

WELCOME!

We're delighted to have you at Dana Martin Studio!



When You Arrive

- **Please wait until your scheduled lesson time** before coming into the studio. If I'm with another student, this ensures that each student gets the best possible lesson. If I'm not with a student, I want to be completely prepared for your lesson.
- **If you need to use the bathroom or wash your hands**, please help yourself to the bathroom without interrupting the current student. The bathroom is down the left hallway on the right side.
- **Please arrive with all lesson books and music folder.** Make sure all your music is in your music tote and docs (Practice Log, Lesson Notes, and other current docs) are in your folder before you come to your lesson.

Your Practice Routine

- **Schedule** your practice times. Make practicing a priority; put it on your calendar and stick to it.
- **Practice** at least 5 days each week for a minimum of 20 minutes. Practicing more often for a shorter amount of time is better than one marathon practice.
- **Play** all your pieces every day you practice. Start with your technical exercises and scales, followed by your lesson book or main piece. Save your project pieces (usually more fun) for last as a reward for doing the other pieces first.
- **Take a break.** Take a 5-minute break every 20 minutes or so. This gives your brain a rest and helps you come back refreshed and with a renewed sense of determination. Younger students may want to divide daily practice into 10-minute periods.

Your Tools

Music. Make sure you have all your pieces out and ready to play.

Theory book. Don't wait; do your theory assignment the first day you practice while it's fresh in your mind, plus there may be portions you need to practice daily. Remember, it's not always just a writing assignment.

Metronome. Get into the habit of practicing with a metronome. Set your tempo at a slower speed and gradually increase tempo as needed. Playing with a metronome helps you play in rhythm and keeps you from speeding up or slowing down.

Pencil and highlighter. Always have a pencil ready to mark your music and for your theory assignment. Use highlighters for marking dynamics and music symbols as needed.

Playback device. Sometimes it's helpful to listen to a piece for expression, dynamics and rhythm. Some books come with a CD, or you can usually find most pieces on YouTube.

Recording device. Nothing says, "Wow, this still needs work," like a recording of yourself in practice. In the moment your playing may sound okay, but the recording won't lie.



Your Goal

Learning vs. Knowing.

Learning a piece is *conscious competence*. That is, we can play the piece competently, but we're thinking about the notes, timing, dynamics, etc.

Knowing a piece is *unconscious competence*. We can play it competently (or better) without even thinking about it. You should strive to "know" pieces that you want to keep in your repertoire – to play for grandparents, recitals, competitions and other performances.

Best Use of time: For many weekly assignments, it may be "good enough" to be consciously competent. However, as you strive for excellence, memorizing pieces for extra stickers and rewards, the extra effort will reward you many times over as *unconscious competence* is reached more often and with more pieces.

Practice Tips

SPACE

- **Choose a time and place** (if you have a portable keyboard) that's quiet and free from distractions.
- **Don't multi-task.** You'll accomplish much more in less time if your focus is entirely on practicing.
- **Keep your phone** around only if it contains practice tools like a metronome or a timer. Put it in Do Not Disturb or Airplane Mode to avoid getting calls during this time.

PRACTICE

- **Isolate** the problem/challenge areas and work on those.
- **Run through** the whole song without stopping. Isolate again as you find problem areas.
- **Practice backwards.** For particularly complicated pieces, consider practicing the piece phrase by phrase, beginning at the end and working toward the beginning. We often play beautifully at the beginning and have difficulty toward the end.

ROOKIE MISTAKES

- **Believing that playing equals practicing.** Effective practice takes focus and determination, not just mindlessly playing a piece.
- **Thinking that practice makes perfect.** It doesn't. It makes permanent. So make sure you're making the RIGHT stuff permanent.
- **Getting it right once and calling it good enough.** Try to play it 3-5 times in a row with at least conscious competence.

