



Hegarty Piano Studio
Incentive Points Program Guidelines
Summary

Guideline #1 ~ "The Way a Student Practices": Each participating student must show work on each specific Assignment Goal each week for at least three weeks of each month. In other words, if you put off your Theory, or if you don't focus on curving your fingers while practicing your Technique Exercises, or if you don't work on assigned sections when you practice your songs, and I reassign the same Assignment Goal more than once a month, then you have not met this Guideline.

Guideline #1 ~ "Warning Penalty": The student will not receive any Assignment Goal points for one month.

Guideline #2 ~ "When a Student Practices": Each participating student must practice their Weekly Assignments for "Warm-up Time" and "Work Time" at least four times each week, for at least eleven weeks of a Quarter. In other words, you must practice (play at least 7 times, while focusing on improving something specific) your "current song(s) in progress" (or a "trouble spot" in the song), at least four times each week.

Guideline #2 ~ "Warning Penalty": The student will not receive any Practice Points for one month.

Guideline #3 ~ "What a Student Practices": Each participating student must maintain, at all times, a "Performance Repertoire" of at least three pieces that are finished and "ready to perform".

Guideline #3 ~ "Warning Penalty": If a participating student is not able to play any of the three pieces in their Performance Repertoire when asked by the Teacher, **Incentive Points will be subtracted from the student's "Running Points Total"** according to the Incentive Points Program Activity List.

Guideline #4 ~ "General Program Guideline": Each participating student must not lose points for any of the Incentive Points Program Guidelines for two months in a row, and not for more than 2 out of every 6 months.

Guideline #4 ~ "Probation Penalty": The student will be placed on Incentive Points Program Probation for 3 months and will lose one-half of their "Running Points Total". The student will continue to earn points, but cannot cash in points and will not receive any Gift Cards that may be earned during this Probation time.



Guideline #1 ~ "The Way a Student Practices"

“Each participating student must show work on each specific Assignment Goal each week for at least three weeks of each month.” In other words, if you put off your Theory, or if you don't focus on curving your fingers while practicing your Technique Exercises, or if you don't work on assigned sections when you practice your songs, and I reassign the same Assignment Goal more than once a month, then you have not met this Guideline.

The way a student practices is possibly the most important part of "making progress". If a student simply plays each piece over and over from start to finish, always zipping through the easy parts and stumbling through the hard parts, the student will NOT make progress. This is **not** "practicing" – this is "playing". Learning to "play" the piano can and should be fun, but it still requires "practice" . . . or “work”. Webster’s Dictionary defines “work” as “purposeful activity” . . . in other words, “working” on a song, or a part of a song, in order to accomplish the weekly goal.

There are many "practice methods" that help a student learn pieces, quickly overcome problems, and make progress in the study of music. In fact, there are too many ways to list here. Therefore, as a student, you should watch how we do things in your lessons. When I work with you on a piece, I will ask you to do things that you should also be doing in your Practice Sessions. One “Practice Method” that I’ve probably shown you already is how to play a problem spot several times in a "building block" way while concentrating on correcting "the problem". Other ways to work on a piece are to play extra slowly and exaggerate the "details", to play broken chord patterns in block form, and to work on long jumps or large chords by playing just 2 - 4 “notes” several times. Try to remember the ways we do things in your Lessons and try to use them in your Practice Sessions. When you encounter a problem, ask yourself “What would my teacher tell me to do?”

(Please note: Soon there will also be "articles" on this Student Resource Page that will describe & explain various practice methods for you to reference as you need them.)

In order to teach students how to practice, each student will be given various Weekly Assignment Goals. Some of these Assignment Goals will be playing assignments and some will be written assignments. Students will be given one or more Assignment Goals to work on for their pieces, along with Assignment Goals in areas such as Scales, Technique Exercises, Theory, “How to Practice”, Posture, etc., as the need arises. The Weekly Assignments will give specific instructions on what to work on or focus on during the practice of each assignment. If a student "mindlessly" plays through each component of the weekly assignment, then the assignment has **not** been completed. (This is why it is important for students to **read** the Assignment Book at each Practice Session - so you'll remember what you're supposed to do!!)

All students that participate in the Incentive Points Program will be expected to spend time on **each specific** Weekly Assignment Goal.

In addition, when a lesson is missed, students will be expected to write **new** assignment goals for themselves, as I would have done. This will teach the student to think about what needs to be done in their music and to practice "being their own teacher". Points will be given for each assignment goal set and met by the student - and points will be deducted if assignments are **not** written.



Guideline #2 ~ "When a Student Practices"

"Each participating student must practice their Weekly Assignments for "Warm-up Time" and "Work Time" at least four times each week, for at least eleven weeks of a Quarter." In other words, you must practice (play at least 7 times, while focusing on improving something specific about it) your "current song(s) in progress" (or a "trouble spot" in the song), four times each week.

As I mentioned in "[A Note on Practice](#)" at the beginning of the Guidelines, Webster's New World Dictionary defines the verb "practice" like this: "1. To do or engage in frequently or usually . . . 2. To do repeatedly in order to learn or become proficient; exercise or drill oneself in".

Let's talk about the 2nd part of this definition first ...

The first half of it, "To do repeatedly", means that playing the song once is **NOT** "practice". Doing something repeatedly means to do it over & over again, several times in a row. Okay, how many times is "several times"? Well, "**seven**" is always a good number. The first & second times you play the song (or a part of it if the song is long) is really just a "warm-up" that focuses your brain on what you're working on. Then the third & fourth times you play it, you should focus all your attention on what it is that you're trying to fix or improve. Then the fifth & sixth times, you should try to "get comfortable" with the "fix" or "improvement". And the seventh time "cements" it in place so that the "fix" or "improvement" is still there the next time you play it.

