



THE ULTIMATE PRACTICE TOOLKIT

PRACTICE GUIDE

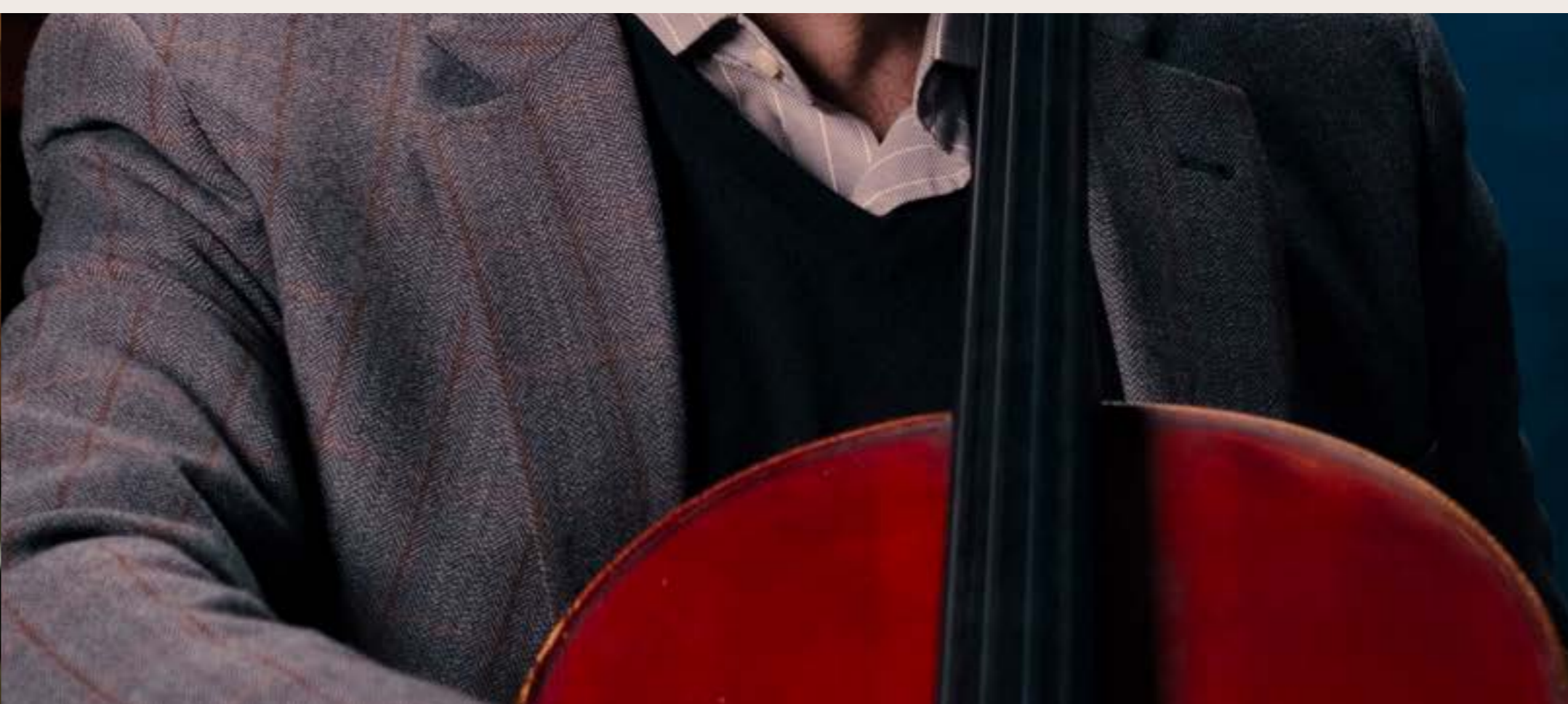


HEY THERE!

WELCOME TO TONEBASE

If you're like most music learners, practicing is hard. Very hard. Often the most difficult part is making it a habit in the first place — one that will keep you motivated and focused on what you want to achieve.

If that's you, never fear. **This guide will teach you 4 essential steps to finally make practicing a consistent, even rewarding, part of your life.**





If you're like most people learning a musical instrument, you've discovered that practicing can be hard. Very hard. Often the most difficult part is making it a habit — one that will keep you motivated and focused on what you want to achieve.

If that's you, never fear. You're about to learn the 4 essential steps to finally make practicing a consistent — and even rewarding — part of your life.

Here they are:

Step 1: Foster the Right Mindset. To become the musician you're capable of being, you'll first need to make practicing a priority and accept that some level of sacrifice is required.

Step 2: Remove Any and All Friction. Next, you'll get rid of obstacles that hinder practice, which will make it accessible and easy to start, every time.

Step 3: Establish Your Vision and Goals. It's time to clarify your vision and set up specific musical goals you want to achieve in the journey ahead.

Step 4: Structure Your Daily Practice. Finally, once you know your goals, you'll construct your daily practice sessions around them — and track the very real progress you'll be making.

We'll also provide little-known tips and examples to help you apply these 4 steps to your unique situation and needs.

Now, let's dive in!

