

# 5 Ways To Get The Most Out Of Music Lessons

## 1. START AT THE RIGHT AGE

We recommend the following guidelines:

Piano & Violin - 5 years & up

Guitar/Bass - 6 years & up

Woodwinds - 9 years & up

Drums - 8 years

Adults - It's Never Too Late

Adults can start lessons at any time. Their success is based on how willing one is to commit to practicing and attending the weekly lessons. Building a skill takes time. Give yourself 9 to 12 months to see significant results. Look for a program that will not just encourage you to learn your favorite songs, but help you understand how music is put together. Believe it or not, understanding the basics goes a long way toward making music success easier.

## 2. INSIST ON PRIVATE LESSONS

Group lessons work very well for pre-school programs & theory classes. However, every person learns differently and at a different pace. Private lessons provide the optimum learning environment by tailoring the lesson to the student's particular learning style. Look for teachers who use creative artistic materials, and present musical ideas in a positive and motivating way. Quality teachers will provide opportunities for performance (recitals, festivals, contests) throughout the year.

## 3. TAKE LESSONS IN A PROFESSIONAL ENVIRONMENT

Learning music is not just a matter of having a qualified teacher and a quality instrument, but also having an environment that is focused on music education. In a professional school environment a student cannot be distracted by T.V., pets, phone calls, siblings, etc. A professional environment can produce better results since the only focus at that time is learning music. Students in a school environment are also motivated by hearing peers who are at different levels and by being exposed to a variety of teaching styles. In a music school, the lessons are not a hobby or side-line for the teacher, but a career responsibility which is taken very seriously, by both teacher AND student.

## 4. LOOK FOR A WELL ROUNDED PROGRAM

Studies show that students who participate in a weekly group music theory and history class tend to progress faster and continue their music studies longer. By attending a group class in addition to the private lesson, not only does the student

learn the basic skills of literate musicianship, but they are afforded the opportunity to see that other students are pursuing similar worthwhile goals. These classes reinforce what students are learning at the private lessons as well as provide additional performance opportunities. Understanding how music is put together is essential for anyone wishing to excel at an individual instrument. Learning how to read music is like learning a second language. To communicate effectively in a language, one learns not only how to speak, but also how to read and write.

## **5. MAKING PRACTICE EASIER**

As with anything, improving in music takes practice. One of the main concerns heard from students and families is that practicing can become repetitive and unexciting. Fighting between parents and students to practice can also become commonplace if care is not taken to structure the activity. Here are some ways to make practicing more successful.

**TIME:** Set the same time every day to practice so it becomes part of a routine habit. Generally the earlier in the day the practicing can occur, the less reminding is required by parents to get the student to practice. Also, breaking up the practice period into two 15-minute increments (morning and evening) can be very successful, especially for young students.

**REPETITION:** Try this method when setting practice schedules for beginners: For some students 20-30 minutes seems like an eternity. Instead of setting a time frame, use repetition. For example, "practice this piece 4 times every day, and this scale 5 times a day." The student then does not pay attention to the amount of time they are practicing, but knows that if they are on repetition number 3 they are almost finished.

**REWARDS:** This works very well for both children and adult students. For example, some adults reward themselves with a cappuccino after a successful week of practicing. Parents can encourage children by granting them occasional rewards for successful practicing. Some students earn stickers and stars. Also, yearly achievement programs where students earn ribbons, certificates, medals and trophies can be a great incentive. Praise tends to be the most coveted award-there is just no substitute for a pat on the back for a job well done!

When seeking an instructor or a music school situation, ask about their practice-building methods. Learning an instrument takes the dedication of more than just the student.

## **6. MOST IMPORTANTLY-HAVE FUN!**