

PRACTICE TECHNIQUES

Noa Kagayama, *Bullet-Proof Musician Blog*

Chaining: Let's say you have a phrase that is too difficult for you to play all in one fell swoop. Chaining would involve starting with the first bit that you *can* play, and once you get the hang of it, adding additional little bits to it, until eventually you're playing the phrase in its entirety.

Whole-part-whole: Let's say you're having trouble with a section of music, and there's one part in particular that's particularly gnarly. Whole-part-whole would involve working on that little trouble spot in isolation, but then playing the larger section again to make sure you can nail that tricky bit in context.

Goal-selection: Rather than simply diving in and getting stuck in the mindless loop of playing things over and over until they sound better, take a moment to (a) make a note of the key areas that need work and (b) create a plan for how you're going to solve these issues *before* you even get started. And prioritize them in some meaningful order – like working on the more basic, foundational things first, then moving to more advanced, higher-level issues. Or even in terms of difficulty – from most to least difficult.

Self-evaluation: Rather than practicing until you can't take it anymore, take a quick break every so often to take stock of your focus level during practice sessions, spending a moment to ask yourself whether you're still practicing effectively or if you're distracted and zoned out and should probably take an honest-to-goodness break to recharge. Kind of like the 20-20-20 rule my kid's eye doc suggested (take a 20 second break every 20 minutes to rest your eyes by looking at least 20 feet away). This could also mean checking in with yourself to do a self-evaluation of how effectively your current practice strategy is working – and moving onto a new section, or trying a different strategy if what you're doing isn't really getting you anywhere.