Pro Tip: Print the pages with reflection questions, and write in your answers as you watch the video course!

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STEP 1: FOSTER THE RIGHT MINDSET

Summary: If it's important to you, you will find time.

The very first step is to get your mind right around what it takes to form a durable practice habit.

We all lead busy lives. Naturally, it can be a struggle to fit practice into our daily schedule.

However, the truth remains: if something is really important to us, we can always make time for it.

Even when life gets busy, there are always pockets of time we can find and utilize to work towards our goals.

Whether it's 15 minutes in the morning before heading out the door, or half an hour in the evening before cooking dinner, we can use those small, recurring moments where nothing much is happening to get a little better at playing our instruments.



Side note: Did you know that just 15 minutes a day adds up to over 90 hours of practice per year? That's more than enough to make some serious progress on any musical goal!

The question you need to ask yourself isn't:

Do I have the time?

But...

Is this a priority for me?

In other words, is getting better at your instrument actually something that matters to you? You might immediately want to say, Of course! But don't be too hasty to answer. Close your eyes and really think on that question.

Imagine what it would feel like to play your instrument the way you've always wanted to, and how meaningful that would be to your sense of self.

If you've decided it truly does matter, that means you can find the time to make it happen. And yes, it's possible!

Now, there's an important thing to acknowledge: sometimes, priorities shift. You might start a new job or have a baby. In those seasons, practicing just won't be your highest priority for a while.

When that's the case, as it inevitably will be, at some point, it's key to recognize and accept that reality. The last thing you want to do is punish yourself for "being lazy" and neglecting your practice time. That will only backfire and demotivate you even more.

Just remind yourself why music matters to you, and commit to the process again when you can.

Prioritizing your practice sessions will mean sacrificing something else that's taking up your time now.

This might come in the form of watching a little less Netflix, waking up a little earlier in the morning, or cutting back on scrolling through social media.

Whatever the sacrifice might be for you, it's important to realize that time is a limited resource, and something has to give. The good news is by removing unnecessary habits, you're creating time to get better at making music. And that's empowering!

Think about 1 or 2 unimportant, yet time-consuming daily habits you have. Commit to stopping those things for now — use the space below to write them down — and use that time instead for practice.

Adopting this determined mindset is your first step to making effective practice sessions part of your life.

Questions to ask yourself:

- Is improving in music really a priority for me right now?

- What am I going to give up in order to make practicing the priority? (For example, watching an episode on Netflix, sleeping in, etc.)

- Exactly how much time will that create in your daily life for practicing?

STEP 2: REMOVE ANY AND ALL FRICTION

Summary: Make the act of sitting down to practice as easy as possible.

Once you've determined that improving at your instrument is indeed a high priority in your life, the next step is to remove any friction that will hinder you from actually doing it.

Eliminating friction is a little different from cutting out time-wasting habits. It might be due to general circumstances in your life that are outside of your control, or internal feelings that affect your behavior.

You might have created time for practicing, and you've made definite plans to do so on a particular day, but then something — anything — gets in the way before you can even start.

For example, let's say you've figured out your ideal practice time is at night before bed, but playing the instrument disturbs others in your living space. Not only will that prevent you from practicing...it will cause enough friction to stop you from building the habit.

Many other types of friction exist, too. Often the biggest source of friction when establishing a new habit is simply initiating the process. It can feel like too "big" of a project to add to your life.

So what do you do? Eliminate the friction! Be a little creative, and make it as easy as possible to start *just the first practice session* in this new journey you're on.

Going back to the first example, if playing at night could disturb your family or neighbors, you might look into using headphones (if you're playing an electronic instrument), or practicing simple exercises at a low volume before everyone around you winds down.



Then after starting the habit at home for a week or two, you might need to reevaluate your schedule a bit, and look into asking a local studio or music school for practice space earlier in the day.

If the friction exists more in your mind, another approach — recommended in the fantastic book by James Clear, *Atomic Habits* — is to begin with a small, easily repeatable task that's in line with the new practice habit you want to build. Something as simple as sitting down at your instrument and playing just one note every day.

After that one note, you can decide whether to continue playing or stop.

The secret? Most days, you'll feel like playing more than one note. But what's important is getting that one note in consistently. That way, you'll build the habit of practicing gradually, without overwhelming yourself.

The key takeaway here is to make the act of *being with your instrument* as frictionless as possible. That's what will get you started...and what will keep you progressing towards your musical goals.

Questions to ask yourself:

- What situation or feeling is preventing me from just sitting down and playing every day?

- What do I need to do to remove that friction?

STEP 3: ESTABLISH YOUR VISION AND GOALS

Summary: Determine what you want to do with your music.

After you've determined practicing music is a priority in your life (Step 1) and you've removed the friction around sitting down to practice (Step 2), it's time to set a vision and create goals for your musical journey.

You've probably heard this many times before, but goals are powerful for holding yourself accountable and providing a sense of purpose. Especially when it comes to a pursuit like musical practice!

But before you set goals, it's important to lay down a grand vision for what you want to achieve with your music. This could be as simple as learning the piece that first made you fall in love with your instrument, or as expansive as making music your full-time career.

