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5 Ways to Get the Most Out of Music Lessons

These guidelines will help you to have a successful, rewarding experience learning an instrument. These are practical tips that we have discovered from years of teaching & our experiences with teaching hundreds of students each year.

1. HOW YOUNG IS TOO YOUNG - STARTING AT THE RIGHT AGE

Adults can start any instrument at any time. Their success is based on how willing an adult is to commit to practicing an instrument. We teach many beginner students in their 60's and 70's.

For children, starting at the right age is a key element to the success of their lessons. Some people will tell you "the sooner the better," but this attitude can actually backfire & be a negative. If a child is put into lessons too soon, they may feel overwhelmed & frustrated & want to stop lessons. The last thing you want to do is turn a child off from music just because they had one unpleasant experience which could have been prevented. Sometimes if the child waits a year to start lessons, their progress can be much faster. Children who are older than the suggested earliest starting age usually do very well.

The following are guidelines we have found to be successful in determining how young a child can start taking music lessons.

Piano/Keyboard

5 years old is the youngest age that New Mozart starts children in private piano lessons. At this age, they have begun to develop longer attention spans & can retain material with ease. We found through our experience that younger children do much better in a group, piano-readiness class such as our [Harmony Road program](#).

Guitar – Acoustic, Electric and Bass

At New Mozart, 7 years old is the earliest New Mozart recommends for guitar lessons. Guitar playing requires a fair amount of pressure on the fingertips from pressing on the strings. Children under 8 generally have small hands & may find playing uncomfortable. Bass guitar students generally are 10 years old and older.

Voice Lessons

10 years old is recommended as the youngest age for private vocal lessons. Due to the physical nature of voice lessons (proper breathing techniques, development of the vocal chords & lung capacity), the younger body is generally not yet ready for the rigors of vocal techniques. For children younger than 10, we recommend our [Harmony Road program](#) which incorporates a lot of singing in the curriculum & teaches them how to sing in addition

to piano, in a fun, relaxed environment or our [Kids Sing Along](#), developed especially for children interested in studying voice but are too young for formal lessons.

Flute, Clarinet & Saxophone

Due to lung capacity (and in the case of the saxophone the size of the instrument), New Mozart recommends that most woodwind beginners are 8 years of age & older.

Violin & Viola

We accept violin students from the age of 4. For the very young children, we use the Suzuki method so that they learn the instrument the way that they learn how to speak. For older children, teens, and adults, we use various traditional methods.

Trumpet

The trumpet requires physical exertion & lung power. 9 years and older is a good time to start learning the instrument.

2. INSIST ON PRIVATE LESSONS WHEN LEARNING A SPECIFIC INSTRUMENT

A well organized & structured music program with the elements of early childhood music theories work well for young children (2-8 years old). However, when actually learning how to play an instrument, private lessons are far superior since in private lessons it is hard to miss anything & each student can learn at their own pace. This means the teacher does not have to teach a class at a middle-of-the-road level & has the time & focus to work on the individual student's strengths and weaknesses. For that lesson period, the student is the primary focus of the teacher. The teachers also enjoy this as they do not have to divide their attention between 5-10 students at a time & can assist the student to be the best they can be.

3. TAKE LESSONS IN A PROFESSIONAL TEACHING ENVIRONMENT

Learning music is not just a matter of having a qualified teacher, but also having an environment that is focused on music education. In a professional school environment, a student cannot be distracted by television, pets, ringing phones, siblings or anything else. With only 1/2 to one hour of lesson time per week, a professional school environment can produce better results since the only focus at that time is learning music. Students in a school environment are also motivated by hearing peers who are at different levels & have the opportunity to be exposed to a variety of musical instruments. In a music school, the lessons are not just a hobby or sideline for the teacher, but a responsibility which is taken very seriously.

4. MAKE PRACTICING EASIER

As with anything, improving in music takes practice. One of the main problems with music lessons is the drudgery of practicing & the fight between parents & students to practice every day. Here are some ways to make practicing easier:



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Time

Set the same time every day to practice so it becomes part of a routine or habit. This works particularly well for children. Generally, the earlier in the day the practicing can occur, the less reminding is required by parents to get the child to practice.

Repetition

We use this method quite often when setting practice schedules for beginners. For a young child, 20 or 30 minutes seems like an eternity. Instead of setting a time frame, New Mozart uses repetition. For example, practice this piece 4 times every day & this scale 5 times a day. The child then does not pay attention to the amount of time they are practicing their instrument, but knows if they are on repetition number 3 that they are almost finished.

Rewards

This works very well for both children & adult students. Some adults reward themselves with a cappuccino after a successful week of practicing. Parents can encourage children to practice by granting them occasional rewards for successful practicing. At New Mozart, we reward young children for a successful week of practicing with stars & stickers on their work. Praise tends to be the most coveted award - there just is no substitute for a pat on the back for a job well done. Sometimes we all have a week with little practicing. In that case, there is always next week.

For more ways to help you or your child practice, you can [read this helpful article](#) on practicing on New Mozart Blog.

5. USE RECOGNIZED TEACHING MATERIALS

There are some excellent materials developed by professional music educators that are made for students in a variety of situations. For example, in piano, there are books for very young beginners & books for adult students that have never played before. There are books that can start you at a level you are comfortable with. These materials have been researched & are continually upgraded & improved to make learning easier. These materials ensure that no important part of learning the instrument can inadvertently be left out. If you ever have to move to a different part of the country, qualified teachers & institutions will recognize the materials & be able to smoothly continue from where the previous teacher left off.

MOST IMPORTANTLY ...

HAVE FUN!!

Music should be something that you enjoy for a lifetime. So, try not to put unrealistic expectations on yourself or your children to learn too quickly. Everyone learns at a different pace & the key is to be able to enjoy the journey.



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