

DR. SCHAFER'S (almost) ONE PAGE PRACTICE GUIDE

1. Warm-up every day before you practice, rehearse, or perform. Use my daily warm-up/maintenance routine or develop your own. Your warm-up/maintenance routine should include long tones, slow lip slurs, and articulated scale patterns, covering your entire comfortable range in a gradual manner. The purpose of this routine should be to establish a relaxed way of playing and address fundamentals. Warm-up exercises should not be for strength or range development; they should be within your current abilities and should not make you tired. You should rest frequently during your warm-up.

2. Rest after your warm-up. When you practice, rest as much as you play, in between exercises and in between practice sessions.

3. Playing through things is not practicing. Practicing is progress through problem solving and forming new habits. Simplifying is key. When you begin to practice a particular exercise or piece of music, play through a section. Ask yourself what needs to be better. Go to that particular group of notes and play them slowly, so slowly that you play the section perfectly. Repeat it 3 times in a row perfectly at this tempo. Then play it a little faster. Figure out how to play the group of notes perfectly at the new tempo. Do not increase the tempo until you play it perfectly at the current tempo three times in a row. Continue with this process until you have either reached your goal tempo or you cannot play it perfectly any faster that day. In the latter case, move on to another exercise and pick up at the current tempo tomorrow. You may find other ways to simplify music other than a slower tempo. Use the same procedure.

4. Practicing every day results in consistency. Practice anywhere from 30 minutes to 2 hours a day total, ideally in 30-45 minute sessions. Make sure you have plenty of lighting and space, a chair that assists with proper posture (if possible, or stand), and a music stand. Be thinking about good posture, staying relaxed, and breathing naturally.

5. Spend about 2/3 of your time on technical practice and 1/3 on musical practice. Practice the following skills during your technical practice:

| | | | |
|------------------------|------------------------|---------------|---------------|
| Sound | Articulation | Tonguing | Attack |
| Dynamics | Intonation | Range | Etudes |
| Lip slurs | Lip flexibilities | Finger speed | Rhythm |
| Flexibility (tonguing) | Intervals | Scales | Transposition |
| Sightreading | Lyrical playing | Endurance | |

Essential method books:

Embouchure Builder by Lowell Little

Complete Conservatory Method, J. B. Arban

Technical Studies, H.L. Clarke

Daily Drills and Technical Studies, Max Schlossberg

A private teacher will help you decide what exercises in these books are best for you.

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You should prioritize the listed skills, and any others you want to add, based on what is most important (including what is required for the music on which you are currently working) and your weaknesses. I have bolded the most important skills. Set goals with timelines. Practice the most important skills and your weakest skills daily or cover them over two days. In order to do this you cannot spend a lot of time on any one skill. Better to spend a little time on each skill and cover more of them than to spend a lot of time on one or two skills. The other skills should be practiced 1-2 times a week depending on their importance and how easy they are for you. You will also want to balance your practicing against the types of playing you are doing in school or other ensembles. For example, if your ensemble music requires a lot of loud playing, you will want your practicing to contain a lot of soft playing (idea borrowed from Chris Gekker, www.chrisgekkertrumpet.com).

6. Your musical practice should involve your ensemble music or repertoire on which you are working and should focus on emotional/musical expression. Your private teacher can help you pick music that is appropriate for you.
7. Be kind to yourself and patient. Real progress takes time. If you stick with it, I guarantee you will see results. Reward yourself when you achieve a goal!