

STARTING AN INSTRUMENT AT SECONDARY SCHOOL

SUPPORTING YOUR CHILD

Learning to play an instrument is a complex process that takes time and patience and involves a number of different elements.

- Learning the **physical techniques** required to play fluently and with a good sound.
- Learning to **listen** well
- **Reading** music
- **Understanding and interpreting** music

What you will need to provide

Your child will need an instrument, which you can hire or buy from local music shops. The teacher will advise you about this and also let you know which music books you need to buy.

Practising is the key to progress

The **Effective Practice** guidelines for secondary students, which you can download from the RMT website, are designed to help you and your child understand the process and maximise the effectiveness of practice sessions.

- **Practising regularly, at least 5 days a week**, is the way to make the best progress. A single, longer practice once a week on the day before the lesson doesn't allow learning to be consolidated.
- **Learning happens in stages**. Sometimes a student will work on something for a long time with no apparent improvement and then discover a sudden leap in ability. Other times, learning happens very quickly. If your child is going through a stage where she feels she isn't making progress, please reassure her that this is normal. The important thing to stress is that consistent practice will yield results.
- **Practising without being disturbed or distracted** is very important. Make sure your child has a place at home where he can do this comfortably.
- **Allow your child to take responsibility for practice times**. Insisting on a strict routine, with practices at the same time each day, may cause conflict with homework deadlines and other activities and is likely to result in poor-quality practice.
- Giving your child **space and time to work independently** is the best way to support progress. Let your child determine if and when he would like to play to you.
- **Don't make judgments** about the musical quality of your child's playing. Learning an instrument involves lots of squeaks, scrapes and wrong notes!
- If you have **concerns about your child's progress** and you would like to speak to the teacher, please call the RMT office and we will arrange this.

There's no such thing as 'practice makes perfect'. If you think you're perfect, you're fooling yourself. Practice makes better.

A note about exams

As children progress, RMT teachers may enter them for ABRSM, Trinity or Rockschoool exams. Children develop at different rates and in different ways, which will affect when and whether and a child is ready to take an exam and which Board would be the most appropriate. Your child's teacher will advise you on this.

Exams provide a useful framework for tuition but it is important that children's experience of music goes beyond the exam syllabus.