

# Practice for the Brass Student

---

In the Malcolm Gladwell book, *Outliers*, Gladwell makes an amazing discovery.

*“The emerging picture from such studies is that ten thousand hours of practice is required to achieve the level of mastery associated with being a world-class expert—in anything,” writes the neurologist Daniel Levitin.*

With two hours practice a day, while at university, you are around 1/3 of the way there! So let’s get busy and understand what good practice is really all about.

A definition of “practice” is ***the consistent work, in isolation, of becoming more proficient on your instrument.*** [Good Music Practice]

## Practice vs. Rehearsal

Furthermore, rehearsal is not practice, and practice is not rehearsal. The two are not interchangeable. In his book, *Good Music Practice*, George Urbaszek states that, “rehearsal is the process of usually more than one person... [working] on elements such as dynamics, tempos, transitions, balance and general togetherness.”

One’s rehearsal time must be apart from one’s practice time or growth in proficiency will be minimal. This writing is about having goals in practice, organizing practice time, and becoming a better musician.

Let’s begin with the “Practice Principle”

## The Practice Principle - “Perfect practice makes perfect”

To elaborate, in his book, *How I Became a Cornettist*, Herbert Clarke says this.

*I have heard many pupils play page after page of the instruction book, missing the notes here and there and making all manner of mistakes without correcting them, then say: - well I played fifteen pages of exercises today.” There was no realization that even if only one mistake was made they had not played the fifteen pages, but simply “played at them.”*

Our practice time is to be focused and precise. Every practice session should have small, achievable goals that match up to an intermediate goal, which is part of an even larger goal.

## The Environs of Good Practice

One's success in daily practice pivots on consistency, major issues include:

- Consistency of Time
- Consistency of Space
- Consistency of Equipment
- Consistency of Literature
- Consistency of Goal

**Consistency of Time** is top first priority. College students have schedules thrust upon them every semester. The day you receive your schedule, you should find at least a one hour block daily that occurs near the same time. Mark this in for practice. Your growth as a musician is driven by this. You must have this time to develop.

There are also opportunities throughout the day to practice, 15 minutes here, 15 minutes there. This is a bonus, not the core of your practice.

PROTECT THIS TIME. This time is so very valuable. You must have a great exception to skip. Hanging out, eating, iPhone use or even 'cramming' is not an acceptable excuse.

**Consistency of Space and Equipment** are arguably the hardest for a college student. However, as HLGU students, you are assigned to a practice room, that you will share with others. However, you can do some things to prepare yourself for this inconsistency.

- Have your case stocked with everything you need, so you can setup in short order
  - Pencil
  - Mutes
  - Valve oil
  - Mouthpieces
  - Tuner/Metronome
  - Music
- Setup everything the same way every time for quick access, and peace of mind.
- Angle yourself away from the window, to remove distraction.

**EXERCISE ONE: TAKE SOME  
TIME TO FIND YOUR  
CONSISTENT TIME OF  
PRACTICE DAILY**

**EXERCISE TWO: MAKE A  
CHECKLIST OF WHAT YOU  
NEED FOR A COMPLETE  
REHEARSAL. PACK WITH  
THIS CHECKLIST IN MIND.**

**Consistency of Literature** is another all-important aspect of playing and playing well. There are two pieces of literature that you must have on hand to grow. 1) **Routine** (technical studies, embouchure development, etc.) and 2) **Repertory** which is music you are playing either in ensembles or soloistically. Make sure you have all of these lined out. Your applied instructor should give you an idea for the semester, if not for the year, of rehearsing the routine aspect.

**EXERCISE THREE:  
ACCUMULATE A  
BINDER/FOLDER FOR YOUR  
MUSIC TO GO INTO FOR  
TRAVEL**

**Consistency of Goal**

In the book, *Getting Things Done*, David Allen talks about the **Six-Level Model for Reviewing Your Own Work**. In doing this he uses an aerospace analogy to describe it. Think of your life goals being like looking outside an airplane window.

