



## Dr. John's Practice Toolkit

In all the following I assume that you will practice each step multiple times before adding more material.

### Rhythmic Permutation

In any sequence of notes of equal value, alter the rhythm so you play first LONG short LONG short LONG short LONG (dotted 8<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup>) and then SHORT long SHORT long SHORT long SHORT long (16<sup>th</sup> and dotted 8<sup>th</sup>). This gives you experience going quickly between two notes and then having a pause before you continue on.

### Back to Front

In any sequence of notes, begin with the last two pitches, then play from the third from the end to the end, then from the fourth from the end, etc., until you reach the beginning of the section you are working on. This technique can also be used in learning entire pieces, for example, if you start with the last measure and continue, in reverse, to the beginning. Since you are always heading into material you already know, you play with much less tension and anxiety.

### Link & Chain

Every melody is made of a sequence of notes that can be considered a series of links - between two notes, between two beats, etc.. Any sequence of notes is only as strong as its weakest link. Figure out which link this and take it out of the chain for polishing. If the trouble spot is between two notes, practice just those two notes until they feel comfortable.

### Moveable Fermata

In any sequence of pitches where you "always" play a wrong note, play the phrase up to the note **before** the note you play wrong, hold that pitch until all the twitching has gone out of your fingers trying to go to the wrong note, and then play the correct note and STOP.

### Moveable Barline

In any series of notes, move the barline so the down beat falls on a different part of the beat. In an example with 16<sup>th</sup> notes, play so the beat falls on the second of the four notes, then play it with the downbeat on the third of the four notes, finally with the down beat on the fourth of the four 16<sup>th</sup> s. This gives each note in the series a chance to be the downbeat and strengthens the whole passage.

## Articulation Alteration

In any passage that is all articulated (e.g. Scherzo to Mendelssohn's Midsummer Night's Dream) practice it slurred and visa versa.

## Practice Aphorisms

Never louder than lovely. The late Fred Schroeder, former flute professor at Lawrence University, Appleton, WI.

Play anything 50 times slowly and you'll not have a problem with it. Frances Blaisdell, Lecturer in Flute, Emerita, Stanford University. Played with the New York Philharmonic and New York City Ballet orchestra.

Most note mistakes are rhythm mistakes first. Robert Dick.

Do it, or forget it. Henry Zlotnik

You can't run before you walk, or walk before you crawl. John Ranck

## Using your toolkit

Any of the above methods can be used in combination. You can use the back to front with rhythmic permutation, you can use rhythmic permutation with the moveable barline. You can combine any of these tools with Ms. Blaisdell's recommendation to practice something 50 times slowly (the emphasis being on **slowly**).

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