

## **5 WAYS TO GET THE MOST OUT OF MUSIC LESSONS**

These guidelines will help you to have a successful, rewarding experience learning an instrument. These are practical tips that we have discovered from years of teaching and our experiences with teaching hundreds of students throughout the years.

### **I. How Young Is Too Young? - Starting At The Right Age**

Adults can start an instrument at any time. Their success is based on how willing they are as an adult to commit to practicing. We teach many beginner adult students.

For children, starting at the right age is a key element to the success of their lessons. Some people will tell you “the sooner the better,” but this attitude can actually backfire and turn negative. If a child is put into lessons too soon, they may feel overwhelmed, frustrated, and want to stop lessons. The last thing you want to do is turn a child off music just because they had one unpleasant experience, which could have been prevented. Sometimes if the child waits a year to start lessons, their progress can be much faster. Children who are older than the suggested earliest starting age usually do very well. The following are guidelines we have found to be successful in determining how young a child can start taking music lessons.

#### **Birth Through Seven Years Old**

If a preschooler has a keen desire and wants to start music, a group preschool music class will give them a good foundation in music basics which will be helpful in private lessons. At this age, private lessons generally do not work as the child has not yet experienced the formal learning environment of kindergarten or school and learns more effectively through the game oriented preschool environment. For children who fall in to this category, we recommend **Kindermusik®**, as it offers the above learning environment for children ages birth through 7 years old.

#### **Kindermusik®**

*Kindermusik®* is music education and joyful learning for your whole family. In an enriched environment and through specially developed activities and materials used in class and at home, *Kindermusik®* contributes significantly to your child’s musical, physical, social, emotional and cognitive development while aiding language development and nurturing the ability to listen attentively. Through *Kindermusik®*, the stage is set for early symbolic thinking, which leads to literacy and writing readiness. *Kindermusik®* in the early years can make a profound difference for your child!

## **Private Music Lessons**

We recommend that the child be 7 years old before starting private music lessons. At this age, a child has begun to develop a longer attention span and can retain material with ease. At Stevens Music Studio, we offer lessons on a variety of instruments, (check out our website at [www.stevensmusicstudio.com](http://www.stevensmusicstudio.com) for a current listing of instruments offered). If you are unsure if your child is ready for a specific instrument, we will be glad to meet with you personally to help you decide or to help determine if an instrument is size appropriate.

### **II. Insist On Private Lessons When Learning A Specific Instrument**

Group classes work well for preschool music programs. However, when actually learning how to play an instrument, private lessons are far superior as each student can learn at their own pace. This means the teacher does not have to teach a class at “a middle of the road” level, but has the time and focus to work on the individual student’s strengths and weaknesses. For that lesson period, the student is the primary focus of the teacher. The teacher also enjoys this as they do not have to divide their attention between five or ten students at a time, and can help the student be the best they can be.

### **III. Take Lessons In A Professional Teaching Environment**

Learning music is not just a matter of having a qualified teacher, but also having an environment that is focused on music education, free from distractions. With only thirty minutes to one hour of lesson time per week, a professional school environment can produce better results since the only focus at that time is learning music. Students in a school environment are also motivated by hearing peers who are at different levels and by being exposed to a variety of musical instruments. In a music school, the lessons are not just a hobby or sideline for the teacher, but a responsibility taken very seriously.

### **IV. Make Practicing Easier**

As with anything, improving in music takes practice. One of the main problems with music lessons is the drudgery of practicing and the fight between parents and students to practice every day. Here are some ways to make practicing easier:

#### **Time**

Set the same time every day to practice so it becomes part of a routine or habit. This works particularly well for children. Generally the earlier in the day the practicing can occur, the less reminding is required by parents to get the child to practice.

#### **Repetition**

We use this method quite often when setting practice schedules for beginners. For a young child 20 or 30 minutes seems like an eternity. Instead of setting a time frame, we

use repetition. For example, practice this piece 4 times every day, and this scale 5 times a day. The child then does not pay attention to the amount of time they are practicing their instrument, but knows if they are on repetition number 3 they are almost finished.

### **Rewards**

This works very well for both children and adult students. Some adults reward themselves with a cappuccino after a successful week of practicing. Parents can encourage children to practice by granting them occasional rewards for successful practicing. In our school we reward young children for a successful week of practicing with stars and stickers on their work. Praise tends to be the most coveted award - there just is no substitute for a pat on the back for a job well done. Sometimes we all have a week with little practicing, in that case there is always next week.

### **V. USE RECOGNIZED TEACHING MATERIALS**

There are some excellent materials developed by professional music educators that are made for students in a variety of situations. These materials have been researched and are continually upgraded and improved to make learning easier. These materials ensure that no important part of learning the instrument can inadvertently be left out. If you ever have to move to a different part of the country, qualified teachers and institutions will recognize the materials and be able to smoothly continue from where the previous teacher left off.

**Most Importantly . . .**

**HAVE FUN!!**

Music should be something that you enjoy for a lifetime. So, try not to put unrealistic expectations on yourself or your children to learn too quickly. Everyone learns at a different pace and the key is to be able to enjoy the journey.