



# How to Practice

The secret to efficient practice is knowing how your mind and muscles absorb information and doing what you need to do to make this easier. Your mind works very much like a computer. If you feed too much information into the computer too quickly, the computer crashes. The same thing happens to our mind when we shove too much information into it. Too often, information often gets learned wrong and mixed around because we try to learn too much at one time. For example, starting at the beginning of a piece and running it to the end is NOT considered practice. Practicing involves **slow, constant repetition of problem areas as well as a strong sense of patience!!!!!!** In order to practice like this, do the following:

1. Number each measure of the piece
2. Highlight all the "extra" components that make the music *music* (dynamics, special instructions, tempo and tempo changes, etc.). We talk so much about "music is so much more than just notes on a page..." Doing this will allow you to actually see the notes and all the other "stuff" at the same time.
3. Get a separate sheet of paper and a pencil. Run the piece from beginning to end. Mark the measure numbers on the blank page of each measure you can't play and/or every time you stop. These are your problem areas.
4. Take these problem areas and run them SLOWLY (as slow as you need to while running it continuously). Run them again and again until you can play them perfectly, at least 5 times in a row. Be incredibly PATIENT with this--you need time to get your muscles and mind to learn.
5. At the end of each practice session and/or when all problem areas are addressed, repeat step 3. You may come across new areas that need to be addressed.
6. Continue to repeat these steps until you can play through the entire piece, at tempo, without stopping.

\*\*\*It is incredibly important that you remain patient and do not get frustrated!!! If you're having problems, focus on something else and come back to it tomorrow. Allow time for your mind and muscles to SAVE the information, just like a computer saves a report to a disk.

\*\*\*It is also very important to practice a little EVERY DAY and allow MORE THAN PLENTY of time to learn a piece. When you go to the gym and lift weights, it is better to lift 50 pounds 20 times every day instead of lifting 200 pounds one time once a week. Think of your practicing like this.

\*\*\*Practicing is a routine. Make the time and force yourself to do it!!!! Sometimes it sucks, but through my experiences, this is the only way you can practice efficiently. When you do succeed (and if you follow these steps, you WILL!!!) you will get a sense of satisfaction that you can't get with anything else. Always remember, no matter what happens, you are in music to HAVE FUN, LEARN, AND SUCCEED!! GOOD LUCK!!!!