

# The 10-Minute Practice Challenge

Do you have so much homework to do that you run out of time to practice? Try the 10-minute practice challenge for 1 month and report your results.

Evidence suggests that listening to classical music helps brain cells process information more efficiently and may facilitate the brain's ability to adapt. Music also "lights up" nearly all of the brain, including the hippocampus and amygdala, which activates emotional responses to music through memory. When you practice a musical instrument, your brain rewires by strengthening synapses, building new neurons, and rebuilding the myelin sheath. All this means that everytime you practice, your brain comes alive and reorganizes itself, improving your ability to learn and remember what you learned. Amazing! Watch the 4-min. video "[How playing an instrument benefits your brain](#)" on TED.com (scan QR code here) for more insights.



If you have 4 hours of homework, instead of studying for 4 hours straight, study for 50 minutes, practice for 10 minutes, then repeat. Over a 4-hour study period, you will have accomplished 30 minutes of practice and still completed the same amount of homework (or more) than you would have without the practice breaks.

## Keys to success:

1. As soon as you get home, unpack your instrument.
2. Pick a location that will keep your instrument safe and give you easy access to practicing.
3. Take a minute to tune, set up your music stand, and pull out your music.

## What to Practice in 10 minutes:

### Session 1: Warm-up

Play several review scales, work on your newest scale, and play something you love. This could be 10 measures of a piece from last year that you have memorized, a favorite pop song you can play by ear, or the easy, fun section of a current piece.

### Session 2: Work out

Set the timer for 10 minutes (so you don't go over time). Work on the measures that gave you trouble in class. These "trouble spots" are easy to find if you marked them during class. You could also work on your upcoming pass-off or region music. You should have lots of repetition on a small section of music.

### Session 3: Play through music

After working out the trouble spots, play through a larger section of the piece that includes the trouble spot.