

# Pro Playing Habits Comparison Checklist

This is a short list that compares the habits of “pros and amateurs.” For purposes of this discussion, a “pro” is a person who has a creative, comprehensive and mindful long-term relationship with the violin. An “amateur” is a person who tends to approach their violin practice on an “ad-hoc” basis without regard for any goals beyond the most immediate. This comparison makes no reference to “making a living” as a musician.

**- As a teacher, I encourage all of my students to treat their violin journey as a professional endeavor.** This, regardless of age or any intent to earn living as a musician. In this sense, professionalism serves as a metaphor for living a fully actualized personal and/or professional life.

- 1 Light Touch** in both hands. Pros cradles the bow with no more effort than if holding an egg without cracking the shell. Their violin hand brushes against the neck with a similar lack of tension in all fingers and thumb. Amateurs often approach the instrument with far too much effort and squeezing.
- 2 Looks Professional** Even a beginner or intermediate player should share the same relaxed body posture and effortless movements of a seasoned pro. You’d have trouble picking the beginner from the pro if they were playing side by side on a video with the sound off.

(cont.)

- 3 Emphasizes Motions and Skills** Playing is all about moving. Pros grow their musicality by growing their physical skills. Amateurs often get bound up into knots with their noses in a music stand while their physical skills languish.
- 4 Uses a Routine** Pros develop a multi-faceted, comprehensive practice routine that provides tools to meet any type of musical challenge. Amateurs build their practice around a single narrow target, such as a favorite song.
- 5 Practice Strategies** Pros use a creative toolbox of micro and macro practice strategies to unravel complex musical problems. Amateurs tend to follow only a single strategy (most commonly, repetition) until boredom sets in.
- 6 Realistic Time Horizons** Both pros and amateurs enjoy setting challenging goals however pros become verse at allowing sufficient time to confidently achieve those goals while amateurs often become frustrated when they can't achieve their unreasonable expectations.
- 7 Working Artists** Pros continually perform and create in public as they refine their art and grow their confidence. Amateurs persevere endlessly over unimportant details and rarely if ever complete a project.