

❖SACD Newsletter❖

Volume 4 Issue 9

The Suzuki Association of the Capital District

Summer 1997

Ideas for Keeping the Fun in Practicing

For Children:

1. **Beat the clock:** Set a timer or alarm to remind you it's time to practice before anyone tells you.
2. **For the Record:** Tape a piece you are working on. Listen for spots to work on and improve. Record again and enjoy your progress.
3. **Blindman's Bluff:** Play a piece while wearing a blindfold. Listen for beautiful tone.
4. **Dance, hum, sing, exercise to the tape** to break up practice time if you can't sit still for very long or your attention span is short.
5. **Teacher's Helper:** After practicing a piece, pretend you are the teacher. Make suggestions to yourself in a pleasant voice about what you can improve. Play again with all your suggestions.
6. **Brown Bag It:** Wear a brown paper bag on your head while playing Twinkle variations on your violin. Keep your eyes focused on the little critter stuck on the top of the violin.
7. **Concert Time:** Line up all your stuffed animals and play for each one of them a section that you want to fix for accuracy or practice a new technique such as using 4th finger for the first time.
8. **Outdoor concert:** Play your violin or flute outdoors for friends to hear.
9. **Tennis:** Have your parent or friend play a rhythm and you play it back.
10. **Duet Time:** Play duets with mom or dad on another instrument.
11. **Board game:** Write your name in large block letters on a large piece of poster board. Divide the letters into sections with tasks or pieces on them. Roll dice. Land on a certain task. Go x amount of turns or per time limit. Change tasks on the board as you advance.
12. **All Time Favorites:** Always end your practice with your favorite piece.

"Practicing should be a pleasurable and happy experience for the child. ... Let the practicing be fun and this high spirit will carry through to high accomplishment."

—Helping Parents Help Their Children

For Parents:

1. Practicing will be more fun if the parent has a positive attitude and comes to the practice with a smile.
2. Allow your child to help in deciding when and how long to practice.
3. Use dice for how many times a phrase or section has to be played.
4. If the practice time changes every day, let your children know the night before when they will be practicing the next day, so they are prepared to practice at the specified time and not be told at the last minute.
5. On weekends, make practice time first, then they can go out to play.
6. Put the things to be practiced on cards or fish-shaped colored paper and let the child fish for what to practice next.
7. On index cards list different ways to do reviews, i.e. 1) R.H. up an octave, 2) L.H. down an octave, 3) opposite dynamics, 4) all staccato, 5) eyes closed. The child draws one or more cards for each piece to be practiced.
8. For a child who has difficulty having a parent tell him/her what to do, use a puppet to talk to the child.
9. The non-practicing parent can just go in and sit and listen during the practicing time and just encourage them and let them know you really enjoy listening to them play.
10. Limit computer game time to a rate of practice time.
11. Let your children improvise. It lets them express themselves, they can use notes that maybe aren't used very much,

they can make sounds that are pleasing to them, and they can't make any mistakes. It's a great way to help children to really love music.

12. Break up practice time with a basketball game. Make paper balls and put them on one side of the piano. They get one ball for each good practice point. When they have accumulated 8 balls on the other side of the piano, they get to stop practicing and to throw the balls in a basket.

13. Encourage your child to play for his/her friends. If their friends also play, encourage them to play also or to play together.

14. **Playing cards:** Assign a suit or # for each part of the lesson, then draw a specified number of cards each day. Variation: assign each piece a suit (club, heart, etc.) according to the technique used.

15. Fill a penny jar for each repeat. When the jar is full, the child may keep the money.

16. Mix up chocolate chip cookies while the child is practicing, then run into the room and drop a chip on her plate for every 10 times working on a certain spot successfully.

17. **Pick-Up Stix:** Write the name of review pieces on popsicle sticks. Add a stick each time a piece is learned. Each new piece means they get to eat another popsicle!

18. **Buy a new piano.** Great motivator for parents as well as child.

19. **Spin-a-Song:** Write names of songs in a circle. Attach with a brad and spinner onto a paper plate.

20. **Complaint Department Closed:** Make a sign of the above and use a few times each week. You are not allowed to say anything except positive remarks.