

Suggestions for Preventing Injury in Musicians

1. Score study and auditory learning before practicing with instrument
2. Stretch, warm up, and work gradually into practice sessions. Practice with intention. Think about what you would like to accomplish prior to starting each practice session.
3. Avoid playing more than 20-25 minutes without a 5-minute break.
4. Avoid unnecessary muscle tightness when you play. Excessive shoulder elevation or neck twisting may lead to muscle spasm and reduce the fluidity of movement in adjacent muscles. Straps, posts, pegs, shoulder pads, and chin rests can reduce the burden of supporting the weight of instruments. Violinists and violists should adjust their supports so that the instrument can be held without *any* elevation of the left shoulder.
5. Begin to increase practice time weeks to months in advance of recitals or auditions.
6. Return to playing gradually if you have taken time off for any reason.
7. When rehearsing or performing with an ensemble, arrive in plenty of time to stretch and warm up prior to playing. Make sure to warm your muscles through an increase in heart rate via some aerobic activity.
8. Be attentive to posture with other activities such as phone and computer use. Slouching in a chair for hours daily will eventually take its toll in back and neck problems. Good posture will reduce the work of small forearm and hand muscles by enabling large shoulder and back muscles to support the combined weight of the arms and/or instrument.
9. If pain develops and is present during playing and other daily activities, seek medical care.
9. Take care of your general physical and mental health through exercise, meditation and nutrition.

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