

SECRETS TO SUCCESS IN PRACTICING

Gabriel Fielder

Director, Leesburg High School Bands

1. WARM-UP – 10 MINUTES

- A. **5 minutes** - Long tones – sustained pitch (crescendo and decrescendo) – use a different scale each day
 - a. Play tone – watch tuner
 - b. Crescendo – watch tuner
 - c. Decrescendo – watch tuner
 - d. Next note – watch tuner
 - e. Listen to the movement from note to note – does it break? Is it even? Are both notes the same volume? (“Longer tube” notes require more air!)
- B. **5 minutes** - Play Scales
 - a. FBA Pattern with arpeggios
 - b. One or two octaves
 - c. Listen to the movement from note to note – does it break? Is it even? Are both notes the same volume? (“Longer tube” notes require more air!)

2. (OPTIONAL FOR FOLKS WHO TAKE AUDITIONS: PRACTICE SIGHTREADING – 5 MINUTES

- A. Take 30 seconds to look over an unfamiliar piece of music – Look for:
 - a. Key Signature
 - b. Accidentals
 - c. Tempo/time
 - d. Tricky Rhythms
- B. After 30 seconds, begin the piece

3. WORK ON MUSICAL GOAL – 15 TO 30 MINUTES

- A. Use a metronome constantly.
- B. Always start slower than you would normally play the piece. SUPER SLOW is best (25% of tempo with subdivisions)
- C. Practice small sections at time, never an entire piece. (Maybe not even an entire measure!)
- D. Have a specific goal set before you start. The secret is to set very small goals and work incrementally.
- E. Do not begin your practice session by running all the way through the music. Don't rip out your marching band music or some other favorite, save that for the end. (*Think about it: Dessert usually comes at the end of dinner! If you leave your practice session with favorite music, you'll look forward to practicing again. All it takes is a little discipline.*)
- F. Once your goal is accomplished, **DO IT THREE TIMES PERFECTLY IN A ROW**
- G. Move on to your next goal

4. PLAY SOMETHING YOU ENJOY – END ON A POSITIVE

PRACTICE GOALS – “WHAT SHOULD I PRACTICE?”

- Something that the Director works on in class.
- Something you mess up during a run through
 - Circle it immediately in class
 - Practice at home for consistency
- An assignment that is given during class
- Solo and Ensemble/Audition/Lessons Music

HOW TO MEMORIZE

- Set a realistic goal – Example: do not attempt to memorize a whole show/piece in one sitting
- Break down your goal into small sections
- Repetition is the key

Practice no longer than 45 minutes without a break

REMEMBER: TO MOVE TO THE NEXT LEVEL, IT ONLY TAKES MORE PRACTICE THAN YOU ARE USED TO.

DON'T PRACTICE UNTIL YOU GET IT RIGHT, PRACTICE UNTIL YOU CAN'T GET IT WRONG.