

IMPORTANT RULES FOR PRODUCTIVE PRACTICE

The first time you play your piece, or any section of it, be extremely careful to avoid making any mistakes in notes or time values. Get the idea, sing and finger first, go slowly. Form good habits your first time.

Sub-divide the piece into short sections.

Occasionally begin your practice period by beginning at the last section of the piece, then the next to last section, and so on until you have reached the beginning.

For the first few days of practice on a new piece, repeat one section four to eight repetitions before beginning to practice the next. When two sections have been practice in this way, they should be joined together and given two to four repetitions as a whole. Ultimately, all the sections should be fitted together in this way.

Resist the temptation to go on playing faster and faster ("rushing"). If you have a metronome, use it for an "external discipline" to check yourself.

During your practice, free your mind from any anxiety concerning the final results of your practice, either with regard to standards or deadlines.

Always try to approach the act of learning a new piece when you are as fresh as possible.

Always be on the watch for signs of staleness. This usually reveals itself through a lack of expression in your piece or in the presence of more than the usual amount of inaccuracy.

In the earliest stages of learning anything new, the rate of forgetting is very rapid. Therefore, the maxim "Little and Often" in the early stages of learning is very important.

Try to practice at times when you do not feel irritable or annoyed; find your good times.

Do get into the habit of trying to look upon yourself as an ordinary human being. This means you neither set yourself absurd and impossible standards of work or achievement, nor allow yourself to be satisfied with a standard which you know really could be and ought to be better.

Think ten times and play once.

Count bars, not beats, if your playing is lacking movement.

Think the rhythm and hear the tones always before starting to play.

Listen for resonance, not noise, in loud passages.

Don't work against time. If you have only one hour at your disposal, plan 45 minutes practice and do the most with each minute. If you attempt a plan for the whole hour, you will have an eye on the clock, a nervous tension that may result in muscular tension, and much of you mental energy will be wasted. "Surround every action with a circle of non-hurry."