- Runway – Current actions**
- 10,000 feet – Current projects**
- 20,000 feet – Areas of responsibility**
- 30,000 feet – One – two year goals**
- 40,000 feet – Three – five year goals**
- 50,000 feet – Life**

One could easily look at this in view of your practicing your instrument:

- Runway – Warmup, Daily Drills**
- 10,000 feet – Repertory**
- 20,000 feet – Solo literature**
- 30,000 feet – One – two year goals**
- 40,000 feet – Three – five year goals**
- 50,000 feet – Life**

The 30,000-50,000 feet look is truly up to you. This is why a candid conversation with your instructor at the beginning of your freshman year is so good for that. Most brass students will have very similar runway, 10,000 feet experiences. 20,000 would be solo repertoire that would tailor a little more to your interests. However, the 30-50,000 feet experience is that which makes you unique in all ways.

The rest of this paper is dedicated to your runway-20,000 feet experience, as it will be very similar to all students. The other, needs to be in consultation with your applied teacher.

**EXERCISE FOUR:  
FILL OUT YOUR GOALS FOR  
30,000 FEET TO LIFE. KEEP  
THEM WHERE YOU CAN SEE  
THEM EVERYDAY**

## How Often Should I Practice?

Every day.

However, one also needs to rest the chops and the mind occasionally. On Sundays, I play, but not hard. I will do simple long tones, an etude or something and call it a day. Rest is necessary. However, that's it. Everyday practice is absolutely necessary for the mind and the very fact that the muscles atrophy so quickly that when you take a few days off, you lose steam. If you start experiencing chronic fatigue in playing, speak with your applied teacher to modify your practice and playing behavior.



### **QUOTES ON PRACTICE FROM HOWTOPRACTICE.COM**

*The best way for a student to get out of difficulty is to go through it* — Aristotle

*Practice does not make perfect – it makes permanent* — Alexander Libermann

*Stage fright needs to be confronted and experienced in order to be conquered.* — Eloise Ristad,

*It is the height of professionalism to be able to make an ordinary piece of music sound good. When playing routine melodic studies the player must treat them as if they are musical value.* — Howard Snell

*If a hard bit is giving you a hard time, you should give it a hard time* — Philip Johnston

*Take care of the bars and the piece will take care of itself* — Philip Johnston

***Every day you don't practice, you're one day further from being good.*** — Ben Hogan



## **WARMUP/DAILY DRILLS FOR BRASS – WELCOME TO THE RUNWAY**

In his book, *Daily Drills and Technical Studies for the Trumpet*, Max Schlossberg lays out eight parts of the daily routine:

1. Long Note Drills
2. Intervals
3. Octave Drills
4. Lip Drills
5. Chord Drills
6. Scale Drills
7. Chromatic Scale Drills
8. Etudes

In the *systematic Approach to Daily Practice* by Claude Gordon, there are five:

1. Long tones
2. Range Extension
3. Lip Flexibilities
4. Tonguing
5. Technique

For second year trumpet students, we will address Schlossberg's studies as a strong component in a daily routine. However, it is not yet on the runway. Runway work requires more thought on sound than it does technique. Trumpet teacher, Ray Crisara once said:

*From this day on, whenever you take your horn out of the case, play everything as if it were the most beautiful thing you've ever heard.*

In the article "Daily Routine: The Key Component of Trumpet Practice", Professor James Madeja boils it down to five:

1. Tone
2. Flexibility
3. Range
4. Fingering technique
5. Tonguing Technique

I will break it down a little more:

1. Long Tones (Warmup)
2. Range Expansion (Warmup – Daily Drills)
3. Flexibility (Daily Drills)
4. Technical Work/Tonguing (Daily Drills)

## Repertory and Solo Literature – Ascending 10,000 to 20,000 feet

This is the part of practice most young musicians think about, practicing a solo piece or an ensemble work. I am putting these together, as the practice habit for both are the same, the difference is the level of commitment to each When it comes to solo work, you should practice it in such a way that it will never leave you. This needs to be worked up in such a way that you can dust it off, practice it a few times and be ready to perform it.

