

Practice Day 1: RESEARCH

(You may have to visit the Internet or other info source to find answers.)

Piece you are learning:

Composer:

What year was this piece composed:

What period of music history:

3 interesting facts about the composer:

Write down all the musical terms and articulation you see in the music and what their definition is:

Take out the printed music of the piece, and listen to the piece 3 times following the score. Be aware of the music's form and energy (tempo, dynamics, etc.) shape. Write into the score any comments or observations you have about any sections.

Practice Day 2: PREPARING THE MUSIC

Mark a ✓ in each box after you've done that step.

The Score:

- Find one or more recordings for this piece and put it on ALL of your listening devices you use.

On how many listening devices did you put your music? _____

- Write down all of the texts in the score and their definitions (you probably did this the previous day).
- Number each measure in the score neatly.
- Mark brackets ([]) to delineate small sections to learn. Brackets should mark 4 - 8 measures, small enough to learn. More complicated sections should be shorter.

How many sections did you delineate? _____

- Label each of these sections with a letter (A, B, C, D ...).

What was the highest letter you used? _____

- Put a star (☆) next to any spots you think will be tricky to learn or to play.

How many stars did you mark? _____

- Estimate the final tempo of the piece.

What tempo did you estimate ? _____

(use a form like these examples: ♩ = 120 or ♩ = 50 or ♩ = 60)

The Interpretation:

- Examine the written dynamics, think about your phrasing, and write down any other dynamics you wish to add. (You can imitate what you've listened to or make your own decisions.). Things to consider include:
- How will you make repetitions in the music different?
 - Are there places where the music has more energy and excitement than others?
 - Where you have phrases, where do you want to peak your energy?
 - Where are the peaks of energy in large sections of the music?

How many extra dynamics did you mark? _____

- Examine the articulation (staccato, legato, accents, etc.), and circle any that you think would take practice to get correct.

How many articulations did you circle? _____

Practice Days 3 until the next lesson: PREPARING THE MUSIC (cont.)

The Technique:

You need to work slowly and systematically through each section of your piece. Your goal is to identify your fingering, arm motions, and eye focus points before you actually start to learn the piece.

To figure out fingering, try moving the fingers in the air for the music, quite slowly. If that doesn't work, try moving the fingers over the piano for each hand quite slowly, trying different variations until you think you've found the best fingering possible. **Write this fingering in!**

To figure out special arm motions, move your hands along the fingering quite slowly. If you feel like you are stretching your fingers or twisting your wrist, adjust the arm right & left, in & out, until you find a position for a particular point that is natural to your hand. **Mark in the score which way you had to move your arm to get to this position (← → ↓ ↑).**

To figure out eye focus points, identify any leaps that you can not make without looking at the piano. Are there also places where both hands leap at the same time? Figure out where you are going to look and when for each leap. **Mark this in the score with a pair of eyeglasses.**

Including today, how many practice days do you have until your next lesson?

How many days ? _____

How many sections did you delineate with the brackets ([]) and mark with letters?

How many sections ? _____

How many sections will you have to work on each day to make sure you have hit all sections before your next lesson? (Round up)

How many sections per day ? _____

Mark a ✓ in each box for each day you've completed the task on each day:								
3	4	5	6	7	8	9	What you did:	
							Marked all of the fingerings for all of the sections of this day.	
							Made notes of any special arm motions I need to consider.	
							Made notes of any eye focus points for any leaps I need to make.	

At the Lesson: PLANNING YOUR STRATEGY

All of your pieces should be learned by November 16. I would like you to try working on all of your works at the same time, so that you don't get stuck on any single work that could prevent you from completing any pieces.

I recommend having all of the parts learned at a very slow but steady tempo by the week of September 28, the piece assembled into a complete work by the week of October 26, and working up to tempo during the last three weeks.

Week of ...	
August 10	Work on this packet
August 17	
August 24	
August 31	
September 7	
September 14	
September 21	
September 28	
October 5	<i>(fall break)</i>
October 12	
October 19	
October 26	
November 2	
November 9	
November 16	Piece is learned!!!

