

Eliminating the Top Excuses For Not Practicing

1. “I Don’t Have Time” or “I Forgot”.

These are the #1 excuses for missed practice. One excellent solution that has worked the best for my students has been to practice at a consistent time each day, especially in the morning for younger students who don’t have school starting so early. This may mean getting out of bed 30 minutes earlier. It will take some getting used to, but having piano practice completed before the craziness of after school play dates, sports, dance class, dinner, homework etc. makes for much more continuity. Another tip is to coordinate it with an activity that happens every day. While in Elementary school I knew that before leaving for school I needed to have practiced for 30 minutes and within 15 minutes of getting home from school I was expected to be at the piano practicing for the remaining 30 minutes. That may seem too extreme but you could schedule practice before dinner or directly after dinner or before the dog is walked. Linking practice time to an activity that happens every day helps establish routine. Not only does this practice strategy work, but it also teaches how to prioritize tasks that must be completed each day and to find effective solutions for time management. This is an INCREDIBLE life skill to develop.

2. “It is too hard.”

Sometimes students get stuck on a hard spot that seemed perfectly easy during the lesson. If this happens, encourage them to do the following:

1. If they are stuck on a note, pull out the Anchor Note Guide and use the strategy of determining how many skips or steps, up or down, the stressful note is from the closest Anchor Note.
2. Use the Tow Truck handout for any kind of stuck-ness. This directs the student to compare their current problem to a previous piece of music, another measure or section of their current piece, or to think of their own solution. This is another excellent life skill!

3. “I don’t feel like it.”

That’s something we can all relate to. Rather than trying to convince them why they should feel like it, encourage them to at least get to the piano bench by starting with their favorite song in their practice repertoire or playing a song for you. Once they are sitting at the piano bench it is easier for them to stay there and continue on. Sometimes just giving a few minutes of your attention to them will show them that it is important to you and may remind them that it is important to them, as well. You can also suggest a twist by saying you’d like to record their practice or let them start practicing a song and see if you can guess which one it is while you are in neighboring room. Few kids turn down positive attention from parents.