

***Keeping your musical practice enjoyable is your first step to a more happy, fulfilling, and successful musical life. Here are 12 games you can implement today to make your music practice more fun:***

### ✓ **Fire your metronome - hire a drum machine!**

Rather than just the straight tick-tick-tick of the traditional metronome, play with a **drumbeat** or some other fun backing track. Many metronome apps these days have a variety of sounds and beats you can use, or you can find a plethora of **backing tracks** on YouTube. Apps like iRealPro also include chord changes and a variety of styles.

### ✓ **Action Movie Trailer**

Think of how trailers for action movies expertly draw you in with **sudden shifts in dynamics and tempo**. Whatever passage you're working on, try to surprise yourself with sudden speeding up or slowing down, or by experimenting with loud and soft playing.

### ✓ **How slow can you go?**

Most of the time, we are trying to play faster and faster. Slow down your metronome or drum machine and see how much expression, thought, and musical meaning you can fit in between the beats. Even better - try to **alternate settings faster and slower** than your target tempo.

### ✓ **Turn your scales into... music!**

**Multitask your scale practice** by working in articulation, dynamics, swing rhythm, and other musical embellishments. Even just starting with playing scales descending rather than ascending can be a revelation!

### ✓ **Emotion bingo**

Write a series of positive and negative emotions on pieces of paper and pick one at random. Then whatever you're practicing **play with that emotion**. Then do an "emotional reset" and pick a new one. Be an actor! Preparing yourself to express through music, and build inner strength to keep you from letting your emotions get you down in practice or performance.

### ✓ **Make that mistake - on purpose!**

Ever had one of those persistent errors that you just can't seem to get over? Make that mistake *intentionally*. Oftentimes, that will **lighten your attitude** about the mistake, teach you why you're making it, and show you the way out.

## ✓ Change up the rhythm

Trying to wrap your fingers around a certain technicality in a scale, solo, or passage? Change up the rhythm! If it's straight even notes, play it in dotted rhythms, in triplets, or quintuplets. Shift the meter so the offbeats are on the beat and vice-versa. Place whole note "bombs" in the middle, where suddenly you land on a note and hold it. **You'll be surprised at your progress** when you go back to playing it "normal".

## ✓ Location, location, location

Stop staring at the same wall while you're practicing. Neurological research shows us that we associate learning with environment, so make it a goal for your learning to be applicable in *all* the places you may be. Even rearranging your practice room can make a world of difference! You can also stand up, sit down, move or walk to the music, **look at something different...**

## ✓ Mess with your memorization

When playing a piece by memory, force yourself to make something up if you forget a part. **Improvisation builds your musical memory** and connection to your instrument, so you will be upping the foundational skills needed more memorizing - as well as building confidence that you can make it through a performance even if you mess up.

## ✓ Play something stupid

Start from something random, strange, funny, or dissonant, and through expressive playing, improvisation, or musical "acting", **transform it into something beautiful.**

## ✓ Practice something different

*Really* different. Play a transcribed metal solo on your violin. Play a Bach aria on the guitar. Try a tutorial in Tuvan throat singing. **Cover the worst song** you've ever heard.

## ✓ Play it by ear

Are you totally reliant on the written page? Practice playing simple melodies by ear, or learn portions of your next classical piece **without looking at the notes** - just by listening to a recording. You can even try to learn that new solo by ear - there are lots of ways to slow down a piece to make it easier. (*Hint: YouTube's video toolbar lets you do this with just a click*).