**Practice Log Examples:**

A practice log should help young musicians build the skills of proper practice. Using a checklist for each student, they could check off what they do each practice period and include a video at the end of the week showing the progress they have made in each area.

A checklist is helpful for beginners. Asking for a practice log video can allow for a quick check for mastery and identify problems that can be attended to in the full band setting. It makes the assessment of practice less about time spent and more on time spent toward mastery and proper practice techniques. A practice log doesn’t need to be in paper form – you can easily do it via online platforms provided/approved by the school system.

Very early practice logs might track the specifics of creating a mouthpiece sound, buzzing exercises, assembling the instrument, reviewing a fingering, and articulation, or rhythms on a mouthpiece. These early journeys are easily shared with parents as students are eager to demonstrate what they are learning to others. These can be short and documented via learning management systems such as Canvas.

With large groups of students, video practice logs could be turned in weekly, but assessments could be done bi-weekly to save time. Practice logs do not need to be graded, as the goal of practice logs are to encourage the kind of guided practice that leads to mastery of musical techniques or performance concepts and ultimately, musical independence and enjoyment. (Examples are included below)

You can also include variations. For example, perhaps you have beginning string students teach a friend or family member how to hold the bow and have them submit a picture. You could also have them teach a friend or family member Hot Cross Buns. See examples 4 and 5 for string-specific practice guidelines for beginners.

Lastly, you can also assign improvisations, writing and playing original compositions as practice.

**Example 1:**

Each practice session, please do each of the following things.

1. Mouthpiece sounds:
   1. 8 count long tones with 4 counts in between. Do this four times.
   2. 16 count long tones with 4 counts in between. Do this four times.
2. Articulation on mouthpieces using Rhythm Sheet.
   1. Select one line and practice clapping and articulating silently
   2. Repeat the line on the mouthpiece with fast air
   3. Select a second line and practice clapping and articulating silently
   4. Repeat the line on the mouthpiece with fast air
   5. Select a third line and practice clapping and articulating silently
   6. Repeat the line on the mouthpiece with fast air
3. Instrument together, play same long tone exercises on each note: Eb, F, G concert pitches
   1. 8 count long tones with 4 counts in between. Do this four times on Eb concert.
   2. 16 count long tones with 4 counts in between. Do this four times on Eb concert.
   3. 8 count long tones with 4 counts in between. Do this four times on F
   4. concert.
   5. 16 count long tones with 4 counts in between. Do this four times on F concert.
   6. 8 count long tones with 4 counts in between. Do this four times on G concert.
   7. 16 count long tones with 4 counts in between. Do this four times on G concert.
4. Instrument together, rhythm sheet (3 lines) on each of the notes (Eb, F, G concert pitches)
   1. Select one line and practice clapping and articulating silently
   2. Repeat the line on the mouthpiece with fast air on Eb concert
   3. Select a second line and practice clapping and articulating silently
   4. Repeat the line on the mouthpiece with fast air on F concert
   5. Select a third line and practice clapping and articulating silently
   6. Repeat the line on the mouthpiece with fast air on G concert

Optional: At the end of the week, make a video recording. Be sure I can see your face/embouchure and your hands.

The assignment below emphasizes very beginning skills once the executive skills have been solidified. You could add breathing exercises, link background tracks for students to play with, and each week add something new to the practice.Perhaps students have a notebook where they write down the rhythm of the day, and they use that for their practice rhythms. Or you can give them a rhythm list for the week and allow them to add two rhythms of their own to check for understanding and transfer. You could also demonstrate making these repetitions a game by using four pennies and moving them from the left side of the stand to the right to keep track of the repetitions. The chart is not about the number of minutes, but the intent to practice skills sets learned in school.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Student Name: | | | | | | |
|  | Monday | Tuesday | Wednesday | Thursday | Friday | Saturday |
| Mouthpiece: Long Tones |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Articulation: 3 Rhythms |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Long Tones: Eb Concert |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Long Tones: F Concert |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Long Tones: G Concert |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Articulation: Rhythm on F Concert |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Articulation: Rhythm on Eb Concert |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Articulation: Rhythm on G Concert |  |  |  |  |  |  |

**Example 2:**

This next example could be for students with a bit more experience who may not need the same guidance. Include an identified warm-up for the week that would include long tones, scales, articulation, and/or technique exercises. Then ask your students to select and prepare three lines of music and submit a short video for the end of the week. The advantage of this is that you can ask them to choose from a list prepared that would include a beginning, intermediate or advanced level (you can indicate these by color as well). That way, students have a choice in their own adventure for the week for practicing. The options should be related to the objectives from the lessons each day in class. Again, not time but noting what was practiced is important.

With this chart, you will need to do some teaching in class to help your students build practice skills so they can eventually become independent musicians.

Block 1: Warm-up routine. This is something you might do in class and have them write down in their band notebook with their new rhythms. The important part is identifying what is appropriate for each instrument.

