

## **No matter what instrument you play, what style of music you enjoy, or what level you're at, these tips will make you a better musician today. Enjoy.**

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1. When all is said and done, learning and perfecting songs will do more for your musical ability and success than scales or exercises ever will.
2. The best way to stick with a practice schedule is to HAVE a practice schedule. Practice at the same time every day. It will soon become a habit and you'll skip and skimp less often.
3. If you ever find yourself in a musical slump (which, indeed, you will), take a while to explore a new style. That should do the trick. In any case, slumps are 100% temporary. Hang in there.
4. How can anyone find the time to practice? For starters, the average American watches more than thirty hours of TV each week. Likewise, do you need to run that errand right now? Is it possible to miss out on reading bad news in the paper once in a while? Will you die if the house gets cleaned a little less often?
5. Keep quiet when someone else is trying to tune. Maybe they'll follow your good example.
6. How much time do you spend practicing each day? Spend an equal amount of time LISTENING to music.
7. Emerson said, "Nothing great was ever achieved without enthusiasm." That goes double for musicians.
8. Jazz guitar legend, Django Reinhardt, played with astounding virtuosity even though two of his lefthand fingers were paralyzed. He worked around HIS obstacle.
9. With but a few irritating exceptions, success is always earned. No one will hand it to you.
10. Songwriters: Can't find inspiration today? Try this exercise instead: Write a new melody to go with the lyrics of a song you admire.
11. Another songwriting exercise: Write new lyrics to a favorite melody. Choose an entirely different topic. The melody to "The Star Spangled Banner" came from an English drinking song.
12. Cash talks at many a music store. Get your best price. Then say, "How much if I DON'T put it on my credit card?" Retailers lose money on credit card purchases.
13. Your instrument and its accessories are your tools. Buy the very best you can afford.
14. If there is one indulgence all musicians should allow themselves, it is an excellent stereo system -- along with a great CD collection.
15. Performance anxiety tip #1: Close your eyes and take three long, deep breaths.
16. If you're tired of listening to the same old music on the radio, give college stations a try. They tend to be more open-minded with their music choices.
17. Instruments are wood and metal. Sheet music is paper and ink. It is only when these are fused with your talent that the power and magic of music is born. Appreciate that often.
18. Every so often, take a break from practicing and play a song purely for the joy of it.
19. Try playing in the dark on occasion. With no visual distractions you will listen as never before, and you'll be truly amazed at all that you'll hear.
20. Being a musician is hard work. But rewarding feelings of achievement are seldom garnered through the accomplishment of "easy" endeavors.
21. Playing is not practicing. True practice involves working on and mastering each element of a song

one at a time. Practice separate bars, lines, sections. Isolate the rhythm. Slow the tempo down. Work on dynamics, articulation, feel. Then put it all together.

22. Subscribe to a trade magazine that caters to your instrument or style of music. Read every issue cover to cover, including the ads. Become very informed.
23. If you sing, try good old apple juice for a tired or strained voice.
24. A cassette recorder is one of the best practice aids there is. Record, listen to, and analyze your playing. In time, you will get used to having it on.
25. Focus on what you do well, not on what you can't.
26. Our world is too multi-cultural these days for a musician to be close-minded to any style of music. Listen to everything. Don't judge. Just listen.
27. Sing what you play as you play it. If you play a wind instrument, sing along with instrumental parts on recordings. There is nothing better for your ear.
28. If you make a mistake while practicing, don't waste time by starting over. Fix the mistake right away. Then go on. You can start over later.
29. Recall why you began playing an instrument in the first place and try to reclaim that feeling every time you play.
30. If you absolutely cannot practice today, at least spend some time listening to music.
31. Looking for a challenge? Try playing musicals with a local theater pit orchestra.
32. Strive for improvement, not perfection. Perfection is over-rated and has no place in the arts.
33. For all you rock 'n' rollers out there: Own and enjoy at least a few classical recordings. Your own music will benefit, no matter what the style. And you just might like it!
34. For all you classical aficionados out there: There is more to life than what was written in Europe two or three hundred years ago. Listen to other styles on occasion. Open up that mind.
35. Bebop saxophone great, Charlie Parker's advice to up and coming musicians: Master your instrument -- learn everything you can about it -- then forget all that s--t and just play.
36. If you feel less confident than you would like when performing, PRETEND that you have more confidence. "Act as if and you will become."
37. Reward yourself (a nice dinner, a new music book, etc.) for sticking to your practice schedule, or for each small musical goal you reach.
38. Schedule group rehearsals for the same night every week and get everyone to work personal commitments around them. No excuses.
39. Use the word "challenging," instead of "hard."
40. Stage fright is simply nervous energy -- the energy to do your best. A great many performers get it. Some let it bother them, others appreciate this energy and use it to their advantage.
41. A musician's choice of style is absolutely no indication of his or her technical ability. All styles can boast heroes. Appreciate and learn from all of them.
42. Make yourself a musician's first-aid kit: Fill a small pouch or carrying case with extra strings, picks, reeds, cords, nail clippers, lip balm, pencil, fuses, business cards, staff paper; anything you could possibly need when you least expect it.
43. Songwriters: Keep a small notebook and pencil in your pocket or purse at all times for those fleeting moments of unexpected inspiration.

