

Note Taking

You and your child have committed to taking a weekly class, you owe it to yourself to have as much information as possible to be a productive at-home teacher during practice. Here are some tips on what to take down in your notes.

1. Specific phrasing/analogies

If your teacher says to play with a “squishy arm”, write that down and continue to call it that in home practices. If you find your child responds better to a different phrase or word, please tell your teacher!

2. Specific praise

It is so important to note your child’s accomplishments and to practice giving them compliments, as well as teaching the child how to accept compliments and give them to others.

A popular teaching tactic when a child is struggling is to acknowledge 1 thing they did well, no matter how small - “I love that you took your time to place your 3rd finger”, “you had a great curly pinky”. Then ask them to play it again “with” something. Example - “you played that with such a steady bow arm! I would like to hear it again with a straight left wrist.”

3. Assignments

Listen out for things like “next time I’d like to hear this” or “next week let’s have X polished”. You should also ask about the next weeks expectations if the lesson ends and you find there are no assignments written in your notes.

For young students, take note of the entire lesson structure and activities - this is the weeks practice plan. There may be specific assignments, but more often than not your teacher assumes you will practice what you observed in the lesson.

4. New technique - scales, exercises, posture

Take notes on finger spacings, posture adjustments, anything you might forget when the next day’s practice comes around. Feel free to clarify anything at the end of the lesson. Your comprehension of what your child is learning is crucial, *even if you don’t consider yourself a violinist.*

5. New terminology

As the home-teacher you will continue to say these terms so your child slowly remembers them and can eventually define the word(s) themselves.

The point of a music lesson is that you work with an expert, and you have a limited amount of time with that teacher. We do not want to use that up with parent coaching unless a viewing of a practice session has been specifically requested. Parents will learn to gauge when they are needed in the lesson, and will indeed have to practice sitting back and observing - jumping to give hints and reminders may help the child in the moment, but does little to help their overall education. Focus on your child, how they respond to instruction, what you can write down to emulate the teacher’s instruction at home.

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