

# Healthy Practice and Habits

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Good wellness habits are for everyone. It's not only about pain and injury prevention. You will play/sing with more ease, and better sound, flow, phrasing, and technique.

## Positive changes to make outside the practice room:

Sit, stand and walk with good posture.

Avoid outside activities that could cause injury, such as weightlifting or other heavy lifting.

## Positive changes to make in your practice:

Alternate practice that is physically demanding with less demanding types of work. Examples:

1. Mental practice: visualize, audialize, use internal tactile and kinesthetic sense.  
<https://bulletproofmusician.com/does-mental-practice-work/>  
<https://www.thestrad.com/7-ways-to-harness-mental-practice-for-musicians/168.article>
2. IPE: Imagine, play, evaluate. You will only play one third of the time.
3. Play very softly, or just tap or pantomime.
4. Sing instead of play. Singers can play instead of sing.
5. Make an audio recording and listen to it. Give yourself a lesson.
6. Practice away from your instrument (listen to recordings, memorize, analyze, interpret).
7. Record your lesson and play it back in the practice room, stopping to work on each point covered.

## Analyze your playing

1. Use large muscle groups rather than isolated small muscle groups.
2. Practice next to mirror, and evaluate posture, playing technique and tension level.
3. Periodically check body alignment, playing technique, relaxation. Practice next to mirror. Set a timer sometimes to remind you.
4. Make a video of your playing and analyze your technique to eliminate tension and bad habits.
5. Take notes as you practice, about what works and what to avoid.
6. Ask classmates to observe your practice, offering feedback on posture/playing technique. Do the same for them.

## Other healthy practice habits

1. Do stretches, warm-ups, deep breathing before beginning to practice. Make sure hands, arms, and body are warm. Practice slowly at first.
2. Practice in several shorter sessions rather than one or two long ones.
3. Practice 20 minutes, then break for 5-10 minutes. Do not use arms and fingers during break time.
4. Consider use a heating pad during your breaks.
5. David Vining has good exercises for 5-minute breaks:  
<https://www.mountainpeakmusic.com/cross-training-for-musicians-1/>
6. Set specific, realistic goals before you practice a passage so you know exactly what you want to accomplish.
7. Use rests in the music to release tension. Extend the length of the rest to give yourself more time to relax.
8. When correcting a mistake, don't play an entire phrase. Work the problem spot by itself, then add on notes in front and in back of the mistake.
9. Break up repetitions to avoid overuse injury. Don't over repeat. No mindless repetition. Set a timer if necessary, to remind you to move on to the next section of music. Pay attention to the law of diminishing returns! When repetitions stop improving, practice something else.
10. Find musical solutions to technical problems. Practice for beauty, not speed. Put away the metronome. Play fast passages as a slow, lyric line.
11. Write down everything your teacher tells you about playing/singing without injury and look at notes when practicing. Tell your teacher about any discomfort, tightness, or pain, in or out of the practice room.