The second half of the 2nd definition says "in order to learn or become proficient, exercise or drill oneself in". This means that, when you practice you must have a "goal" in mind. When you drill your spelling words or your times tables, it's so you can memorize them & know them when you take a closed-book test ... and it's so you can recall them quickly when you need to. When you exercise your body you do things like running, weight-lifting, push-ups, aerobics, practicing a sport, etc. - and these things are done repeatedly in one "session", sometimes for an hour or more at a time, and they are usually done 3-5 times a week - if they're not, then the results are hard to see, it takes longer to happen, and/or you don't win very many games.

The same is true for learning to play the piano. Music is a language - and the notes, the rhythms, the "markings" & "details", all must be "drilled" like spelling words or times tables in order to recall them quickly when you're reading music. And music is a sport - every time you play the piano, your fingers are doing as much "muscle movement" as your legs would if you played a game of basketball or soccer - and so they must be exercised & "practiced" in the same way your whole body is when you have basketball practice.

Now let's go back & look at the first part of the definition of "practice" ... "To do or engage in frequently or usually". "To engage in" something means to "occupy or involve oneself in; take part in; be active in". So, running through a song once or twice doesn't count. And there's the word "frequently" - which means "occurring often, happening repeatedly at brief intervals; constant, habitual". And this means that once or twice a week doesn't count either. In order to be "practicing", you need to "involve yourself" at least four times a week (preferably not skipping more than one day in between sessions) with your "Weekly Assignments" in order to say that you are "practicing".

Although most of my students do not have to keep track of how much time they spend practicing, it is helpful to have a "Suggested Minimum Practice Time" that can be used as a "gauge" when you're trying to decide how much time to spend practicing. How much time a student spends practicing depends mainly on the study level of the student.

These suggested minimums are based on the diversity & difficulty of the information and the difficulty of the pieces that must be learned at each level. But keep in mind that they are just **minimums** and the old cliché is true: "You get out of it what you put into it". The students who practice **more** than the suggested minimum **will** make much faster progress

Suggested Minimum Practice Time

Primer Students (under 7 years old) is 1 hour & 15 minutes each week. (**or 19 minutes, 4 times a week**)

Beginner Students is 2½ hours each week. (**or 38 minutes, 4 times a week**)

Intermediate Students is 4 hours each week. (**or 1 hour, 4 times a week**) ----> (Due to busy schedules, Intermediates can practice as little as 2½ hours per week and still make progress, **but** progress **will** be relatively slower.)



Guideline #3 ~ "What a Student Practices"

"Each participating student must maintain, at all times, a "Performance Repertoire" of at least three pieces that are finished and "ready to perform"."

What a student spends their practice time on is very important to the student's progress.

Each Practice Session should have balance and should include a **"warm-up time"** of scales and exercises; a **"work time"** when the student practices the "hard parts" of songs in progress & focuses on trying to make them better; a **"study time"** doing theory worksheets, analyzing a song, or clapping rhythms; a **"review time"** when the student plays one or two finished songs & focuses on improving them even more; and a **"play time"** when the student tries out new songs (sight-reading) or makes-up songs of their own (composing).

If a student follows "Guideline #1" and does their weekly assignments, then the 1st three components of a balanced Practice Session will be done.

"Review time" is an equally important component of practice, because without it, students would forget the songs they have learned & would only be able to play one song -- the one they are currently working on or have recently finished. "Review time" is also important because it is time spent maintaining a Repertoire of songs that the students are able to perform on a moment's notice at family parties or school/church performances. And "Review time" is important because the whole point of learning to play the piano is to be able to play several pieces, isn't it?

Therefore, Guideline #2 requires participating students to make "review time" a part of their Practice Sessions. This guideline will be monitored & administrated in two ways:

1. Twice a year, students will be expected to record the pieces they have finished during the previous six months - Each student will be expected to have at least 3 pieces ready to record.
2. During the lessons, the student will be randomly asked to play one of the pieces on their Performance Repertoire list.

Because this Guideline is required of students participating in the Incentive Points Program, the time spent reviewing the finished songs on the Repertoire list will be tracked on the Student's Practice Record and extra points will be given for the "review time".



Guideline #4 ~ "General Program Guideline"

“Each participating student must not lose points for any of the Incentive Points Program Guidelines for two months in a row, and not for more than 2 out of every 6 months.”

Each of the previous three Guidelines has it's own consequence (a "Guideline Warning Penalty"), given as a warning to participating Students who aren't following the Guidelines. These consequences will be enforced at the time the guideline is "broken".

All students that participate in the Incentive Points Program will be expected to meet these Guidelines on a regular basis. Therefore, each participating student's compliance with the Guidelines will be reviewed every six months, at the end of June and the end of December. This "General Program Guideline" will be enforced, if necessary, at the "Guideline Review".

After "Incentive Points Program Probation"

At the end of "Incentive Points Program Probation", the Student **must have successfully met all of the Incentive Points Program Guidelines for all of the three Probation months** in order to be reinstated in the Program.

If the Student is reinstated, the Student **will get back ½ of the points that were taken away** when the Student was put on Probation. If a "10,000 Point Level" was reached during Probation, the Student will receive a \$5 Gift Card after being reinstated in the Program.

If, at the end of this Probation time, the Student has not successfully met all of the above Guidelines, the Student **will be discontinued from the "regular" Incentive Points Program and will forfeit all of the points that were taken away** when the Student was put on Probation. (See "Incentive Points Program Description - A Note on Qualification" for information on what a student can do with points when they are not able to meet the Guidelines.)

If any Student has been reinstated after Incentive Points Program Probation, that Student **must not get into another Probation "situation" for the next 6 months**. If this does happen, the "Guideline #4 Penalty" will be applied, and the Student **will be discontinued from the regular Program without a Probation Period**.