

# 5 Steps for Learning a Song

Master each step before moving on

- 1) Say the rhythm
- 2) Say the letter of every note
- 3) Say the letters in rhythm
- 4) Say the letters while doing fingerings/slide positions
- 5) Play the song

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## Sample Practice Routine

20-35 minutes

- 1) Read and say any note letters or rhythms you need to practice (2-3 minutes)
- 2) Breathing exercises (2-3min)
  - a) 4 in 4 out (steady & even)
  - b) 4 in 8, 12, 16 out (practice for playing music phrases)
  - c) 2 or 1 in 4 out (practice for taking quick breaths while playing)
  - d) in, sip, sip/ out, push, push (or other workout exercises)
- 3) Play on mouthpiece/head joint only – set embouchure, play with a clear & steady sound (2-3min)  
(percussion – play LRLR notes on bells & snare, being very steady with sound & tempo)
- 4) Long tones – play long, steady sounds on any/all pitches & at different dynamics (3-4min)
- 5) Tonguing – play repeating notes on any pitch, focus on steady air and tongue placement (2-3min)
- 6) Practice patterns – pick 1 or 2 patterns, practice at different speeds (2-4min)  
2-3 minute break
- 7) Songs to improve – pick spots from songs in class, work on those, then perform the song (5-10min)
- 8) Play for fun – play songs you like from any book; improvise; make up your own song (2-5min)

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## Practice Strategies & Other Tips

**Frequency** – practice as many days a week as you can. Try for three 20 minute sessions per week, then see if you can get it any others, even if they are short

**Duration** – 20-30 minutes will give you time to work on fundamentals and songs, but even 5 minutes can be effective if you get better at something

**Make something better** – don't just play notes, practice to get better; 5 minutes that leads to improvement is better than 20 minutes of staying the same

**Set a goal** – before practicing a song decide what you want to improve. Focus on making the improvement, then play the part you improved at least 3 more times to make sure really have it

**Use a timer** – After setting your goal, set a timer for 2-5 minutes (depending on what you are trying to achieve), and try to meet your goal within that time. This will help you focus on what you are practicing

**Metronome** – using a metronome or metronome app helps you make sure you are playing rhythms correctly, and aren't speeding up easier parts and slowing down more difficult ones

**Chunks** – break songs down into small chunks, one measure or less, and practice until perfect. Start combining chunks until you can play the whole song

**Slow it down** – play it at a slower tempo until you get it steady & correct, then speed it up

**Wind pattern** – use your air to perform the rhythm of the song; maintain steady air through all notes

**Develop good habits** – set your embouchure & mouthpiece first, then breathe & play