44. Don't waste time "practicing" what you already know. Focus your efforts on those measures, sections, or pieces you can't play yet.
45. If you write songs you should know that the average person's vocal range is about one and a half octaves. Try to keep any melodies you write within that range so that listeners can sing along.
46. Learn and use the word "yet." Say "I'm not good enough -- yet," or "I can't play this song -- yet." Adding this word helps to make problems temporary.
47. Write fast, edit later. Try to write songs in a single sitting, within a single burst of emotion.
48. Judging a musician by how fast they play is very much like applauding an artist because they paint fast, or an author because they type fast. Music is not an Olympic event.
49. "Malleus," "Incus," and "Stapes" are your friends. Learn their names. They are the three bones in your ear which help to transmit sound waves to your brain.
50. Performance anxiety tip #2: Don't over-practice just before a performance. It usually makes things worse.
51. Don't hoard or throw out music books that have served their purpose. Give them to a school or an individual who will use them.
52. Listen to songs first for enjoyment, then for understanding.
53. Owning a vast collection of recordings will probably do you less good than a small, highly-diversified one with which you can become intimately familiar.
54. It's not how many music instruction books you get through that counts -- it's how many get through to YOU.
55. Your tone is your trademark. Treat it with the importance it deserves. In most cases it need not be perfect, just appropriate, engaging, and yours.
56. Don't criticize anyone's musical taste. Everyone likes something different on their pizza.
57. If you rehearse in a basement get a dehumidifier. Moisture just loves to ruin all kinds of equipment from electronics, to fine woods, to guitar strings.
58. Three instruments all musicians should dabble in: Piano -- for its visual clarity, drums -- for the rhythmic mastery you will acquire, and voice -- which connects you to music like nothing else.
59. Respect the older musicians. They have knowledge, wisdom, and abilities that only years can give.
60. For a true understanding and appreciation of the of the origins of the rock & roll attitude, read Jack Kerouac's classic "On The Road."
61. Some say there's nothing new under the sun. Thank goodness there will always be a few inspired players and composers around to prove them wrong.
62. Let the critics be eclectic. Great musicians are notoriously well-rounded and open-minded.
63. Never allow ink on paper to defeat you. Conquer those difficult passages.
64. Don't complain that you're too busy to practice. Nearly everyone is busy these days. You'll practice if music is a priority in your life, no matter how busy you are.
65. Greatness starts with desire. Those who have it want it so bad it hurts. Do you?
66. Four: the magical musical number. Perfect fourths. Four-four time. Four bars per phrase. The cycle of fourths. Not to mention the "Fab Four."
67. If you play in a group have everyone number the bars on the music to make corrections and to

make starting from a particular point easier and faster.

68. Why should you tap your foot when you play? Because it allows you to keep a steadier beat, and, most important, because it allows the body to literally feel the beat, not just think it.
69. Edison failed some five thousand times before building the first commercially-viable electric light bulb. Finish what you start and don't quit.
70. You want it. You want to achieve musical mastery, even greatness. But how bad do you want it? Do you want it bad enough?
71. Only listen to the best music. There isn't enough time in a lifetime to waste it on anything else. The same goes for music you learn – only spend time with music that brings out your best.
72. You are a success at music if you love it, if you play the style you love most, and if you work hard at it. Success is not a destination, it is a way of life.
73. Never put yourself down. Speak highly of yourself, even if it sounds phony at first.
74. Yankees legend Lou Gehrig played in 2,130 consecutive baseball games. If we musicians were like him we would never skip a day of practice or a rehearsal.
75. Celebrate your imperfections: They are what give each of us our own individual style. Music is art; there is no "right" or "wrong." Even if there were "perfect" musicians out there, they would have one big problem: they would all sound the same! Same perfect tone, same level of precision, same everything. Bo-o-ring!
76. Music is communication, art, entertainment, mood setter, something to dance to. It's relaxing, invigorating, educational, deep. Know and appreciate the individual needs of your audience.
77. In improvisation there are no "wrong" notes, simply varying degrees of bright to dark, appropriate to inappropriate, depending on the context.
78. Choose a single, attainable goal for your music this year. Don't quit and don't add on new goals until the first is reached.
79. Discover what time of day you play your best and practice at that time whenever you can.
80. Legitimate record companies never ask musicians for money. The same goes for agents and managers.
81. No CD collection is complete without at least one recording by each of the following masters: Mozart, Duke Ellington, The Beatles, Muddy Waters, Cole Porter, Carole King. These artists transcend time and style.
82. More essential listening: Charlie "Bird" Parker, Beethoven, Claude Debussy, Louis Armstrong, Chuck Berry, Miles Davis, Bob Dylan.
83. Never put more than three songs on a demo tape unless it is requested.
84. Great musicians are notorious in their willingness and ability to infuse elements of any musical style into their own.
85. It is assumed that you have business cards and that you dispense them liberally. Simple is best: name, instrument or service, phone number. This goes for any musician, whether you play in a group or not.
86. Be a regular at one or two local music stores. Better deals and possible referrals for gigs will result when store owners recognize your loyalty.
87. Don't collect music books. Complete them.
88. Performance anxiety tip #3: Generally, the audience cannot do what you are doing and are more easily impressed than you realize.

