

# Practice Tips

Relaxation makes learning easier, recall better and increases your mental capacity. When we are uptight and nervous, ideas and information won't flow into our brains very well.... too much static energy is in the way! When relaxed - the ideas will pour in!

- **PICK YOUR BEST TIME FOR LEARNING:** I'm sure you've noticed people still yawning at 11:00 am, or you see people who are wide awake at 2 in the morning. What is your biological cycle? This is an inner clock we all have - and it's different for everyone. Most of us have times when our mind is alert and functions best. **If you follow your own "optimum" time, make a habit of doing your most important work then.** This way you can utilize your peak cycles to your advantage.
- **TWENTY MINUTE PEAK TIME:** - Practice for 20 minutes at a time, then do something else - come back to practicing. **Utilize your peak concentration times and maximize your energy and power!** Your mind will remember more of what you practiced . If you end up practicing for two hours, you will remember less because of concentration. There are exceptions to every rule..... if you're on a roll - go with it! It's best to practice either 10 or 20 minutes every day than 1 ½ hours a week in one sitting. Your body and brain retain more of what you're working on. Even 20 minute practices, three times a day works wonders.
- **WELL BALANCED PRACTICING:** This should include reading music and exploring improvisational patterns. If you only are "paper trained" and read music, spend a little more time on exploring improvisation. If you have only played by ear, take up the challenge and learn to read notes! **Well balanced musicians use both sides of their brain.** Playing in both styles will reward students with well sought after versatile skills.
- **VISUALIZE AS YOU PRACTICE:** Create **mental pictures of the sounds.** This will help plug in scenes that will connect you to the piece. Does your song tell a story? Help your audience "see" your music as well as hear and feel it.
- **TAKE MUSIC PRACTICE INTO YOUR DREAMS:** If you are "working" on finger

*It is better to do less well, than more badly  
harp student, Jean Finn*

patterns, putting 2 hands together, a new song, a difficult passage, etc. Take this request with you into your dreams and see how your **dreams will show you a solution.**

- **DANCE YOUR PRACTICE:** Dance the piece you are working on. This will help you **connect with your music on a physical level.** Feel each musical leap - dance it, visualize! Like Walt Disney's hippos in "Fantasia" - put a pink tutu on. Dance will open you up to the rhythm and ultimately help you play better.
- **SING YOUR MELODIES WHILE DRIVING:** Go over difficult passages while driving. **Transfer the song from your fingers to your voice.** Practice singing your melodies while you're driving (by yourself....!) Haven't you ever noticed people at the red light in the car behind you - singing away - are they practicing, too? Practice singing your song in your mind while you're going to sleep, waiting in line...
- **PRACTICE AWAY FROM YOUR INSTRUMENT:** Close your eyes and visually "see" your fingers placed on the strings. "See" your fingers play the patterns. You can visualize how you are sitting at the harp, what your wearing, notice how relaxed you are. Try to **"mentally" play your harp.** When you finally sit at your harp, your body will feel like you have already practiced. Now it's just time for it to manifest.  
*This is how injured Olympic skiers still stay in the most important race of their life! They go through the "moves" in their head. They choose goals for themselves of how fast they will ski and what time they will finish at. It is amazing and inspiring!*
- **RECORD YOUR PRACTICE:** You will be pleasantly surprised when you rewind and hear yourself on tape! You can pinpoint things like when your timing is off, or finger buzzing against the strings, how connected the song feels, listen to how the finger flows - is it clumsy or right on? **You will be so encouraged to hear how much you are improving!**
- **TITLE YOUR IMPROVISATIONAL PRACTICING:** This will help you **connect with pictures in your mind, & sounds that you want to imitate!** This will give you a spring board on which to start your musical piece from and to help you proceed. Play out a whole story. In your mind see the beginning, middle and the end. Feel the breeze blowing and play that sound on your harp!

*Determine that the thing can and shall be done and then find the way*  
Abraham Lincoln