



Guidance for Teachers

Types of Practice

Learning Context

Musicians must practice. That's the only way we get good. There are many ways to practice.

Variable practice. This is when you learn multiple versions of a particular skill.

For example, on the clarinet, there are at least two different ways to play B4.

Variable practice will have you playing different pieces that require you to switch between the different ways to play B4.

Fixed practice. This is what most of us are familiar with: this involves playing the same thing over and over in the same environment under the same conditions until you get it.

Parts practice. This is when you take a particular skill and break it down to its component parts and practice each of those parts.

For example, on the piano, practicing the fingering of a C major scale from A0 to C8 with both hands requires breaking the steps down.

- First you need to get the fingering for one hand.
- Then you need to get the fingering for the other hand.
- Then you need the coordination of both while keeping your shoulders relaxed and your feet flat while breathing.

Parts.

Whole practice. This is where you practice your skill in its entirety. This would be like practicing your C-major scale from A0 to C8 , ascending then descending.

Mental practice. This is where you imagine performing the piece perfectly.

This is one of the most underrated types of practice. [Studies have shown](#) that practicing your piece in your mind is incredibly effective.

Distributed practice. The most effective type of practice, distributed practice is when the instructor teaches a concept, and the student practices this concept in short intervals over a longer period of time.