



# **“But HOW do I practice?”**



*Tips for students and their parents*

## **Schedule your practice time**

Shorter, consistent practice sessions are more effective than one longer session. Schedule even 15 minutes every other day to practice and you will see improvement! Ask Rachel for more individual guidance on how much time you should ideally spend practicing.

## **Set a Clear Goal**

Set a clear goal for each practice session. While ‘I will practice for 15 minutes’ is a goal, it is less effective than specific goals. Example: “I will sing this measure four times correctly in a row.”

## **Remove distractions**

Put your phone in another room and put away any distracting games or screens. You didn’t really practice for half an hour if half the time you were on Snapchat! Focus on the task at hand.

## **Structure practice like a workout**

Just like an athlete, musicians work to strengthen muscles and improve skills. Start with a warmup, move on to skills and fundamentals like scales, then start working on repertoire. Cool downs are recommended for longer practice sessions and can be easier songs and/or SOVT exercises.

## **Break Your Music into Small Sections**

You might want to sing your new piece all the way through, but that’s not always the best way to start. Break your music down in to smaller sections when you practice. You don’t have to start from the beginning every time! Find those tricky sections and practice them on their own, then start a few measures earlier and practice moving into (and then out of) the tricky section.

## **Practice Rhythmically**

You can practice without singing by focusing on the rhythms. This is great for vocal rest days. Try clapping or tapping your rhythms on your lap. Generally, when practicing, we need to SLOW DOWN. Use a metronome (Google ‘Metronome’ is all you need!) and practice slowly. Once you have the phrase correct, you can then try it faster.

## **Explore the Text**

Most vocal music has words. Try speaking the text in rhythm, with and without the metronome. Can you hear where the sentences rise and fall, and where the natural breaks are (commas, periods, etc.)?

If your piece is in a language you don't speak, make sure you have the translation written out, and that you know what all the words and sentences mean in English.

### **Listen to other people perform your songs**

Whether it's on YouTube, Apple Music, Spotify, or anything else, listen to other people sing what you're working on. Where do they breathe? What dynamics do they use? What do you like about their artistic choices? What will you do differently in your version?

### **Sing it on solfege or vowel sounds**

Especially when a song is new to you, figure it out in solfege (Rachel can help with this). You can also try singing on vowel sounds to focus on just the notes – this is especially useful when learning songs in other languages. You can sing it all on 'ah' or with the vowels that are in the song.

### **Use your theory knowledge to analyze the piece**

Our music theory studies help us learn our music! Look for cadences, A and B sections, repeated motifs, key changes, scalar passages, etc.

### **Start and End with Fun**

Playing music should be fun! If you want to sing your favourite song with a karaoke track as a warmup, go ahead! If you want to work on a pop song that you found on YouTube, play around with that after your regular practice. Practice sessions can be both fun and productive.

### **Examples of practice sessions**

5 minutes (young children): 1 minute of 'dog pant' warm up. 2 minutes of reviewing DO RE MI solfege syllables and their hand signs. 2 minutes on assigned song, focusing on the first verse.

15 minutes: 5 minutes of five note scales using solfege, raising 'do' by a half step each time using a keyboard. 5 minutes reviewing the hand signs for the entire major scale. 5 minutes on assigned song, focusing on the repeated section.

Half Hour: 5 minutes on Boytim's warmups number 4 and 5. 5-minute sing through of previously learned piece for a fun warm up. 5 minutes on the newly learned Boytim Solfeggio exercise 4. 15 minutes on assigned repertoire, focusing on the chorus of the second piece.

45 minutes: 10 minutes on Royal Conservatory technical requirements, first through a straw, then on Italian vowel sounds. 5-minute sing through of previously learned piece for a fun warm up. 5 minutes of solfege practice with the Boytim Solfeggio sheet. 10 minutes on the assigned RCM song, focusing on the French pronunciation by speaking it through before singing it. 10 minutes on the other assigned repertoire, singing the coloratura passages on just their vowel sounds. 5-minute sing through of previously learned piece on an SOVT for a fun cool down.