

Practice Habits & Organization

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Practice habits

- Music is 5% talent and 95% hard work. Most instrument work is mechanical / physiological: requiring us to repeat, repeat to make muscle memory, even singing! So practice and TRUST the process. Trust that your body will do what it's good at: repeating and improving. After all, that's how we're wired!
- Practice 5 times/wk for 20-30 – that's the minimum you need to make progress.
- Singing “grunt work” is memorizing lyrics, mapping breaths, learning rhythm & entrances if you're using karaoke tracks.
- Instrument grunt work is tuning, chords, melody and other technical work.
- Repertoire grunt work means sometimes drilling down to the smallest problematic unit of music and repeating it 3-5 times. You have to play the harder parts of a song more than the easy parts to get it right. Makes sense, doesn't it?

Organization

Keep your songbook and materials organized. This is a good habit to build from the beginning. Get a one-inch binder (soon you'll need a 3” binder!) and split your songbook into:

1. current material (what you're working on right now),
2. archived (material you've tried and have put aside for now),
3. wish list (songs you'd like to work on when you have a chance),
4. seasonal (eg, Christmas), and
5. standards (Happy Birthday, O Canada, Auld Lang Syne, For He's a Jolly Good Fellow, Amazing Grace etc – popular requested songs you'll need to pull out of the hat at any time) .
6. Vocal coaching notes – my weekly teaching summary; print & stick in there for easy review.
7. Keep a chord / scales chart in the front pocket for easy reference.

Why is it important to be organized?

- An organized book saves you in a pinch when you haven't had enough rehearsal time,
- Makes it easy to share music in a key that suits you with your fellow musicians.
- Helps you keep track of your total possible set length easily, so you can plan your performances.
- Makes it easier to track your progress.