

Efficient & Productive Practice

The Index Card

Method

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What is better than a productive and efficient practice session? Nothing is more satisfying than entering a practice session with a plan, and leaving the session knowing that I improved. I have a very easy method for you to try using a pack of index cards to level up your next practice session. The goal is to limit distractions and to play with a plan.

I am someone who thrives off of a plan. I love routines. While that may sound limiting and even boring, I promise that there are inherent freedoms that come with routine. Not having to decide what I am going to do with each precious minute of my practice session allows me avoid decision fatigue. I feel less anxious and more prepared with a plan in place. I feel the ability to be more creative within the framework that I have set up for myself rather than feeling the burden of infinite choice. When one has the ability to practice *anything*, one could just as easily practice *nothing*. It's simple: do what the index card says.

Warm Up / Routine

Write out your warm up on the card. Be sure to indicate specific exercises (include page numbers of your favorite books) so that you don't waste your time searching for material to play.

Create a few of these detailed warm up cards. You might even create a different one for each day of the week or time of day. You could also create cards that focus on certain skills like flexibility or articulation. When it's time to warm up, then put your card on your stand and do what it says.

Solos & Etudes

The application for this format is to divide your solo or etude into practice sessions. Write the measure numbers of the section on the card, and then jot down a few bullet points to remember when practicing that section. You could also keep track of tempo markings if you need to reduce the speed and gradually

build it back up. This could also be an effective tool if you are trying to memorize a piece. You could mix up your cards and then recall the sections from memory.

Drills

Write scales or arpeggios to perform at random— pull a card and play. You could then make piles of “nailed it” and “needs work.” Rather than performing drills at random, you could also plan certain scales/arpeggios/drills throughout your week in order to make sure that you cover everything that you need to.

Practice Affirmations

Do you need an encouraging message before you perform? Do you need a reminder of what you already know to be true? Put it on the card and scatter some encouragement throughout your practice. Some favorites of mine include:

1. Song and Wind
2. Breathe!
3. Get rid of your ego.
4. Play with ease.
5. Do the necessary work.

Benefits

The benefits of this practicing method are numerous.

1. It's portable. Put the cards in your case or backpack.
2. It's customizable. Let your deck change as you grow.
3. You can pre-plan everything and know exactly what to do without overthinking.
4. You can use certain cards at random in order to test yourself and your abilities.
5. It can aid in pairing down distractions. Do what is on the card. Then move on to something else. The key is to give your undivided attention to the task at hand.
6. Most importantly, it promotes an efficient and productive practice method!