

5 WAYS TO GET THE MOST OUT OF MUSIC LESSONS

These guidelines will help you to have a successful and rewarding experience learning an instrument. These are practical tips that we have discovered from our experiences with teaching hundreds of students each year.

STARTING AT THE RIGHT AGE

Adults can start any instrument at any time. Their success is based on how willing they are to commit to practicing. However, starting a child at the right age is a key element to the success of their lessons. Some people will tell you “the sooner the better” but this attitude can actually be a negative. If a child is put into lessons too soon they may feel overwhelmed and frustrated. The last thing you want to do is turn a child off to music just because they had one unpleasant experience which could easily have been prevented. Sometimes if the child waits a year to start lessons their progress can be much faster. The following are guidelines we have found to be successful in determining how young a child can start taking music lessons:

Piano

At our school three is the youngest age that we start children in private piano lessons. At this age they have begun to develop longer attention spans and can retain material with greater ease.

Guitar

We recommend children starting Guitar lessons be no younger than five. Playing guitar requires a fair amount of strength in the fingers for pressing on the strings. Children under eight generally have small hands and may find playing the guitar uncomfortable.

Voice Lessons

We recommend children to be 5 or older before they begin voice lessons. Due to the physical techniques in voice lessons, such as proper breathing and lung capacity, the younger body is generally not yet ready for the rigors of vocal technique.

1. Insist on Private Lessons when Learning a Specific Instrument.

Group classes work well for preschool music programs and theory lessons. However, when actually learning how to play an instrument, private lessons are far superior. Private lessons allow each student to learn at their own pace. This means the teacher does not have to teach a class at a middle-of-the-road level but has the time to work on the individual student’s strengths and weaknesses. Teachers also enjoy private lessons because they do not have to divide their attention between too many students at a time.

2. Take Lessons in a Professional Teaching Environment.

Learning music is not just a matter of having a qualified teacher but also having an environment that is focused on music education. In a professional school environment a student cannot be distracted by TV, pets, ringing phones, siblings, or anything else. In a music school the lessons are not just a hobby for the teacher but a responsibility which is taken very seriously.

3. Make Practicing Easier.

Improving in music takes practice. One of the main problems with music lessons is the drudgery of practicing and the fight for parents to have their students practice every day. Here are some ways to make practicing easier:

Time

Set the same time every day to practice so it becomes part of the routine. Generally, the earlier in the day the Set the same time every day to practice so it becomes part of the routine. Generally, the earlier in the day the practicing can occur the less reminding is required by parents to get the child to practice.

Repetition

For a young child 20 or 30 minutes can seem like an eternity. Instead of setting an amount of time to practice use repetition instead. For example, practice this piece four times every day and this scale five times a day. Then the child does not pay as much attention to the amount of time they are practicing but to the amount of repetitions they have completed.

Rewards

Parents can encourage children to practice by granting them occasional rewards for successful practicing. Praise tends to be the best reward. There is no substitute for a pat on the back and a job well done.

4. Use Recognized Teaching Materials

There are some excellent materials developed by professional music educators that are made for students of all ages. Are many books that can start a student at any level they are comfortable. These materials have been researched and are continually improved to make learning easier. The workbooks ensure that no important part of learning the instrument will accidentally be left out. If you ever have to move to a different part of the country then qualified instructors will recognize the materials and be able to continue from where the previous instructor left off.

5. Have Fun!

Music should be something that you enjoy for a lifetime. Don't put unrealistic expectations on yourself or your children to learn too quickly. Everyone learns at a different pace and the key is to enjoy the journey.