89. If you can't find the time to practice, your only option is to make the time, that is, to borrow it from some less important activities or distractions.
90. Appreciate your music. Appreciate the talent you possess right now. Appreciate your instrument. Appreciate the fact that you can take those three things, mix them together and create something that makes people feel. Isn't that great?
91. Be influenced by other musicians, certainly. But don't plagiarize them.
92. Don't be a snob -- a musical snob that is. There are great musicians and there is great music in every style. In any case, this isn't a contest.
93. The Beatles once spent the better part of a day tracking down a fellow who could show them how to play a B7 chord. Dedicated chaps, they were.
94. Have photocopy reductions made of sheet music that has too many pages to fit on a music stand.
95. If you don't own a metronome, get one. If you do, use it religiously.
96. To receive copyright forms and filing instructions write: Registrar of Copyrights, Library of Congress, Washington, DC 20559.
97. Do you have fun when you play? Make sure you do. It is a very important component of greatness.
98. Decipher complex rhythms by rewriting them in half-time. Thus, sixteenth notes become eighths, eighths become quarters, dotted quarters become dotted halves, and so on. Then, just speed it up.
99. Your audience will, almost without fail, be less interested in seeing what you know, and more interested in hearing what you FEEL.
100. The term A440 is a tuning standard. It means that the A above middle C should vibrate 440 times per second.
101. Buy anything local school band musicians sell door-to-door. Always toss some spare change into a street-corner musician's case.
102. Be patient. Greatness takes a long, long time.
103. Try writing a song. Many musicians say that it's the most fun you can have as a musician. Gifted or not, anyone can write.
104. When you improvise, be tasteful, not tacky. Nobody but your mother really cares how fast you can play.
105. Technology can only take you so far. In the end, it's just you.
106. Play strong and hard. It will improve your tone, help with speed, and eliminate mistakes.
107. If you write music, check out "Coda" or "Print Music" software by Finale. Go to [codamusic.com](http://codamusic.com). With it you can print, edit, and play back your creations.
108. Drawing the clef sign and key signature at the start of every line is unnecessary and clutters the page. At the beginning of the piece and at each change of key is sufficient.
109. Use a highlighter pen to highlight anything on a piece of music that you will need to spot quickly: repeat signs, codas, dynamics, difficult phrases, and so on.
110. If you perform, it's a good idea to keep a "things to bring" checklist on a 3 x 5 card handy. List equipment, music, clothes, directions, accessories, etc. that you may need.
111. Even in his later years, jazz trumpet great Miles Davis continued to grow, experiment, and change

with the times. He was never one to rest on his laurels or remain locked stubbornly in the past. He was always one to keep his mind open to new ideas, no matter where they came from.

