

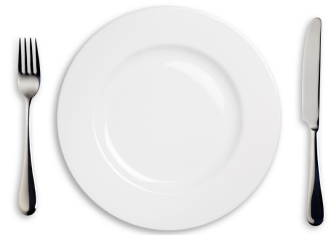
The Practice Menu

A suggested structure for your violin practice

STARTERS: TECHNICAL PRACTICE

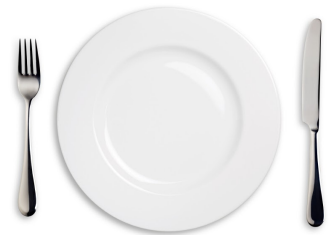
Warm-Ups, Building & Maintenance

Warming up, maintenance, and development of technical skills, including posture, scales, studies, and technical exercises.



MAINS: REPERTOIRE PRACTICE

Practising the music itself. Working on technical and musical issues in the context of pieces of music. Realising your imagination of what the music should sound like.



DRINKS: PERFORMANCE PRACTICE

Building up performance experience by playing pieces from beginning to end under concert conditions, as if you were on-stage.



DESSERT: CREATIVE PRACTICE

Improvisation, composition, playing by ear, sight-reading, and any other creative activities that you enjoy, that will help develop your musicianship.



The Practice Menu

What should a session of violin practice actually look like? What should you be spending your time on? How do you divide up your time, to make sure that you get through everything you need to do in the time you have available?

When choosing what to do in your violin practice, think about how you might go about planning a meal. Each part of a meal has a different purpose, and contributes to how good the meal is overall. Each part functions in a different way, and is structured differently too.

The 'main course' is usually the most substantial part of a meal. It's what grabs your attention the most. And it's what takes the majority of time to prepare.

Practising your **repertoire** (the music you are learning) is likely to take up the majority of your practice time. You'll want to resolve technical and musical issues to make sure everything is correct; in time, in tune, and sounding good.

Then you can work on your interpretation, i.e. how you choose to shape the music in order to create a compelling and moving experience for your listeners.

Most of the time, you'll want to **warm up** and get your body prepared and ready to play. So it makes sense to start with some basic body movements, and do whatever is necessary to get your mind, body, violin and bow aligned and working together.

This leads naturally into **technical** practice. This involves **maintaining** the skills you already have (e.g. by practising scales and technical exercises), and **building up** new skills, until they are integrated into your violin technique.

The sequence of your practice should change according to what's most important to you on any given day. But very often, violinists will begin with warm ups and technical exercises, to centre the body and the mind. This will help you to focus yourself, and prepare mentally for an effective practice session.

Performance is a learnable skill, so we should leave time to develop it during our practice sessions. The more you practise performing, the easier it is to stand up in front of other people and play to them.

This is an entirely different skill to actually *playing* the violin. Your body and mind respond in a different way when you know lots of people are watching! So it's

important to allow adequate time in your regular violin practice sessions, to make sure that you are developing this ability through a process of testing and repeating what you can already do, under performance conditions.

Finally, you could eat a meal without a dessert, but it wouldn't be so enjoyable or fun! Also, we need some time just to mess around, experiment, and explore new ideas. This is important for developing our creative skills and musicianship.

That's why leaving time for **creative** activities is an essential part of good violin practice. This can include everything from making up your own tunes, to learning how to read music at sight, to joining in by ear and playing music without notation.

How much time should I spend on each task?

There's answer to this question depends entirely on what your priorities are at any given moment, and where you are in your violinistic and musical development.

That's why if you are a committed learner, it is a very good idea to get personalised feedback to help with questions like these, either from a teacher or by enrolling at a school (such as the 'Violin Course' programs we run at ViolinSchool).

However, for an early stage learner in the first few weeks of playing, it makes sense to focus on mastering the fundamental technical skills, and to begin practising your first pieces of music. A half-half split of your practise time between technical and repertoire practise is likely to be a sensible approach.

Once you have been playing for a few weeks, and can reliably play **in time, in tune** and with a **good sound**, then try introducing some performance practice and creative time into your regular practise sessions.

With the caveat that the exact time split will depend **entirely** on your priorities, and that for the best advice you should seek guidance from a qualified and experienced teacher, here is how an example practise session *could* look:

Type of Practice	% Time	30min Practice Session	60min Practice Session
Technical Practice	25%	7.5 min	15min
Repertoire Practice	50%	15 min	30min
Performance Practice	15%	4.5 min	9min
Creative Skills	10%	3 min	6min