Whatever that North Star is for you, write it down.



Once you have that vision in place, break it down into long-term and short-term goals. Ask yourself what you want to achieve in 1 month, 6 months, 1 year, 3 years, and 5 years from now. Then, think about the actionable steps needed to meet those time-bound objectives.

For example, to reach your 6-month goal, do you need to learn specific techniques? Find a teacher? Study a certain style of music?

Defining achievable goals that move you towards your ultimate vision – in realistic increments of time – will give you the charge to stay on your musical path.

Questions to ask yourself:

- What do I ultimately want to achieve in music?

- What are some milestones (at 1 month, 6 months, 1 year, 3 years, and 5 years from now) that I think will move me closer towards my ultimate vision?

- What are some individual tasks I need to do to achieve those goals?

STEP 4: STRUCTURE YOUR DAILY PRACTICE

Summary: Build your practice routine around the goals you want to achieve.

Have some clear goals in place?

Great: you've now established the foundation for your daily practice routine! You'll never sit down at your instrument again wondering what to focus on, as you now have clear steps to follow.

That level of clarity is especially important for those days when you're short on time. You'll want to make the most of every minute you have to practice. To ensure you're practicing effectively, consciously choose the exact exercises that will move you towards your goals.

As an example, many musicians make the mistake of practicing endless technique exercises, like scales and arpeggios, without considering the link to their musical goals. That's where they start to get lost — and get demotivated.

Remember, technique is just a means to an end. For the most part, the exercises you do in your practice sessions should be focused on enabling you to play the music you want to play.

Here's a good way to stay on track:

- Carve out 5–10 minutes in the **first practice session** of each week.
- In that 5–10 minute pocket of time, go over both your immediate milestones and your bigger goals thoughtfully.
- Decide then and there what you'll do that week to make progress towards your next milestone.

Do this, and you'll keep your focus on what matters most.

You'll maximize the usefulness of every minute you spend in practice. And you'll find yourself closer to those short- and long-term goalposts, week after week.



Questions to ask yourself:

- What can I do this week to make progress towards my 1-month and 6-month milestones?

- Is what I've been practicing helping me make progress, or not?

BONUS STEP: PRACTICE WITHOUT YOUR INSTRUMENT

Summary: When time is scarce, use mental practice to your advantage.

It's a common misconception that practicing can only be done with your instrument in your hands.

Of course, playing an instrument requires time spent with it. But not all practice has to be done by physically engaging with it. The great musicians of the world understand this, and know the secret of practicing away from their instrument.

How is this even possible? The first way is a matter of using your mind.

Whether you're sitting in traffic or waiting in line at the store, there are many opportunities to practice the numerous mental aspects of playing an instrument. If time happens to be your biggest hindrance in establishing a practice habit, this is one of the best strategies for you to learn.

For example, if you're trying to memorize a piece for an upcoming performance, start envisioning the first few bars of that piece in your mind.

Visualize passages from the score. Imagine how it feels to play each note. Notice any sticking points that you want to work out the next time you sit with your instrument.



You can also improve your playing by listening, with intent, to different interpretations of the piece you're currently trying to master.

Seek out different artists who have performed that piece. Pay close attention to dynamics, articulation, and overall style as you listen. The more you focus on how different artists approach the same music, the more you'll pick up on!

Then, start trying out the ideas you're discovering in your own playing. This is all a part of developing a more "musical" mind.

And finally, try tonebase. It's an excellent digital resource for learning and practicing away from your instrument.

Inside tonebase, you'll find hundreds of structured video courses on repertoire, theory, and technique, led by top artists and experts on your instrument. Your progress is automatically tracked, so you can pick back up at the same spot whenever you have to stop.

Just pick a course that's in line with your personal goals, and use this guide and the other worksheets in the Ultimate Practice Toolkit to get the most out of what you're learning.

Take advantage of every opportunity to practice, even when you don't have your instrument with you. It's a surefire way to level up as a musician!



Question to ask yourself:

- What are some of the opportunities I'll have to practice away from my instrument this week?

- What are some of the methods I'll try?

Learn more at tonebase.co



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CONCLUSION

Congratulations! You now know what it takes to have a practice habit that's consistent, and that works.

By following the steps we've shared in this guide — fostering the right mindset, removing friction, establishing a clear vision, structuring daily practice sessions around your goals, and the bonus step of practicing without your instrument — you're on the way to becoming the musician you want to be.

But now, it's time to take action.

This guide has given you a framework to leap over every obstacle that could get in the way of forming a meaningful practice habit. Without taking the first step, however, you won't get any closer to that musical dream.

Don't wait another day. Remember, you can get there with sessions as small as 15 minutes. You can even make the all-important start by playing just one note!

Your small, consistent steps will add up over time. And with a little bit of effort and determination, you'll be amazed at how you'll be playing a month, a year, and 5 years from now.

So go ahead, take the first step today, and let this guide be your blueprint for success!

If you have any corrections, comments, or critiques relating to this workbook, please send them to team@tonebase.co. We strive to deliver the highest quality enrichment experience. Thank you!