

# The Beginners Guide to Starting Music Lessons

This guide is intended to help new students avoid some of the common pitfalls when beginning to learn an instrument. Using these guidelines, students of any age can have successful and rewarding musical experiences and will enjoy playing music year after year.

## **Step 1: Choose the right instrument.**

When beginning music lessons people are usually drawn to a particular tone from an instrument and will want to choose the instrument that has the most appealing sound to them. It is important to pay attention to this desire and to follow it, however the age of the student must be considered as well. Very young students such as 5 year olds will probably not have the lung capacity to play certain wind instruments and may not be grown enough to play larger instruments such as the bass. Typically the violin or the piano are the best choices to begin with when studying music, and can serve as an outstanding foundation to branch out and learn other instruments as time goes on. The ear training, coordination and balance those students learn from the violin or piano is universal to music and serves as the perfect building block for learning other instruments when they are ready.

## **Step 2: Find a knowledgeable, inspiring, and enthusiastic teacher.**

The world is full of many music teachers. Some of them love to play music and share it with others but lack the technical understanding of the instrument to teach effectively. Some teachers are full of knowledge but they are tired out from teaching so many lessons over the years. The truth is that although music is fun, learning music can also be difficult. What students need is an instructor who completely understands the instrument so that they can help them through the technical challenges, while at the same time support and encourage them to move ahead into their next level of play. Learning in anything is never an even road. Sometimes progress will be easy and fun while other times reaching the next level of play will be slower and you may feel discouraged. The combination of a motivating and enthusiastic teacher, who is also an expert with the technical aspects of the instrument, will propel students forward into higher levels of performance and understanding.

## **Step 3: Participate in performing opportunities such as recitals.**

When choosing a music program it is a good idea to choose one that provides performing opportunities at least once a year. Recitals allow students to not only have a goal to work towards, but it allows them to share what they have learned with an audience. The sense of accomplishment as well as the applause received from family and friends helps students to reaffirm that all their time spent on practicing is really worthwhile. Typically after a recital students will show an increased enthusiasm in their music and will be eager to dive into practicing.

## **Step 4: Have a plan for implementing a practice routine.**

When students first begin lessons they are usually very excited and cannot wait to begin playing music at home. This enthusiasm will last for a long time for some, and others will lack motivation to practice once the novelty of playing has worn off. It is important to have a strategy to motivate children to move ahead and continue to put time and energy into their music. In our studio we give students and parents a list of 9 things that they can do to set up successful practice sessions at home. This list contains the best ideas that have worked for many families to help them achieve successful practice over the years.

### **Step 5: Learn how to read music.**

Many teachers send their students out into the world with a good playing technique but without the ability to read music or understand music theory. For violinists this can cause problems for them if they decide to play in a youth symphony or group orchestra because they will not understand how to read their part. For piano students this lack of note reading and theory will make it take longer to learn new pieces and they will tend to perform pieces less accurately. In the beginning of lessons it is important to first set up the technique correctly and to focus on proper technique and tone production. However, once excellent technique and habits have been established then it is time to learn how to read music and explore reading new material. In our studio we make sure students learn the combination of proper playing technique as well as note reading and a good understanding of music theory. When students begin to prepare for competitions or auditions or play in a group orchestra or ensemble they have positive experiences because they can easily understand and comprehend their part.

### **Have fun!**

Music is something that you should bring enjoyment to your life. Whether you are aspiring for a career in music or choose to play purely for fun always remember to enjoy the journey and the gift of music. It is my hope that by using these guidelines you will have the most positive musical experience possible and will continue to enjoy playing for a lifetime!