

Practice Routine

Concert/Beginning Band

A successful practice session should be organized into 3 parts: **warm-up, technique** and **repertoire**. Each part should be practiced with the idea that it will make the next more successful. A musician should also make certain that their practice area is quiet and has sufficient light. A music stand should always be used. Use of a tuner and metronome are also strongly encouraged.

Warm-Up 3-5 minutes

***Long Tones** throughout register. The player should listen for tone quality, attack and release and pitch. **Brass** players should also warm-up with lip slurs. **Percussionists** should warm up with single stroke rolls for 2-4 minutes without stopping.

Technique 5-10 minutes

***Scales** (Bb, F, Eb, C, D, Chromatic) should be practiced slowly at first, with careful attention to key signatures and/or accidentals. Gradually the scales should be practiced at a faster tempo with goal being that they can be played faster than the student can articulate them. *Memorization of scales is a good long-term goal.* **Percussionists** also practice **rudiments** (rolls, flams, etc.) during this part of the practice session.

*Assignments from method book.

*Other assigned exercises/sightreading. These may include **lip slurs, speed drills**, etc.

Repertoire 10-15 minutes

Concert music should be practiced slowly at first, clapping the rhythm if needed. It is always advisable to practice the difficult sections of a piece first and often, and not to waste time practicing parts of the piece that are already mastered. It's also a good idea to save a few minutes at the end of your practice session for music of the student's own choosing.

Procedure for playing a piece for the first time (sight reading):

1. Identify Title, Composer, Key Signature, Time Signature.
2. Count and clap rhythms, especially complex rhythms.
3. Slowly finger notes while singing note names.
4. Play slowly.
5. Repeat step 3 as needed. Isolate difficult sections.
6. Play piece straight through. Repeat step 3 if needed. Gradually increase tempo.

Additional Suggestions for Success in Band

1. Students should use a metronome while practicing. The metronome should be set at a slow tempo (60-80 beats per minute) initially. As the student gains mastery of the piece or exercise, the tempo should be gradually increased until performance tempo is reached. Sabine makes a tuner/metronome combination called the Metrotune. It's about the size of a deck of cards and works quite well. We use them at CLES in rehearsals and sectionals routinely.
2. Parents should ask to hear what their children are learning in band. Even taking a few minutes to ask questions like "What are you playing on the concert, can I hear some of it?" or "What's your favorite piece of band music?" will let your children know that their enjoyment of music and success in band is important to you.
3. Students often benefit greatly from practicing together. Getting together weekly or twice per month for Practicing Parties is a great way to replicate the social aspect of ensemble music that is missing from solitary practice at home.
4. Students should listen to great music every day, particularly great performers on their instrument. This inspires young musicians and also gives them a model for what their instrument can sound like when played at its best.
5. Attend live performances when you can. Certainly the Baltimore and National Symphony Orchestras are convenient. So are the great service bands we have in the area, as are performances by school ensembles such as Centennial HS and Burleigh Manor MS.