During the learning process: EXECUTE YOUR MAP

- Make a copy of the following sheet (page 6) for each piece, each lesson week.
- Fill out all of the days you plan to practice and the goals for each day. An example of how to fill out this page is on page 7.
- *Your practice time each day is as long or short as it takes to meet the goal for that day.* If at all possible, do not quit practicing for the day until you have met your goal! However, remember you can (and should) take breaks so that you can return refreshed when you need to.
- Tricks to the practice:
 - **Work with digestible portions.** This is the purpose of working with one section at a time, and then later on glueing the sections together.
 - **Manage the tempo.** Do not attempt to play faster than you can already play well. Use a metronome. Maintain a consistent tempo.
 - **Image ahead.** As you are playing, be aware of what will be coming next, and be prepared for the arm motion, the fingering, and the musicality that follows.
 - **Be artistic, yet aware.** Make music, but avoid being “caught up in the passion.” You want to continue to image ahead and assess how well you are doing.
 - **Execute three times in a row perfectly.** Demand excellence from yourself, achieve it, and then move on. *Always aim for growth, not blind and soulless repetitions.*
 - **Balance small and large sections.** You may find that you need to focus on something smaller than one of your sections to get the technique or fingering correct. Then work into the larger section.
 - **Record yourself!** Use your iPad or iPhone to record yourself and assess how you are doing.
 - **Set limits, rest, and review.** Don’t try to bite off too much. Take time to review what you’ve learned. Take time to rest.

A WEEK'S PRACTICE PLAN FOR ONE PIECE
(Example)

Piece Name: Mr. Johnson's Opus

Practice Days starting in the Week of: August 17

Preparing for the lesson on day: Wednesday, August 26

Goals to achieve before the next lesson (from page 4): Learn sections A, B, C to

tempo quarter = 60

Did it?	Listened ?	Days I will Practice	Goals of each practice for this piece.
✓		Thu 8/20	Section A LH, RH, 2H @ 40bpm. Same with B. All 3x/row
✓		Fri 8/21	Review A, B LH, RH, 2H, get to 50bpm. C LH, RH, 2H @ 40bpm. 3x/rpw
✓		Sat 8/22	Review A, B LH, RH, 2H, get to 60bpm. Review C LH, RH, 2H, to 50. 3x
		Sun 8/23	Review A, B 2H, fix all 60bpm. Review C LH, RH, 2H, to 60 bpm. 3x
		Mon 8/24	Review C 2H 3x, fix all 60 bpm, Ditto with A, B Record self fix hiccups
		Tue 8/25	Record A, B, C @ 60, fix hiccups 3x/row, play each 3x/row correctly

PARENT GUIDE

Your Strategy:

I am asking your student(s) to learn several works of music largely on their own. Your job, as the parent, is to enable their success by (a) helping them find the time to do daily disciplined practice; (b) encouraging their efforts of deliberate practice through gentle double-checking that daily goals are being identified and achieved; (c) cheering them on for their accomplishments, which likely at first will seem small to them.

What to Check:

If your relationship with your child still involves any level of participation in their practice, please periodically check that they are doing the steps outlined above to maximize their chance at success in this independent learning project.

Here is what you can check:

- Week 1
 - Days 1 & 2 of practice have worksheets to fill out above. Each day, please check that they are filled out.
 - Days 3 through the rest of the week involve preparation of the music score. Please check that they are doing some of this each day for the rest of the week so that they will be finished when they arrive at the lesson. **It is VERY important that the student complete everything prior to the next lesson.**
- All other weeks
 - At the second lesson, we marked out goals for each week of the rest of the semester. At the beginning of each successive week, the student should create a map of each day's goals for the remainder of the week. *Please check that this map (a copy of page 6) has been filled out appropriately to meet the goals.*
 - Make sure that the map has been emailed to me on the first practice day, so that I might make necessary comments on the planning.
 - On each day, please make sure the student has practiced, achieved the goals, and marked the sheet appropriately.

What to Expect:

Ideally, everything goes smoothly, and your student learns the assigned pieces on time or ahead of time. *Please work as hard as possible to make this happen.* Some weeks surely will be more difficult. While I hope that each student can achieve 100% success, even successfully learning only one work independently offers an experience useful for a lifelong enjoyment of music.

I am assigning works that I believe can be learned by your student through consistency and modest diligence. Assuming your student is assigned three works, then your student can consider the following to be reasonable “school-equivalent” grades for what they accomplish:

- A- to A+ : All three works learned to performance level, with consideration of the level of refinement.
- B- to B+ : Two works learned to performance level. (Partially learned works don't count.)
- C- to C+ : One work learned to performance level. (Partially learned works don't count.)

Thank you. I hope you and your student(s) have fun and discover a new level of musical independence this semester.

CREDITS

Much of the language for this document comes from the book, The Musician's Way: A Guide to Practice, Performance, and Wellness, by Gerald Klickstein.

For any musician thinking about becoming a professional or serious musician, this book is a great read.