

# How to Create Peaceful Practice... And End Practice Wars for Good!

(Adapted from TeachingPianoToday.com)

## 1. Location, location, location

It's true in the real estate world, and it's true in the home practice world. Having your piano in the correct place in your home is of paramount importance for successful home practice. Unfortunately, most of us don't have an ideal play for our piano. If possible, your piano should be located in a comfortable room, close to where the family is, but away from major distractions. Your child does not want to be isolated during practice time – but they also do not want to compete with your washing machine or siblings in the next room having fun. Wherever your piano is located, please help minimize distractions so that focused practice is a possibility.

## 2. Cramming is Not the Answer

Nothing stresses a parent out more than helping their child practice when they have 10 minutes before leaving for the piano lesson. Keep the peace at home by beginning home practice immediately after you return home from their piano lesson. They will still remember what they covered in their lesson, and the piano books will actually make it to the piano... setting you up for a good start to the piano practice week.

Cramming creates feelings of inadequacy in your child as they struggle to perfect what should take 7 days to percolate. Cramming makes you sweat and wonder why in the world you are paying for these lessons. Cramming is not the answer.

## 3. Mistakes are Okay

I promise! It's my job as a piano teacher to sort out the mistakes in lesson time. Your job at home is to be the support – to remind them to spend time on the piano, congratulate them on their efforts, revel in the joy that is your child creating music, and show that you value music in your home.

Avoid the following statements and watch peace fall over your home immediately: "Is that right? I don't think that's right."... "That's not how it's supposed to sound."... "Are you watching your music?"... "Your sister played that piece and it didn't sound like that." ... "Wrong note!"... "Try it again." etc. Your child will get their back up immediately and the practice wars are sure to ensue.

## 4. "But My Teacher Said!"

How many times has your child shouted a statement similar to this? "My teacher said I only have to play the first page!"... "My teacher said to play it up here."... "My teacher said to play it this fast!"... What your child is actually trying to say is "I want to be in charge of my learning." So let them! Whether or not I actually said these things is beside the point.

Resist the urge to argue (and resist the urge to call me to ask what in the world I am teaching) and trust that your child will sort it out themselves. This is often a knee-jerk reaction on your child's part – they so desperately want to be right and in charge and it's their way of saying "Stay out of this, I've got it." If you allow them this right to direct their own learning you will help to create a confident piano student.

## **5. Be Present...**

For students in their first and second year of lessons, you and your child will enjoy piano practice time so much more if you, the parent, are not multi-tasking. Your child thrives on one-on-one quality time, and if this is combined with their piano practice it is an activity that you will both grow to cherish.

Take away the distractions – the cell phone, the baby, the dog, the dinner prep... and focus on just your child. Soak up the experience of watching your young one learn such a complex skill. Find a time to practice that isn't restricted by deadlines. Just enjoy making music together. It's impossible to start a practice war if you are truly "bonding on the bench".

Piano practice is a commitment – it's a daily event that can either be gloriously wonderful... or horribly stressful. Keep these 5 tips in mind when you start out this new practice week and welcome peaceful piano practice into your home with open arms.