Ensemble repertory, though important, will typically come and go – THIS IS WHY PRACTICING FOR ENSEMBLES CANNOT BE THE HEART OF YOUR PERSONAL PRACTICE TIME.

Also, and this is terribly important, performance anxiety (stage-fright) feeds off of the feeling of unpreparedness. The more prepared you feel, the more confident you are to take the stage.

However, most of us really don't know how to practice a piece. After you have blown through it in its entirety, here is how Claude Gordon of the *Systematic Approach to Daily Practice* (pg. 80) tells us to do it.

1. Practice this one measure at a time, starting at the end and work toward the beginning.
2. Practice each measure slowly, four times.
3. When you have finished one phrase, practice that entire phrase four times.
4. Remember, practice slowly and accurately.
5. By the time you get to the beginning of the study, you will be ready to start from the top and work for the tempo that is marked.

## Instruments for the flight

If you flying, and want to get higher. There are some inexpensive things that you must invest in:

### Tuner/Metronome



When you are practicing, the metronome is an essential piece of equipment. This is a picture of mine, it costs \$29 dollars. I do not practice without it. When you are working on solo repertory, technical studies, you must have this available to give you an objective assessment. Most technical studies you play will not initially be playable at the indicated tempo. So you slow it to the point you can play it perfectly then, using the 5-step approach above, you speed up the tempo.

### THE METRONOME WILL NOT LIE!

I know the iPhones, Androids, Windows Mobile all have free apps for this. However, the standalone unit is easier to use, more robust, and you don't have the distractions of the smartphone to get in your way.

Plus some of the apps I've used actually have a bit of "limp" in keeping time, as the processor is doing other things. This is not acceptable in practicing with a metronome. By the way, if you see "MM=" at the beginning of a piece, that stands for **Maelzel's Metronome**, in honor of the inventor, Johann Maelzel (Franz). The equivalent is BPM, or "Beats per minute".

**DID YOU KNOW...THE ACCEPTED TEMPO  
FOR FIGURE SKATING IS  
QUARTER NOTE = 92 BPM.**

### Why a tuner/metronome?

A couple of reasons: With tech being as cheap as it is today, there is not a huge difference in price. But more importantly, especially if you are trying out different instruments, or alternate fingerings, you can see if you are in tune or not. **You don't want to find this out on a gig!** That is why tuners are nice additions to your equipment. The rudimentary tuner on KORG TM-50 is precise enough to do the job.

### Digital Recorder

The use of a digital recorder in practice is extremely helpful when you are trying to master good tone. The problem with playing a brass instrument like trumpet is the fact you are not hearing the direct sound, instead you hearing the sound as reflected from the walls in front of you.

### Pedagogical Material

You have an applied instructor here at Hannibal-LaGrange University. That instructor will walk you through several "studies" books, e.g. *Arban's Complete Conservatory Method*, *Schlossberg's Daily Drills*, *Clarkes Technical Studies*. It maybe lip flexibilities such as the *Walter Smith, Lip Flexibilities*, or *Charles Colin's Advanced Lip Flexibilities*. Your teacher's job is to grow you as a musician, using these tools, as prescribed. This is a necessary part of your growth. It's not all solos!

### Pencil in Concepts

Your practice material should be full of reminders to yourself, often in a multi-page work, you may write at the bottom corner, V.S. – short for *Volti Subito* or "turn the page quickly". **Anytime you continue to miss an element of music, writing in a reminder is a must. Here are some common notations:**

 - Means "Watch Out"

b or # - reminds you of enharmonics or accidentals

B.B. – "Big Breath"

