

FAQ's for the Parent of Beginning Music Student: Fostering Musical Interest
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Q. What are the benefits to learning a musical instrument?

A. Being involved in private violin and group music lessons can increase a child's mental, emotional, and social development. Studies show that learning a musical instrument increases a child's cognitive abilities. While piano is a popular instrument for a child at an earlier age, learning the violin allows the child to develop important VALUES such as patience and diligence while also developing their memory and physical coordination.

Q. When and how do I obtain a violin?

A. If your child is younger than 10 years old, you can wait until after the first few lessons to obtain a violin. You can ask your relatives and friends if they know anyone who has a violin to lend you. Otherwise, after a few lessons you can decide whether to buy a violin from a local music store (we can remind you at that time). Buying a student violin can be affordable (even if you are trying it out) and can range from \$100 to 200 US dollars (excluding shipping rates) - online websites such as amazon.com also sell violins. While responsibility of the quality of the violin rests on the purchaser, Mendini and Cecilio violin models have generally been satisfactory brands with some beginning students. You can also rent a violin from a local music store, but it would be cheaper in the long run to purchase a violin should your child continue the music lessons (we can guide you in the purchase decision).

Q. What if my child does not seem interested in violin or music lessons...does he/she have a problem?

A. Parents should understand that every child has an innately different level of interest in music. No blame or shame should be attached to this. We believe a significant part of a child's interest in music is genetic. However, their interest in music is also shaped by their ENVIRONMENT and family background (such as whether they were raised with listening to music in the background and whether accompanying traits of discipline and cooperation were encouraged). Thus, one child may be passionate about music while another child wants to play sports any day over practicing a musical instrument. Significantly increasing interest in music does not develop overnight...it is an accumulation of months and years of exposure to music.

Q. How do I encourage my child to practice his/her musical instrument?

A. Here are 4 ways to incrementally foster your child's interest in music:

1. At least before the pandemic, it has been typical for a child to have several extra-curricular activities, not to mention the bombardment of media, video games, and other technology, thereby easily distracting the child and even causing attention deficit. I had a former student,

only about 7 years old at that time, who literally took about 10 different subjects (ballet, tap, drawing, painting, paragliding, swimming, violin, piano, etc) all in one week! No wonder her parents found it difficult for her to focus on violin! Life when I grew up was much simpler than that, allowing the time to practice my musical craft ! The moral of the story is to PICK your child's "battles" (in this case, the musical instrument) so they can focus on them better, and select at most A FEW other subjects that he/she can be allowed to "dabble" in.

2. Check in on your child's practice session occasionally and COMPLIMENT them when you hear/see that they have improved in a certain skill or song. Compliment them and even REWARD them if they pick up the musical instrument (to practice) by themselves or increase their practice duration without your goading or reminding them.

3. Try to frequently have music running in the background, whether in the car or at home while they play or do chores. If you want them to grow to love classical music, have the classical music station on, or if they play the violin, run violin music and if they are working on a specific musical piece, encourage them to listen to a recording of that piece a few times so they have a mental idea of how it should sound.,

4. Encourage them to PERFORM informally in front of their friends as well as their family- this can motivate them to set a performance standard or goal to work towards.

5. While you should NEVER force your child to practice (or even worse, punish them if they don't, as this very well could result in them losing interest in even more), you can set reasonable guidelines as to how much on average they should aim to practice (which depends on their interest level, so this practice duration can vary with every child). Also, understand the child's tendency to practice or not: If they have an independent personality (I was like this as a youth), they may want to decide on their own as to when and how much to practice. In this case, it's better to give them some space so they can feel good about picking up the instrument when they do, and if they do, then you'll feel good as well). Others are more social or co-dependent, and may never or seldom practice unless you remind them or are actually there with them. In this case, it's fine to prod them to practice - otherwise, you may have to resort to accepting that their lesson would be their practice session (which in and of itself, can still be beneficial).

Q. How would you motivate my child's interest in music through your violin lessons?

A. During the 1st couple minutes of the lesson, I have some small talk with the student to foster a good teacher/student relationship. Praise and COMPLIMENTS (not negativity or threats) are a prevalent teaching tool. If I see that the student is improving in a skill or following instructions better, they get one point and/or sticker. If they have made a significant accomplishment, such as memorizing a song, or master a skill, they receive a few extra points. Once they collect 10 points, they get a small reward or discount towards the next lesson package. Also, I apply a special step-by-step method for learning a song, which allows the student to feel like they're progressing in an efficient manner, no matter what their talent level. Furthermore, I walk them

through their homework assignments so that they can actualize the idea of practicing them. All these things help motivate them to progress.

Q. What age do you teach?

A. It is typical to start learning the violin as early as age 6 (if you/they are serious about lessons, then the earlier the better for the student) but whether it is a good idea for the child depends on their level of interest, motivation, talent, and personality. If you find that they are extra talented, pay attention to details relatively well, or have learned another instrument already (usually the piano) for 6 months, then they can start violin lessons as early as age 5.