

Practice Strategies: Band Edition

General Ideas:

- CHUNK IT - work on only a small chunk at a time.
- ADD A NOTE - start with just a few notes, then add one at a time
- ADD A MEASURE - work measure by measure, grouping measures together as they are learned
- TIZZLE/SIZZLE - good for combining Fingerings, Rhythm, and Articulations together
- PENNY GAME - try to get your spot right 3 to 5 times in a row. If you get it right slide a penny from the left side of your stand to the right. If you get it right again slide another. Anytime you mess up all the pennies go back to the left and you have to start over.
- REVERSE - start at the last measure of your section, then move back 1 measure, then 2, etc.
- SLOW - play slowly with a metronome and gradually increase speed
- RECORD - and then listen for errors
- FRIEND - practice with a friend (can be through Skype or FaceTime!)
- FAMILY - perform for a family member

Fingerings/Slide Positions/Stickings:

- Do fingerings while saying notes names
- Use Mixed Rhythms to isolate tricky fingering passage, Short (S), Long (L)
 - Examples: SL, LS, LLSS, SSLL, LSSS
- Figure out a fingering for a tricky spot and write it in as a reminder
- For tricky finger patterns isolate the problem notes – practicing going forward and backward
- Double it: play each note more than once before moving to the next note

Rhythm:

- Write the counting in your part
- SUBDIVIDE (count/think in small units - 1&2&3&4& or 1e&a2e&a...)
- Count the rhythm aloud
- Count the beat (1,2,3,4) while clapping the rhythm
- Do fingerings while counting aloud

Tempo:

- Practice counting with a metronome.
- Practice playing with a metronome
- Practice playing with a recording.
- SUBDIVIDE

*Free metronome:
www.metronomeonline.com
or download a free APP*

Articulation:

- Isolate the articulation by playing it on one note
- Listen to music in the same style to get a sense of what the articulation is supposed to sound like
- Practice the articulation style within a scale

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Intonation:

- Listen to your tone. If it is not correct, intonation will not be correct.
- Are you sitting with correct posture?
- Are you taking a good breath?
- Practice the scale and finger patterns within the key of your part
- Sing your part
- Play with a tuner.
- Practice intervals, or identify intervals in your music to listen for:
 - Half step –jaws
 - Whole step – Do-Re (first two notes in a scale)
 - Major 3rd – “Doe, a Deer” (“deer” is the third)
 - Perfect 4th – “Here comes the bride”
 - Perfect 5th – Twinkle Twinkle, or Star Wars
 - Major 6 – NBC or My Bonnie Lies over the Ocean

Tone:

- Check your posture:
 - Are your feet flat on the floor?
 - Is your back straight?
- Check your breathing:
 - Are you taking a full breath from your stomach?
 - Are you putting enough air into your instrument?
 - Is your air moving at a steady speed?
- Check your embouchure
 - Is your chin flat?
 - Are your cheeks in (not puffed up)?
- Check your playing position
 - Are you bringing the instrument TO you?
 - Are your arms/hands/shoulders free of tension?
 - Is your instrument at the correct angle?
 - Are you holding your sticks/mallets at the fulcrum?

Phrasing:

- Sing your music!
- Think of a phrase as a musical sentence. In speech there are natural pauses for periods and commas. Figure out where the natural pauses might be in the music. Make sure your breathing isn't interrupting the “sentence”.

Dynamics:

- Identify the dynamics, Circle things that you have trouble remembering
- Ask yourself the following question: What is my AIR doing?