

Practice Strategies “Cheatsheet”

HOW TO USE THIS STRATEGY CHEAT SHEET:

You can use these ideas in any way that seems to fit your working style, however many students have found the following guideline to be helpful.

1. Get **super clear** about a problem or musical passage that you'd like to change. Is something different needed in the bow hand or violin hand? Is it pitch? Tone quality? Rhythm? Musical Interpretation?
2. Pin down the problem or area to a specific note or very small group of notes. Something small enough so that could be noticeably improved within 5 minutes.
3. Choose a strategy from the 3 large groups: Simplify, Rethink or Transform. If in doubt, start with Simplify.
4. Apply one or two of the strategies to your practice over the next 5 minutes.
5. Go back to the problem or passage in its original form. Have you achieved the change?
 1. If yes, consolidate it over the next 5 repetitions, over the next 5 days.
 2. If no, go back to steps 1 and 2, to clarify the problem and/or the number of notes involved.

As always, begin your practice session with some relaxed scales or open string playing to put your mind in a calm, focussed state. Feeling rushed, bored or otherwise preoccupied is a signal that you are not yet ready for quality work in the practice room. Don't practice at all unless you feel ready to explore and experience a new discovery.

(cheat sheet is continued on reverse)

SIMPLIFY

1. **TAKE AWAY** violin hand - open strings only
2. **TAKE AWAY** bow - no bow, or pluck your notes or just reduce the amount of bow
3. **CHERRY PICK** - Selectively leave out hard notes, shifts or other difficulties
4. **EASY PEASY** - Use an easier fingering, note, bowing or rhythm
5. **SPLIT DOUBLE STOPS** - play only one note and reassemble
6. **TAKE AWAY RHYTHM** - Everything in quarter notes or half notes, separate bows
7. **TAKE AWAY ARTICULATION** - Everything in quarter notes, slurred
8. **EXTEND TIME** - Difficult or Fast Passages: play each note 4, 3 or 2 times, in separate bows

RETHINK

1. **STOP AND GO** - Regroup notes in Tempo (ex. 4 notes + 1 extra note)
 1. Overlap 1 note and continue
2. **ADD ON** - Start with one note of the passage, restart and play 2, 3 etc
 1. Be sure all your new pearls are shiny
 2. Begin add on notes before your “trouble spot” and transition into that spot.
3. **TWINKLE IT** - Map the pitches to a Suzuki Twinkle Rhythm or other figure
4. **CRAZY TWINKLE IT** - as above but change your rhythm map on the fly as needed
5. **REGROUP IT** - Passages: Group it into 2s, 3s, 4s, etc. and play as groups
6. **CHANGE THE VIEW** - Lower your violin or rotate it for a different perspective. You can also use a mirror or video recorder for this strategy.
7. **CHANGE THE VIEW #2** - Start/Stop/Overlap from different places in the music
8. **CHANGE THE VIEW #3** - Exaggerate string changes or other movements

TRANSFORM

1. **MIX IT UP** - Play it staccato in smooth or slurred passages and vice versa
2. **BUMPS** - Add unexpected accents that follow a regular pattern
3. **BACK IT UP** - Play it in reverse
4. **TO AND FRO** - Forward/reverse, expand/contract range, forward/reverse
5. **SUPER SLO-MO** - Play it super slow/fast/whatever
6. **JAZZ IT UP** - Play it in a syncopated rhythm
7. **MIX IT UP** - Randomly change the order of the notes

ZOOM IN

X-RAY 1 - Pause the music, take a close look at your bow position!

X-RAY 2 - Pause the music, how will your hands find what's next?

X-RAY 3 - Keep making the action simpler until you find the answer!