



Choosing Appropriate Practice Techniques organrep.com

“Every problem has its origin and solution in the music itself.” – Franck Merrick

General Practice Techniques

1. Play one hand staccato / one hand legato.
2. Play left hand on a speaking stop / right hand on a silent manual.
3. Practice with the wrong hand – will reinforce the notes because you cannot rely on finger memory.
4. Play a melody on one finger alone – reinforces notes because you cannot rely on finger memory.
5. Play one hand on a mutation registration so that it sounds on unexpected notes.
6. Tap / conduct while playing one hand.
7. Stop every time there is a tie / rest.
8. Play on the downbeats only or play only on the 4th sixteenth of a quad group.
9. Play a passage slowly with staccato (get finger exercise of going up and down quickly but slow enough to think through the notes).
10. Sing one line of the piece while omitting that line it from your hands.
11. Play 2 beats slowly, 2 beats quickly.
12. Practice on a silent manual.
13. Double the pedal line with one hand while playing the other hand as written.
14. Play on piano – hand reacts to different key action.

Fingering / Hand Position

15. Chord reductions – help find a natural fingering by what “sits well” under your hands.
16. Practice by touching the keys, but not actually playing the keys.
17. Thumb turn-under = see-saw between the two positions.

Transitions

18. Alternate between the last chord of one phrase and the first chord of the next phrase.

Line Independence

19. Repeat all notes in an eighth or sixteenth rhythm to emphasize note durations.
20. When one voice holds over and another breaks, stop on the held note to make sure that you break the other voice

Rhythms / Tempo

21. Count the smallest subdivision out loud.
22. Rhythmic practice – uneven – dah-di-dah-di or di-dah-di-dah.
23. Change the subdivisions – if the subdivisions are in threes, then play in groups of four.
24. For changing subdivisions of 3’s and 4’s – play only the triplet beats, then only the quad beats.

Harmonic Understanding

25. Arpeggiate chords.
26. Stop on every (consonant/dissonant) interval.
27. Stop on every (major / minor) chord.
28. When there is a note which alternates accidentals (a series of F and F# say) practice one time while skipping the F’s and playing F#, practice one time playing F’s and skipping F#’s.
29. Stop on the beginning of each line / phrase and determine what key you are playing in.
30. Play piece as written, sing only the accidentals.
31. For complex chords – play the tonal parts of the chord, then add in the additional notes.

Learning a fast note passage

32. Additive – play 2 notes, then 3, then 4 etc.
33. For fast changing rhythms in a line – play downbeats only – then add other voices.

Special Circumstances

34. For passages with lots of substitution – for each chord: {1) play the chord – 2) do finger substitutions – 3) prepare next chord}.
35. For chords in succession – figure out a ‘leading’ finger and play only one note of each chord. (ie. Play the lowest note of a series of chords with only the r.h. thumb.)
36. Trios: stop when two voices play in unison / octaves / fifths etc.

Philosophical Approaches

37. Take one phrase – think it through – play it through – discern if your playing matched your mental image of the piece. {Think – Play – Discern}
38. Conduct the music (away from the keyboard).
39. Find out what is alternating (major/minor, contrapuntal/diatonic) or what changes.
40. Figure out which sections repeat.
41. Figure out your type of difficulty: notes, rhythms, technical aspect.