

# WVHS Band Practicing Guide

We practice *not* until we can play something correctly, but until we can never play it *incorrectly!*

- Practicing is your daily homework assignment for band class...you should be practicing your instrument **at least** 20 minutes every day!
- Playing in band class or extra-curricular ensembles does NOT count as practice time. Practicing must be done alone.

## Practice Tips:

1. **A healthy daily practice routine should consist of the following:**
  - Warm-Up
    - Long tones, lip slurs, scales, buzzing, etc.
  - Technique Music/Private Lesson Material
    - Technical exercises and etudes, solos,
  - Ensemble Music
  - Sightreading
  - Fun Stuff
    - Play songs you love, get a book of movie tunes, improvise, compose, etc.
2. **Spend more time practicing the stuff you are weaker at** - We all want to sound great when we play. However, it is necessary to sound bad at times in order to develop skills. In the practice room, it is okay to sound bad when you are trying to improve. With consistent practice, those sounds should get better and better. However, if you only practice what you are already good at, you will never improve!
3. **There is no substitute for repetition** - Practicing takes focus and discipline. Practicing is our daily effort to form good habits and re-enforce them until they are second-nature. This can only be accomplished through lots of repetition. There is no substitute for repetition. Remember: when we get nervous (like in performance), our body will default to its habits...if you have repeated your good habits enough, they will be there for you!
4. **Discover the clues in the music** - Take the time to define all of the terms (including the title and composer) on your music before you start playing a piece. These terms are clues that the composer has left for you so you can play the music with the correct style!
5. **Dynamics and articulations are part of the music** - Practice dynamics and articulations as well as notes and rhythms. Not only are they integral parts of the music, but they make playing the music much more fun!
6. **Practicing the hard stuff:**
  - Identify the hardest part(s) of the music. Practice those parts relentlessly until they are the easiest parts for you to play!
  - Practice hard music VERY slowly (so slowly that it might sound silly) at first. Then GRADUALLY speed up the tempo until you can control the hard music at the appropriate tempo. Control comes from **slow** practice!!!!
  - The hardest part of the music will determine the tempo for the entire piece. In other words, you may NOT slow down at the hard stuff and then speed back-up for the easy stuff. You have two choices: practice the hard part until you can get it up to tempo, or slow down the whole piece to accommodate for that one hard part.
7. **Dealing with difficult rhythms** - If you are unsure of a rhythm, use the methods you learned in middle school: write in the counting, then clap and count the rhythm. If you are still unsure, ask your teacher immediately for help. Do NOT just guess as to how the rhythm goes.

8. **Use a metronome** - Keep a metronome handy when you practice. Check the provided tempo on your metronome. If only a tempo word is provided, then use your metronome to write-in an appropriate tempo marking. This will give you a goal as to how fast a piece should go. You should also keep a metronome handy so you can practice playing with a steady beat. Make sure the metronome is loud enough so you can hear it while playing.
9. **Sightread your way to better sightreading** - Many of us feel intimidated by sightreading. The only reason for this is because we don't practice this skill. Like anything else, the more you do it, the better you will get! So, the first time you play a new piece, try sightreading all the way through from beginning to end without stopping! You should also try to sightread something every day--it does not have to be long. Open your book to a new page and try playing through it. The only way to get better at sightreading is to do it a lot! Like it says in #2: There is no substitute for repetition!

## Resources:

There are many great resources available online that can help you! All of these links can be found on the WVHS Music Website: [www.wvhs-music.org](http://www.wvhs-music.org) Under the "Band" heading you will see a submenu entitled "Student Resources."

1. Free Online Metronome - <http://www.metronomeonline.com/>
2. Free Online Music Dictionary - <http://www.dolmetsch.com/defsa.htm>
3. Woodwind Fingering Guides - <http://www.wfg.woodwind.org/> (these are much easier to read than the charts in the technique book, and trill fingering charts are also available)
4. Smart Music - <http://www.smartmusic.com/>
5. Blackboard - <https://blackboard.ipisd.org/>