



Life Hacks for Musicians

"Laws of Practicing" and More Tips on Preparing Music

Many of the early South Hills Junior Orchestra "Fox's Firesides" are about developing new techniques to solve musical problems, dispelling the myth that all you need to do is *put in the time*. Is there any truth in "practice makes perfect?" Nope. It is more critical that all instrumentalists set-up a regular schedule for focused practice, limiting all distractions, defining and working on goals, and then the truer adage can be modeled: "perfect practice develops perfect playing."

Perhaps since January is the first month of The New Year, this would be a good time to review the different practice techniques we have already published at <https://paulkfoxusc.wordpress.com/foxs-firesides/>, especially #1, #4, and #8.

Here are a few more ideas, "borrowed" from my former place of employment – the Upper St. Clair School District Performing Arts Department:

THE LAWS OF PRACTICING

The 24-Hour Law – It takes 24 hours for yesterday's lesson to be learned.

The Perfect Attendance Law – Practicing a little every day always beats cramming.

The Three Musketeers Law – Never practice without a metronome, tuner, or recording device to hear how you sound.

The "Elephant in the Room" Law – One must "face the music," specifically, the musical passage with which they are struggling the most.

The Sloth Law – When in doubt, play it slower.

LIFE HACKS (Practice Edition)

Sloth Hack – Playing slower, to the point that it is impossible to mess up.

Jaws Hack – Slur a passage with which you are struggling.

Karaoke Hack – Play the passage in conjunction with your favorite recording of the piece.

Time Trial Hack – Put a timer on for a few minutes and see how much you can accomplish in a short amount of time.

Drop the Bass Hack – If a passage is too high, play it down an octave.

Cheat Code Hack – Simplify a rhythm if you are struggling to learn it.

Here are several additional websites with excellent "hack" recommendations for developing better practice skills, but don't forget to ask your school music director and private teacher for more advice!

- <https://www.quora.com/What-are-some-great-hacks-for-music-practice-and-performance>
- <https://www.lifehack.org/articles/lifestyle/6-clever-music-hacks-that-speed-learning.html>
- <http://ondrakoak.com/2018/10/lifehacks/>

