

How do you get your kid to practise?

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Image: A dedicated space, some reverse psychology, and a few bribes can help children establish a regular practice routine.

It's that time of the year: The shiny new instrument has been shown off at home; everyone in the family has heard a command performance of *Three Blind Mice*. But now comes the hard part. You need to persuade your beginner musician to get into the habit of regular practice. So what do you do?

That's just the question I got from Dan in Katoomba, NSW. His five year-old daughter Flora is learning the violin and has started to get bored.

Luckily music education expert Dr Anita Collins — you'll remember her from the ABC's *Don't Stop the Music* — has a few tips:

1. **Five minutes of practice, no more!**
Tell your child that they have 5 minutes MAXIMUM a day to practise. See how this changes the psychology of their practice routine. Suddenly they'll want to practise more — but don't let them!
2. **Establish a routine**
Get used to a particular time of day being practice time, whether it be before dinner or before shower and bed time. Stick to it religiously.
3. **A practice space**
Make sure your child has a space to practise. It doesn't have to be a room — it can just be a corner. A good tip is to have a little rug that defines the space. It should become the special space that is reserved for this part of your child's life.
4. **Bribery**
Well who hasn't tried this with their kids? It really works with practising a musical instrument. The bribe can be something simple and basic. Stickers work really well!