nothing that can be done to change it, just look forward to the next week. Learning an instrument or voice is a marathon, not a sprint, and a week here and there of not practicing is not going to make a huge difference in the long run. Feeling guilty over not practicing will cause frustration and anxiety about the lessons, which is the last thing we want for the student.

5. Contact the instructor for questions. Often the "real" reason for not practicing is because the student may not understand what he/she is supposed to practice. It's human nature to not face something that seems difficult. If the student does not understand the assignment, or unsure of what to practice, please don't hesitate to contact the instructor and ask questions. I hire instructors that "love" to teach, and want to make sure the student understands what is being taught, so never feel like you're imposing on them to ask questions. It may be a simple step not understood or missing, and clarifying that can make a huge difference in the student's desire to practice that week.

How to correct a "learned" mistake

There are mistakes that happen randomly, and then there are the mistakes the student makes every time he/she comes across a certain section of music. This is what I call a "learned" mistake, and if you practice incorrectly, you can actually make the problem worse. I have developed a 3 step process for correcting these mistakes:

Highlight the mistake-the first step in correcting the mistake is to simply identify what it is the student is doing incorrect. Is the student going too far to a specific note, not far enough, or identifying the note or rhythm incorrectly, etc?

Delete the bad information-take the bad information out of your thinking process.

Input correct information-and finally enter the corrected information in processing that section(s) and practice that section(s) with the corrected information.

I have found when the student does these 3 steps (and in some cases, even after just doing the first step of identifying the mistake), it corrects the mistake instantly. I advise to follow the correction with "spot practicing" (which I describe in the following segment), and the mistake will completely disappear altogether.

Spot practicing

Another mistake I've often seen students do is to start at the beginning of the piece when a mistake is made, no matter where they are in the song or how they played the song at the beginning. I like to think of problem areas like a tangle that you need to straighten out, so playing the entire piece is not going to get the tangle out, and in fact, sometimes reinforces the mistake and it then becomes a learned error rather than a mistake. Here's the order of learning a new piece that I've always found to help me:

1. To begin, play the piece all the way through, no matter how many mistakes you make, so you become familiar with the song and where it's going musically.

2. Secondly, divide your song into sections to practice. Use your own judgment on how long of a section you would like to learn at a time. You may choose to only play the one section per practice, then at your next practice session, move on to the next section.

3. Once you've finished practicing all the sections, you can now play the piece in its entirety. However, there will always be sections that will give you more trouble than other parts. This is where spot practicing comes into play. Once you've determined the parts that give you trouble (this may be one measure, an entire line or several lines), determine to use your entire practice session to just go over that particular part, then work outward. For example, let's say you have one measure that gives you trouble. Play that one measure repeatedly (at least 5 times in a row) until you feel more comfortable with it, then play the measure before and after the troubled measure, then play the entire line. Sometimes the problem is not just that part, but going into and out of that part.

Repeat troubled spots immediately

The sooner you go back and play the difficult spots again, the more you will retain. I call this "repeat before the glue dries". Because there are different levels of retention, this is another reason why going back to the very beginning of a piece does not help you correct the errors or improve your playing. For most adults, you can remember the Pledge of Allegiance, because as a child you said it every day for years. So even now when you probably haven't said it for a long while, you can still recite it. This is because you've learned it at a deeper level. Practicing a part over and over but doing it consecutively is the best way to retain what you've learned or corrected and sets what you've learned to that same deep level

Listen to yourself

For those of you that are taking lessons, imagine that your instructor is there with you when you practice and be critical of your playing the same as your instructor would, hearing his or her words in your head. I still hear my past instructors every time I practice, telling me things I know he would say if he were listening. I know that while you're learning a piece it's hard to also hear what you're playing, but as you grow more familiar with the piece, you'll be able to do that more and more. And another great way to practice is to record yourself. That is usually the last step I take when learning a piece that I'll be performing, so I can hear myself better and critique my own playing. You may even want to circle those areas you need to work on (with pencil) on the music so you can remember or make notes.

Final step

Of course learning the notes and rhythms to the song is just the beginning of making music. Once you've learned the nuts and bolts of the song, you can then begin to add color to the music, by using dynamics (varying volumes) and rubato (varying tempos or speeds) as well as phrasing and your interpretation of the music. This is where taking lessons really helps you, so that you have an instructor listening to your playing and able to give you guidance on how to make the music become yours. I believe the music maker is not the composer, but rather the musician who makes the black and white notes on paper come alive. Because of this, we still have the spirit of all the past composers with us still today.

In summary, I hope these steps have and will help you in your musical journey. Please feel free to contact us with any questions or suggestions. We're happy to hear from you!