

## SUMMER PRACTICE - GET READY!

Lately, I've been asking my Suzuki families what makes practice during the summer so difficult for them.

Student response - It's hard to come inside when it's sunny out

Parent response - I have to make sure that my motivation is greater than my child's.

### WHY IS IT HARD?

Kids have the notion that all regular activities and disciplines break for the summer. Family life changes; summer camp, increased sports activities, cottage life, holidays, guests at home make practice more challenging.

Increased light levels means kids are outside more and probably exhausted by the end of their day.

"The Summer just seemed to slip by". This is a very common statement teachers hear in September with the unfortunate result of students having to relearn repertoire.

1. Make a master plan - Sit down with your child and your family calendar. Block off times when you can't practice (holidays, visitors, etc) and then create a schedule for when you will. Doing this together takes the pressure off you when your child asks to skip practice one day. You can just remind him/her that you must stick to the schedule.

Even though your child will protest, this will not damage their attitude towards music. It sends the message that you value this discipline and your time together.

### Possible Summer Scenario #1:

Child - "Why can't I go to Isabelle's house?" -

Parent - We have our practice time then.

Child - I hardly ever see her. All my friends will be there.

Parent - If we don't practice now, we won't get it done today.

Child - I don't care. I hate the violin/viola/cello/flute/guitar.

### DO NOT PANIC. BE PREPARED FOR THIS

Parent - "I realize that this would be a nice thing to do and I'm sorry it won't work out today."

Child - "Why can't I go just this once?"

Parent - "I love you so much, that I have decided to practice with you every day and learn to play this beautiful instrument."

### DON'T CONTINUE THE DISCUSSION, END IT NOW

SIT QUIETLY, GET PRACTICE MATERIALS READY, PRETEND YOU ARE IMMERSSED IN HIS NOTES OR START TO PLAY YOURSELF WHILE WAITING FOR A COOL-DOWN. RESUME PRACTICE.

Possible Summer Scenario #2:

Child - "Isabelle invited me over at 5 p.m."

Parent - "I'm afraid that is practice time this evening."

Child - "I really want to go."

Parent - "If we can get 25 good bowholds in a row, you can go at 5:15."

It IS Summer, so as long as you are holding to your schedule, there is room for some flexibility and spontaneity.

2. Think outside the box during the summer months

You might have to:

Practice under a tree while watching your other child on the soccer field.

Practice before leaving for the day

Go to your child's camp/school during lunch

Hire a teenager to watch the little one while you work with your musician child

Organize CD's and music books to be where you are - car, home, cottage, Grandma's, etc.

"This wasn't a good day!"

THERE IS NEVER A GOOD DAY FOR PRACTICE! I can't imagine any family having 30 minutes magically appear in their day!

Just like there is a never a good day to make healthy food or start an exercise program. It takes planning.

Discover what motivates YOU. This is a discipline, and you the parent must teach this to your child.

You are the motivator, the organizer and the energy behind this endeavor.

Some examples:

Set a repertoire goal for your child this Summer

Plan performances by your child/family. Have them play at a family gathering or create a concert for neighbors. Your kids can even make programs.

Listen to music yourself to inspire you and remind you of your hopes and dreams for

your child. Ottawa has back to back music festivals this summer. Some have free family events.

Read about motivation- " Helping Parents Practice" by Edmund Sprunger  
Search on-line for things. SuzukiMethod teachers share information and many now have blogs or websites. ( [www.thepracticeshoppe.com](http://www.thepracticeshoppe.com) has free downloads).

### DON'T SABOTAGE YOUR EFFORTS BY:

having every minute of the day filled so practice is impossible  
expecting your child to organize their own listening -this will never happen. Listening is up to you.

setting unrealistic goals - a happy 15 minutes is better than a stressed 25.

### PRACTICE IDEAS

#### Monopoly

Create a monopoly board (Bristol board and markers) with practice jobs on each square. Build up points and rewards. Be creative by including silly things on your board as well. Instead of "Going to Jail," your child might have to make a bow hold while lying on the floor, standing on one leg, walking around the garden, etc. For the "Chance" cards, have them answer musicianship questions relating to what they have learned during the past year, such as find an "a" on your instrument, name the notes of one line of your study, say the notes of the G Scale backwards with your eyes closed. Humor is a wonderful tool. Use it whenever possible!

#### Bingo

Using your child's name, create a bingo game (Bristol board, markers, small envelopes and old business cards.) Your child's name spelled across the top of the board will create the columns. Now make as many as you want columns going down the board. Mark off your boxes and put a number in each one. Paste an envelope onto each box. Write an activity onto a business card and put one into each envelope. Your child picks a column (letter across the top and box number, B 3), opens the envelop, does what it says and places a marker on that square. When all the squares in a row are done, your child gets to... whatever you decide. This game will take an evening of your time to create, but can be used for years. You just have to update the jobs on the business cards as they develop new skills.

#### Summer Story

If you will be practicing at a cottage, Grandmas', or another new place, have your child create a story that incorporates the names of his/her review pieces. Much of the beginning repertoire can be used in stories about camping, relatives, journeys, etc. (Lightly Row, Aunt Rhody, Song of the Wind, etc.) You can read the story at practice time and your child plays each piece as it comes up.

#### Grow a Graden

Another idea is to "grow a garden." Either drawn on paper, or built from pieces of construction paper glued onto a larger piece of paper, add a stem, leaf, or petal of a flower for each day of practice. By summer's end, you have a beautiful garden with each part of the flower representing a day's worth of playing.

### OLDER STUDENTS

Regular practice, review, and listening are still a must for this group, but musical friends play a more important part. Creating opportunities for kids to get together can really boost enthusiasm and motivation for practice.

- Attend a summer camp or institute.
- Find a practice buddy and get together regularly. Play duets.
- Have them take part in the “Busking Program” at the Leading Note Music Store.
- Practice new repertoire and put on a concert for friends, relatives or neighbors.
- Make a CD of your concert for Grandma for her birthday.
- Try a new style of music for fun – fiddle, movie tunes, jazz, etc.

## SILLY REVIEW CARDS

Using old business cards, create 2 piles. One pile contains the name of 1 review piece per card. The other pile contains 1 silly way to review:

standing on 1 foot  
 eyes closed  
 softly  
 as loudly as possible  
 in the bathroom  
 laying on the floor  
 marching while playing

Your silly cards can also highlight musical concepts:

Allegro  
 Presto  
 Largo  
 Pastoral

Or moods:

sadly  
 happily  
 angry  
 smoothly

## DON’S FORGET THE FUN!

Practice is work and discipline, but any work goes down easier with a dose of fun, lightness, silliness, etc. Think of concepts that many of you experience at work:

Dress down Friday  
 Motivational speakers  
 Parties and lunches for special occasions

## HAVE A GREAT SUMMER!

