

The 7-Day Practice Plan

Every musician practices. Not every musician gets better, and the difference is rarely talent or time.

For years I practiced six to eight hours a day, and I got worse. The hours weren't the problem. My attention was. Practice doesn't make perfect. It makes permanent: whatever you repeat, at the quality you repeat it, is what stays.

This plan gives you one week, a few focused minutes a day and a box to tick each night. It works on any instrument, at any level, from your first year to your hundredth gig.

1 Before day 1: choose one thing

Write down the piece or skill, the one thing you'll improve in it, and when and how long you'll practice. Small and specific beats big and vague.

Plan	Yours	A drummer's example
Skill		The groove of one song
Focus		An even tempo through the fills
When		Before work, phone in another room
How long		15 minutes a day

On another instrument? A violinist might choose one shift, a singer one phrase on one breath, a pianist one left-hand passage. The plan is the same.

2 Every day: four steps

Aim. Before you start, say your one thing out loud.

Attend. Go slowly enough to notice. When your mind drifts, stop, reset and start again. Coming back isn't failure. It's the rep.

Reach. Spend the last few minutes just past your level: a little faster, a little harder. Don't beat yourself up if you don't nail it. Move toward it.

Note. Write one line in the log: what got better, and what got in the way.

3 The week: tick each day you practice

- ☐ **Day 1. Start.** All four steps, once, all the way through.
- ☐ **Day 2. Slow down.** Slower than feels necessary. Notice what you missed yesterday.
- ☐ **Day 3. Find the spot.** Where does it break down? Practice only that.
- ☐ **Day 4. Hardest first.** Start with the hardest five minutes, while you're fresh.
- ☐ **Day 5. Listen in.** Record yourself, or ask someone to watch. Listen once, without judging.
- ☐ **Day 6. Reach further.** Go one step past where you reached on day 3.
- ☐ **Day 7. As if it counts.** Do it all the way through, once, as if it matters. It does.

4 The log

Day	What got better	What got in the way
1		
2		
3		
4		
5		
6		
7		

5 Look back

Compare day 7 with day 1. What changed? What will you keep practicing next week?

What this page can't do

It can show you how to practice. It can't watch you do it. Sometimes it takes an outside eye and ear to notice what you've stopped noticing. That's what a Discovery Session is for: in 60 minutes on Zoom, we find out where you are, what's holding you back and what will help most. Bring this page.

<https://www.jakedouglass.com/private-studio/discovery-session>

"Practice these things, immerse yourself in them, so that all may see your progress" (1 Timothy 4:15, ESV).

From Jake Douglass, founder of Practicing Musician.

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