



Goals for the Musical Road to Success...

Making mature and meaningful decisions to plan personal practice

As the school concert season draws to a close and summer is almost upon us, now is the perfect time to reflect on a little musical goal-setting, complete a personal inventory and needs assessment (*in what areas do I need help?*), prioritize what's the most important, and define several new "practice plans."

Do you recall a cartoon with Lucy van Pelt bossing Charlie Brown around and handing him his own very long list of New Year's resolutions? Except for your parents and the music teachers who know YOU, it isn't usually effective for someone else to pick your goals. (Of course, if you don't listen to the suggestions from your music directors and private teachers, there's a good chance you will never improve!) Sitting around doing nothing, accepting things as they are now, and randomly floating from one task to another accidentally "making music" without foresight or planning are not likely to work. Inattention and osmosis are slow ways to achieve anything in life. Obviously, you must be motivated, ambitious, focused, and committed to "whatever it takes" on the pathways towards self-improvement and musical mastery!

According to "goals experts" (such as the *One Minute Manager* book by Kenneth Blanchard and the link to Utah State University recommendations in red below), to create meaningful personal goals, they should:

- **Be written down** (Take the time and post them in your room!);
- **Be specific** (Keep it focused, simple, and to the point!);
- **Be concrete** (Exactly what/how do you need to do?);
- **Be measureable** (How do you know when you've succeeded?);
- **Be viewed and reviewed often** (Look at them weekly, and every time you practice!);
- **Be shared** (Show them to your music teacher and/or parents/spouse!);
- **Be flexible and change as needed** (Modify and adjust – set new goals!);
- **Have a time frame** (When will these have to be completed?).



ALL students, parents, and teachers – CLICK ON THIS LINK! Download, print, and read *Getting What You Want – How to Make Goals*: https://www.usu.edu/asc/assistance/pdf/goal_setting.pdf

Your practice should have well-defined goals. What do you want to learn as a musician? Are there particular pieces of music, styles, or technical skills you would like to be able to play? Knowing what you want to accomplish will help you decide what work is needed and assist defining specific learning targets. If you have a private teacher, he/she will automatically prescribe objectives for you, based on your present strengths and weaknesses. But if you desire to join the local youth symphony, participate in a music festival, play in a pit orchestra, perform solos or chamber music, become a conductor, help coach your peers, or want to improve a specific technical skill or general musicianship, make sure your teachers know it! They may be able to share warm-ups, strategies, or practice materials that will help you improve and expand your knowledge, technique, expressiveness, sight-reading and ear training.

Here are some goal-related questions to ask yourself (consider several of these):

Next Fireside: *Practice Diaries*

1. Have you signed up for the local band or string camp?
2. Have you made arrangements to take a few lessons on your instrument or even on piano or music theory over the summer?
3. What was the last method book you used? Did you finish it? How many pieces can you memorize from it?
4. When was the last time you performed a solo or two and recorded yourself? Wouldn't it be fun to video yourself playing a mini-recital and sending the DVD to your grandmother or grandfather?
5. One of the greatest challenges in performance is sight reading. Can you pull-out a random piece of music (even something written for a different instrument) and play it straight through without stopping?
6. Pick your greatest weakness or problem on the instrument. What needs your attention? New keys, rhythms, articulations?
7. Ask your teacher what would be an appropriate exercise book. Can you define several new challenging goals in playing scales, arpeggios, other warm-ups, or études specifically geared for your instrument?
8. Did you know the South Hills Junior Orchestra is always open to new instrumentalists? SHJO begins its Saturday practices a week after Labor Day (USCHS Band Room 10:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.). Everyone is welcome to play in 2-4 free-trial practices!



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<http://www.shjo.org/foxs-fireside/>