

How to motivate your child to practice the piano?

It's Saturday afternoon: time for piano practice. You've reminded your child twice already since lunchtime. Yet instead of keys being played, all you've heard so far is "In a minute!"

It's now well past three o'clock, and the piano still hasn't been touched. You sense that this will end with the usual argument.

"I don't want to practice!"

"The piece is boring."

"Why do I have to learn how to play the piano, anyway?"

You point out, yet again, that piano is great for both mathematical skills and language learning. Of course, your child isn't convinced. It's in these moments that you wonder whether your kid really will be grateful for the opportunity they had to learn an instrument during their childhood.

Many parents struggle to encourage kids of the "smartphone generation" to sit at the piano and practice. A piano, after all, doesn't have glowing buttons, bright colours, or cool features. For most kids, all it has to offer are some sheets of music and the instrument itself. Chances are that your child simply can't fathom that playing the piano could be fun, let alone feel inspired to practice efficiently!

Unfortunately, there is no foolproof formula that'll get kids excited about practicing piano. But there are a number of strategies you can try out that will make a difference.

Practice time and expectations

In the early stages, it's important to keep practice sessions quite short. Children will be much happier to work through two sessions of 10 to 15 minutes of practice each day, rather than one long session in the evening. It also helps to make practice a part of their routine during the week. Saving practice for the weekend won't help much, as your child will lose the opportunity to reinforce new skills each day. Daily repetition of hand movements, patterns and exercises is a vital part of practice for even the most accomplished pianists!

You'll probably witness yourself how long gaps between practice sessions will cause your child's skills to fade, slowing their progress as a result. Avoid this by encouraging them to practice a little bit everyday. Point out that their only other option is doing one long, difficult hour on a Saturday afternoon and they'll definitely be on board with keeping a daily routine!

As a parent, it's difficult not to beam with pride when your child learns something new. Children love to hear that you're proud of them too! But you've got to be careful that they don't start feeling the pressure to perform and meet your expectations.

At the beginning, most pieces your child learns won't sound that nice as they practice them. But that's totally fine! After all, you can't expect them to pick up pieces by Chopin and Beethoven after a few weeks of lessons. Learning piano is a process that requires time. Try to be patient, and help your child to stay patient too.

Give your child the freedom to learn at their own pace, and encourage them when they achieve new milestones, even if they're just taking baby steps! Every child learns differently, and learns to love different aspects of piano-playing. This is something we should celebrate.

Use small treats

Developing a routine of practicing takes time but is also very important. To get into the habit of practicing regularly, little treats can be helpful in the beginning. These treats can be almost anything, depending on what works for your child. I recommend negotiating with your son or daughter about the kind of treats they would like and what you approve of, such as extra minutes to spend at the PC, extra mobile phone credits, or staying up a bit longer on the weekend when your child practices regularly.



A very popular way of motivating and reaching goals is collecting “points.” These points can be almost anything, but stickers are the easiest way to track them. There are stickers in all kinds of shapes and colours, so have your child choose some he/she likes. And whenever your child practices, he/she gets to put a sticker either on a special chart you set up for this purpose, or maybe just a calendar or a little booklet.

It’s really important that you and your child decide on a specific treat for a certain amount of stickers. That saves you some discussion afterwards.

Collecting points (or stickers) provides additional motivation and is an objective your child can reach faster than mastering a whole piano piece. This works especially well for younger students. The younger your child is, the more important it is to have a small goals they can reach in a relatively short amount of time...

Find your set of “little helpers”

When you start to learn how to play an instrument, motivation usually is at its highest. Everything is new and exciting. Especially at the piano, it is possible to play a nice little tune quickly. The challenge is to actually keep this motivation over a long period of time.

When making progress, the pieces become harder, and you need to work more for your progress. Many people struggle with that and stop playing. There isn’t one single magic trick to overcome this challenge and not give up. As with most things in life, it’s a combination of several factors that lead to success.

I hope I have given you some inspirations to find the “little helpers” that will keep your child motivated. And hopefully, all the “I don’t want to practice” discussions during the weekend will be a thing of the past. :)