Block 2: New music. Have an assigned line or ask students to select a line of music. Demonstrate in class how to isolate and identify the parts of a line of music they are unfamiliar with and how to practice it in pieces. This could include rhythm on neutral syllables, rhythm using your identified specific syllables, singing the melody in two bars using solfege syllables, singing and fingering together, playing two bars at a time and building the song from beginning to end or end to beginning.

Block 3: Critical analysis of technique. Teach students to stop and mark the spots where they are struggling (making consistent errors) with fingerings or pitch or rhythm so they can isolate and practice those spots. They may need help so checking for how students are marking their music is a quick check for you as a teacher and will allow you to help them learn how to mark effectively and how to practice something that is hard. Teach them some ways to do this (slow it down; isolate two notes and go back and forth then add the note before and the note after; take out the rhythm; change the rhythm; etc.) and have them write those in their notebooks.

Block 4: Review of technique and adding musicality. Students should review a line of music they just learned to see if they can add musical nuance to it, listening for phrasing or articulations, so they are moving beyond notes and rhythms. You can encourage this in class and allow them to add markings they want to try as they express the line musically.

Block 5: Celebrating musical voice. I want my students to end their practice session with their favorite thing to play in the moment or to learn a melody they love by ear to share in class.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Name: | Monday | Tuesday | Wednesday | Thursday | Friday | Saturday |
| Warm-up it up!  (Specific warm-up routine) |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Break it down!  (working on new or difficult passages) |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Mark that music!  (keep track of what is still problematic) |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Play it through!  (Play a newly learned line to add musicality) |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Free choice music! (Play or learn a melody that you like) |  |  |  |  |  |  |

**Example 3:**

The next example could be for a more advanced student. You could ask them to select an exercise from a list you give them (again, with options for more beginning, intermediate, or advanced levels). You could also include sections from concert music they are working on for a concert. Continue to use the blocked practice record or create a form that is more specific to what your objectives are for your students. They should begin to find a routine that works for them and will be able to extend the time they spend practicing in one sitting.

Choose an exercise for each of the areas: tone development, finger technique and scales for this submission.

* Select ONE example that demonstrates your best legato style (book or music)
* Select a second example to focus on a challenging fingering technique you are working toward mastering (book or music)
* Select ONE scale from student book page XX with arpeggio.

**Example 4: Assignments for Beginning String Students**

1. Show a family member or friend rest position and playing position. Teach them how to do it and take a picture.
2. Show a family member or friend how to hold the bow, modified playing position, how to bring the bow to the string, and how to push and pull the bow on one string. Teach them how to do it and take pictures/video.
3. Show a family member or friend playing position, the name of the four strings and pluck (pizz.) each string four

times while singing the name, rest position. Teach them to do it and submit a video.

1. Show a family member or friend playing position, how to bring your left-hand fingers to the fingerboard, pizzicato (pluck) four times each: 0, 1, 2, 3, 4 (vln/vla) (0, 1, 3, 4 cellists) (0, 1, 4 bassists) on each string. Submit a video.
2. Perform Hot Cross Buns for a family member or friend and submit a video.

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Student Name: | | | | |
| 2 Pics: Rest and Playing Position | 4 Pics or video: Bow hold…pull/push bow | Vid: Sing and pizz open strings | Vid: Teach Left hand notes and pizz. | Video: Hot Cross Buns |
|  |  |  |  |  |

Pic = Picture, Vid = Video

Example 5: Beginning Violin and Viola Players’ Practice Expectations

1. Find a quiet place to practice,

2. Find a consistent time to practice (1/2 before or after dinner?),

3. Review what to practice and give handouts with expectations.

Then, give a handout with reminders about how and what to practice. Something like,

Add shoulder rest

Wider part of shoulder rest underneath chin rest (make it look like a frowny face)

Shoulder rest arm on side of instrument, then slide other side onto violin until secure.

Playing Position

Hold violin in front of you (scroll on top and button facing floor)

Hold violin sideways (scroll to left and button towards right wall)

Lift over your head

Sway like a palm tree until you find your center of balance

Bring down onto left shoulder

Sniff a sniff of arrogance “just pretend”

Turn your head in disgust “just pretend”

Drop the side of your jaw/chin in the chin rest

(In class, Move feet/body until the scroll is pointing at me.) Return to rest position. Repeat.

2nd time: Swing arm underneath the violin so you strum strings with pinky

3rd time: Fingers dance on the fingerboard

Left Hand Playing Position

Fleshy part of the side of the index finger above last knuckle against neck near nut

Fleshy part of thumb above last knuckle feels the seam between fingerboard and neck across from first finger

Sing and Pluck (pizzicato) Open Strings and then adding Left-hand Fingers

Make L with right-hand thumb and first finger

Thumb against fingerboard

First finger reaches to farthest string.

Sing and pluck G (violin) C (viola) 4 times.

Relax arm and finger to next string. Sing and pluck (G, D, A, viola, D, A, E, violin) 4 times.