"Don't Rush" – Don't rush

V.S. – Turn the page quickly

() – Bracketed practice phrase requiring work

8va – Up an octave



Circling dynamic changes

8vab – Down an octave

## MEMORIZED SCALE REQUIREMENTS FOR APPLIED STUDIO (WINDS) - (MUSIC MAJORS):

<u>CLASS</u>	<u>SEMESTER ONE</u>	<u>SEMESTER TWO</u>
FRESHMAN	Major Scales, One Octave Quarter = 120	Major Scales, Two Octaves, Q=120
SOPHOMORE	Major/Minor Arpeggios Eighth=100, One Octave	Major Scales in Thirds 1 Octave, Q=120
JUNIOR	Natural Minor Scales 2 Octaves, Quarter = 120	Chromatic Scales in triplet eighths, Quarter = 100, 1 octave
SENIOR	Harmonic Minor 2 Octaves, Quarter = 120	Melodic Minor 2 Octaves, Q = 120

All scales will be played in a tongued tenuto style.

Each student will have two chances to play a given scale correctly with a metronome. The student must play 3 of the 4 drawn scales correctly to pass that particular series of scales. The student will draw two scales from an “easy” pile and one scale from the “not easy” pile.

“Easy” Scales – F, B-Flat, E-Flat, C, G, D

“Not Easy” Scales – A-Flat, D-Flat, A, E, B, F-Sharp

*Minor scales are the relative of the Majors*

## REQUIRED BRASS BOOK LIST

<u>CLASS/TITLE</u>	<u>PUBLISHER</u>	<u>PRICE (APPROX)</u>
<b>FRESHMAN</b>		
<b><i>Brass Playing is No Harder Than Deep Breathing</i></b>	<b>Carl Fischer</b>	<b>\$15.00</b>
<i>Arban's Complete Method</i>	MUST BE – CARL FISCHER EDITION	\$35.00
* <i>Setting Up Drills</i>	Carl Fischer	\$15.00
* <i>Clarke Technical Studies</i>	Carl Fischer	\$20.00
<b><i>Schirmer's Pocket Manual Of Musical Terms</i></b>	<b>Schirmer</b>	<b>\$30.00</b>
** <i>Complete Method</i> (O Franz)	Carl Fischer	\$20.00
<b>SOPHOMORE (TRUMPET)</b>		
<b><i>Sound The Trumpet</i> – Francis</b>	Blurb Books	\$20.00
<i>Lip Flexibilities</i> – Walter Smith	Carl Fisher	\$10.00
<i>Daily Drills</i> – Schlossberg	M Baron Company	\$20.00

### **JUNIOR/SENIOR**

*Prescribed Solos and Methods*

**ALL TRUMPET STUDENTS MUST BE STUDENT MEMBERS OF THE INTERNATIONAL TRUMPET GUILD ANNUAL FEE OF \$35.**

- You receive, four copies of the journal, DVD of past journals, free CD and book

Emboldened titles indicate for all brass players.

\* - Trumpet students

\*\* - French Horn students

## WORKS CITED

“Outliers”, Malcolm Gladwell, pg. 40

“Good Music Practice” George Urbaszek, pp. 68-69. [www.goodmusicpractice.com](http://www.goodmusicpractice.com)

“How I Became a Cornettist”, Herbert Clarke, pg 7, Public Domain

“Getting Things Done”, David Allen. Penguin Books, New York, NY. Copyright 2001, pg. 51

“Music Practice Quotes”, <http://howtopractice.com/music-practice-quotes?quotes>

“Daily Drills and Technical Studies for Trumpet”, Max Schlossberg, M. Baron Company, New York, 1965, Opening page

“Systematic Approach to Daily Practice for Trumpet”, Claude Gordon, Carl Fischer, New York, 1965

“Daily Routine: The Key Component to Trumpet Practice”, James T. Madeja. International Trumpet Guild Journal, January 2013/ITG Journal, pg 71

“Remembering Raymond Crisara – Memories from His Students”, Joel Treybig, ITG, October 2014, pg 42.

“Franz Metronome Manufacturing Company Treatise on the Metronome”  
<http://www.franzmfg.com/book1.htm#c9>