



Twinkling The Ivories

February 2012

Achieving Balance: Practice Pointers from a Suzuki Parent

Wouldn't it all be easier if time were like a DVD that you could slow down, speed up, fast-forward, or rewind? Finding time for instrument practice amongst everything we are juggling can be challenging. Work, school and homework. extracurricular activities and chores. Sleeping and eating. Just chilling and family time. Everyone's circumstances are different. For me, the challenges are:

- Having a 7:30am – 3:30pm job Monday to Friday.
- Two kids with different instruments – piano and violin.
- Being the practice parent for both.

On a school day, by the time I get off work, pick them up from school, and commute home, it's around 4:30pm. My younger child is in bed by 7:45pm on school days and the older one by 8:30pm. This leaves us only a few short hours to fit everything in. How do we fit daily practice in without feeling frazzled and overwhelmed?

SETTING A ROUTINE PRACTICE TIME THAT WORKS FOR EVERYONE: Having a routine practice time that is agreed on by both me and my kids is so important. For them, arriving home after school and having to practice right away just doesn't work for them. When they get home, they just want to unwind from the day. So usually they do whatever they want before supper, we eat around 5:00pm, and then its practice time afterwards.

With two kids, there's the inevitable debate of who practices first. I try to spin it a different way and ask them instead, "Who gets to practice first?" Because my daughter has the earlier bedtime, I enlist the help of my older child by getting him to yell out "I get to practice first". If my daughter sees that her brother wants to do it, she immediately wants the same.

EXTRACURRICULAR ACTIVITIES & HOMEWORK: Of course there are exceptions to the 'routine practice time' on some days. In our house, school work always comes before instrument practice. And, a lot of extracurricular activities are scheduled on weekday evenings. As a hockey parent, we have inconsistent practices and game times. If we know we have hockey later that evening, I've already discussed it with my child that instrument practice will take place right after school. It's important that my children understand that there are exceptions to the routine that we agreed upon.

QUALITY PRACTICE TIME DOESN'T ALWAYS EQUAL A LONG PRACTICE TIME: When my son first started piano, I thought it meant we had to practice for a certain length of time every day. As the kids get older and have more homework and other activities, this is not always possible and that's okay. We compromise by doing a bit more on other days, and on weekends we always have longer practices. No matter how busy we are, we make it to the piano or violin for at least 10 minutes a day for note reading, scales, or a couple of review songs. It doesn't seem like much but it pays off in the long run.

COMMITMENT: Being committed means extra time on my own once a week to understand the assignments from the teacher. If I can't capture the assignment in writing, I record the teacher demonstrating the assignment. Later that evening, usually when the kids are in bed, I review what I wrote or recorded. I find it helps to save a tremendous amount of time and frustration during practice time with my child because I'm not trying to figure out what it was the teacher wanted. Knowing what I want them to work on beforehand shortens practice time and increases quality.

TAKE ADVANTAGE OF WEEKENDS: Weekend practice does not follow the same routine as school days and my kids understand that. We have a rule that we are not allowed to miss a practice on the weekend and it has to be done early on in the day. This is because a lot of the afternoon and evening is dedicated to just family time and doing something fun like a movie night, so leaving practice for the end of the day after dinner means it doesn't get done. Weekends provide more time for quality practice and also to catch up on things missed during the week, so we make sure to take advantage of it!

TRACK ACTIVITIES AND PROGRESS, OFFER REWARDS: There are days where I deal with my kids not wanting to practice. Keeping a practice chart and/or just having some sort of visual counter for my child during practice time helps them to see how much they have accomplished and keep them motivated. An occasional reward for filling up a chart is always a great incentive and boost to inspire them to keep practicing.

Every family faces the challenges of fitting in practice time into our busy lives. I find that with a little bit of planning, commitment, and sticking to a consistent routine as much as we can, it can be relatively easy and stress-free for everyone!

Phuong Chau

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It's Never too Early to Think About Summer Institutes!

A Summer Institute is a special summer camp offered to families involved in Suzuki programs throughout North America. Featuring master classes, group classes, music theory, enrichment activities, concerts, and family events, Institutes are an action-packed and inspiring way to experience music outside of your normal routine.

While Institutes are offered throughout North America, inspiration can also be found much closer to home. Why not think about adding one of these Institutes to your summer schedule?

Langley Community Music School Summer Institute

July 16-19, 2012

Langley, B.C.

www.langleymusic.com

Calgary Suzuki Piano Institute and Piano Camp

August 6-11, 2012

Calgary, AB.

www.mtroyal.ca/summer

2011-2012 Calendar

February 5, 2012 Winter Recitals, Suzuki Charter School

1:30 pm – Nancy Thornhill

3:00 pm – Ruth Johnson

February 12, 2012 Winter Recitals, Suzuki Charter School

1:00 pm – Alla Rekhson

3:00 pm – Tim Eckert

February 26, 2012 Winter Recitals, Suzuki Charter School

12:00 pm – Joyce Sipsas

1:00 pm – Ken Zeller

2:00 pm – Tess Brown

3:00 pm – Eleanor Tsui

March 16, 2012 Winter Recitals, Suzuki Charter School

6:30 pm – Rhonda McEachen and Melanie Bodnar

March 18, 2012 Graduation, Muttart Hall

March 21, 2012 ESPS General Meeting, 7:45 PM, Suzuki Charter School

April 21, 2012 Spring Festival, Suzuki Charter School

May 15, 2012 2012-2013 Registration Forms Due

June 3, 2012 Group Concert, Suzuki Charter School

June 10 & 17, 2012 Summer Recitals, Convocation Hall

June 24, 2012 Graduation, Muttart Hall

January 2012 Graduations

Congratulations to the following students for their hard work and well-deserved graduations:

Volume 1

Sam Heintzman

Naomi Li

Elise VandenBorn

Nouhad Wehbe

Ethan Wellburn

Volume 2

Anita Chlebek

Evan Makar

Isaac Makar

Volume 3

Sam Brosseau-Carter

Bailey Deuis

Volume 4

Lina Kim

Volume 5

Annika Hanson

Colin Zhou

Volume 6

Vincent Wong

***"Beautiful tone,
beautiful heart."***

Shinichi Suzuki