Sing finger numbers

Open, open, open, open,

(put 1 on tape closest to the scroll) 1, 1, 1, 1

(add a second finger on the next tape) 2, 2, 2, 2

(add a third finger on the next tape) 3, 3, 3, 3

(add a fourth finger on the highest tape) 4, 4, 4, 4

(lift 4 but keep 1, 2, and 3 on the tapes) 3, 3, 3, 3

(lift 3 but keep 1, 2, on the tapes) 2, 2, 2, 2

(lift 2 but keep 1 on the tape) 1, 1, 1, 1

(lift 1) 0, 0, 0, 0

Repeat on another string or two

Silently lay violin in case

Gently remove bow from case

Turn screw six half turns to right until stick and hairs are pencil width apart.

Lightly rosin

Hold rosin in left hand

Land bow on rosin at frog and count to six (half bows, back and forth or up and down)

Full bow to tip and count to six (half bows, back and forth or up and down).

Repeat.

Bow Hold

Pick bow up at balance point with left hand, frog facing right

Left arm in front of body

Lightly grab your arm with right hand (thumb underneath arm)

Look at the spaces between your fingers

Slide second knuckle of fingers over hand and onto stick over the frog

Thumb is bent and under frog. It won’t always live there but just for now.

Poem: Four little frogs swimming in the pool, (Celloists and bassists stop here)

Violinists & violaists, The little one gets out and sits on the stool. (Click your pinky on top of stick)

Tip up, check that your thumbs are bent, click pinky again

Modified Playing Position

Begin with instrument at your right side

Left hand on fingerboard

Right hand holding bow

Tip towards ceiling but use side of hand above wrists

Two-handed up and over head, onto left shoulder

Bow to String

Landing silently half way between the bridge and fingerboard on the \_\_\_ string. Relax your shoulder and arm. Push and pull. Repeat on each string. Rest position.

IN REST POSITION WITH SCROLL TOWARD YOUR FACE, now guitar position because we will play:

wave right hand to wall

secure violin/viola under right arm with string facing the wall

back of vln/vla against your side

scroll pointing forward

strings facing away from body

arm protects the bridge because it is not glued down

Left Hand Playing Position

Fleshy part of thumb above last knuckle feels the seam between fingerboard and neck across

from first finger.

Fleshy part of the side of the index finger above last knuckle against neck near nut.

Placing fingers on fingerboard & finger numbers—0, 1, 2, 3, 4.

Sing (Do, Re, Mi, Fa, Sol or 0, 1, 2, 3, 4) and use your right-hand thumb to pluck four times each

Do: Open, open, open, open

Re: (add first finger to tape nearest scroll) 1, 1, 1, 1,

Mi: (add second finger to next tape) 2, 2, 2, 2

Fa: (add third finger to next tape) 3, 3, 3, 3,

Sol: (add fourth finger to last tape, nearest bridge) 4, 4, 4, 4

Fa: (lift 4 but leave 1, 2, 3 on tapes) 3, 3, 3, 3

Mi: (lift 3 but leave 1, 2 on tapes) 2, 2, 2, 2

Re: (lift 2 but leave 1 on tape) 1, 1, 1, 1

Do: (lift 1) Open, open, open, open

Hot Cross Buns Four Ways On the D string

Pizz. (Pluck) with your right thumb while in guitar position. Walk up: 0 1 2 2

Sing and pluck

2 (Lift up your 2) 1 (Lift up your 1) 0 (put your 1 and 2 down)

2 (Lift up your 2) 1 (Lift up your 1) 0 (put your 1 and 2 down)

0, 0, 0, 0, (put your 1 down) 1, 1, 1, 1

2 (Lift up your 2) 1 (Lift up your 1) 0 (put your 1 and 2 down

Repeat in Playing Position: (pizz. with right hand thumb against the fingerboard, index finger on D string)

Repeat with the Bow: Review Bow Hold, Modified Playing Position, Bow to String, Left hand Playing Position

Repeat on another string

Instrument care (Loosen bow, rosin bow, keep in safe place—never leave in car or in front of heater or air conditioner)

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Student Name: | | | | | | |
|  | Monday | Tuesday | Wednesday | Thursday | Friday | Saturday |
| Playing Position |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Left-Hand Pos. |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Sing and Pizz. |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Bow hold: curve pinky and thumb, second knuckles over stick |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Bow to String- Open Strings |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Sing and Finger |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Hot Cross Buns in Guitar Position |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Hot Cross Buns Pizz. in Playing Position |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Hot Cross Buns with Bow on D |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Hot Cross Buns with Bow on another string |  |  |  |  |  |  |

1. What did you enjoy?

2. Was anything challenging for you? If so, describe it here.

3. If you have any questions for me, write them here:

4. If this seemed easy and you want an additional challenge, figure out how to play Mary had a Little Lamb using the same three pitches as Hot Cross Buns. (Hint, the first three notes are the same).

