

Private Lessons for Your Child:

Tips for parents on reaping the full benefits of music lessons

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Before launching into my ideas about this, you the parent should realize that you are doing a good thing for your child. In any school, a child is always part of the class and regardless of class size, the student isn't always receiving personalized attention. Regular private lessons with a qualified, enthusiastic, and experienced teacher can have positive rippling effects throughout a person's entire life. That being said, below are some tips to help make sure you're getting more than just expensive babysitting.

- ü Practicing must be a part of the student's every day life A good maxim to live by is that one should "Only practice on the days that they eat." Even though it may seem so to them, practicing everyday is not a punishment but a joy. It is, however, a form of discipline that needs time to develop.
- ü Practicing is not the same as playing. Although anytime someone plays anything on their instrument, it makes them that much more familiar and comfortable with it, having a game plan for part of their playing time (i.e. 'practicing') will ensure progress and positive experiences in lessons.
- ü Make sure that lessons are treated as a special event. Let the student know that lessons are a privilege and that they are learning from people with years of professional experience. Rescheduling should be kept to a minimum and it is common professional courtesy to give a full day's notice for cancellations.
- ü Talk to the teacher regularly. Get an idea of how the lessons are going from another perspective besides the student's
- ü Talk to your child about what they're doing in their lessons. Occasionally sitting in on lessons with them is ideal to get an idea of what they're doing. Because this isn't always possible, discussing the lesson intermittently during the week and even having them teach you what they've learned is a great way to engage their mind in what they're learning.
- ü Once you know that the student has to get new materials, don't delay. I generally don't assign new things frivolously, and although new method books etc. might seem pricey sometimes, compare the cost/benefit ratio to that of a new DVD.
- ü Listen to music and find live performances to go to often. It doesn't always have to be the music that they're interested in at the moment, but it should ideally feature the instrument they're studying. Also, seeing a real live performance has a powerful and lasting effect on young musicians.
- ü All musicians get better by playing with other people. Whether it's with a school ensemble or with a garage band, or even a favorite recording, it all helps make a real musician and gives the student something real to use their lessons for.
- ü Encourage patience in seeing results. Learning a musical instrument is not an activity that is often rewarded with instant gratification. If the first point is followed, progress will be assured, but not with the same pace that most kids master a new video game.
- ü If you as a parent value music in your daily life, so will your child. Musicians don't come out of a vacuum.