112. Excellent video lessons featuring notable performers fill the music marketplace. Check with your local music and video stores as well as the Internet.
113. An inexpensive way to legalize the completion dates of your songs or compositions is to have the original copy of each work notarized. Your work is now legally protected under copyright law.
114. Make it a habit to review, revise, and revive old pieces. You will probably play them at a higher level of technique and awareness than before.
115. Have respect for copyright law; don't photocopy someone else's music. You would expect no less.
116. There is a specific number of times you must play each piece before it is mastered. If you can't play something correctly, don't criticize yourself. It simply means that you haven't reached that number yet.
117. Go hear the local bands. Meet the musicians. It's a great way to round out the Roladex.
118. Add inspiration to your practice space; posters, magazine pictures, and quotes from favorite players can do wonders for your morale.
119. Often the best "teachers" are the very songs you love and the players you admire. Study them. Listen carefully to them.
120. Every day, visualize yourself giving a stellar performance. You will be more likely to give one when the time comes.
121. Playing through a song is the goal of practicing, not the process. Fixing problem areas and working on speed -- one section at a time is the process.
122. Master players are the material result of their persistence and vision more so than their natural talent.
123. Seven hours of practice time per week -- minimum -- in a week containing 168 hours. You have the time.
124. For Christmas and birthday gifts ask for music books, CD's, and music accessories to help in your battle against those keyboard neckties and G-clef paperweights.
125. When listening to music wear different "hats." Listen first as would a songwriter. Then, as a musician. Finally, as an average listener.
126. You will not play how well you want. You will play how well you expect.
127. Speed is the absolute most overrated attribute a musician can have.
128. Beethoven was deaf. Stevie Wonder is blind. Django Reinhardt had paralyzed fingers. What's your handicap? Whatever it is, don't let it stop you, either.
129. Most musicians go from "fast and wrong" to "fast and right," spending a lot of time correcting mistakes (i.e., learning it over). Instead, go from "slow and right" to "fast and right," by simply speeding up once everything is in place.
130. If the TV goes on the fritz, seriously consider not fixing it. Think of all that free time you'll have to play your music!
131. Are you unsure about whether you should "break a rule" or play something differently than it is written? Just try it. If it sounds good, keep it.
132. Music is best learned if at first we break it down into its individual components. Work on separate bars, individual phrases, isolated sections. Work on melody, then rhythm, then articulation, then

dynamics. Don't try to nail everything at once.

133. Typos happen. If something in a printed piece of music sounds wrong, it's wrong. Try to fix it.
134. One reason most tunes clock in at around three minutes is because years ago, when records turned at 78 rpm, that was about all that would fit on a side. Old habits die hard.
135. If you can't play the first bar correctly, don't go on to the second.
136. You do have to learn the rules before you can break them.
137. Read biographies. Musicians, athletes, Helen Keller; it doesn't matter -- you will be inspired.
138. If your tone sounds dull, practice in an un-carpeted, un-upholstered room. Vice-versa if your tone is too bright or shrill.
139. The next time you're stumped by a nasty part, don't blame your lack of talent. Blame your lack of patience. Then do something about it.
140. Your artistic evolution happens imperceptibly slowly. Make a tape of your best effort, put it away for a year, then listen to it and see how far you've come.
141. Don't underestimate the utter importance of playing in tune. "Out of tune" is much more noticeable than wrong notes or rhythms. And more annoying.
142. If you take lessons, ask your teacher if you can record the lesson from time to time. If you are a teacher, encourage your students to do so.
143. At some point in your life, learn some piano. Doing so will give you the best possible perspective on how notes and chords are structured.
144. Audiences appreciate and relate to feeling and communication and energy more than technical exactness.
145. Play with purpose, fire and passion. People will notice.
146. Shop around. Prices on the same instrument or piece of equipment can and do vary widely from store to store.
147. When warm-up exercises cease to challenge you, learn new ones. No pain, no gain, right?
148. Nothing will hurt a well-rehearsed piece more than trying too hard to get it right. Have fun when you play!
149. Performance anxiety tip #4: Expect to put in a great performance. Don't just hope for it. Expect it.
150. Playing something right can take hundreds of tries, perhaps even hours of time for a single passage. The greats know this. They are very tenacious.
151. No matter what your excuses, your concerns, your unpreparedness, busy schedule, level of talent - - just play. You'll save yourself a whole future of regret.
152. From the school of creative metronome usage: Set your metronome at HALF the chosen tempo and count its ticks as beats "two" and "four." It will feel more like a drum beat.
153. If the neighbors complain about the noise, try affixing egg-cartons and/or carpet samples to the walls to absorb the sound.
154. Everyone is unique. Discover and appreciate what it is you have to offer as a musician -- your own individual proportion of talent, knowledge, experience, and soul. Then utilize it.
155. You will not receive an audience's gratitude until you demonstrate your own toward them.

156. When practicing, spend no more than seven or eight minutes on the same passage. Progress wanes after that. Come back to it later if you need to.
157. Consider moving to a place where music happens. Consider staying where you are and cultivating a very loyal audience.
158. Every "rule" that ever existed -- every one -- has been broken by someone great. Rules are guidelines, not commandments.
159. Learn and appreciate what it is that non-musicians like about certain songs or groups or styles. Just ask them. You'll be amazed at how different a point of view your audiences have. At the very least, respect it.
160. Don't quit. Don't quit. Don't quit. Ever.
161. Blissfully ignore your limitations -- self-perceived or otherwise.
162. Perform for your satisfaction and to entertain the audience, not to win approval.
163. Be nonchalant about your mistakes and you will make far fewer of them.
164. Songwriters: Write lyrics people can identify with. Write melodies people can sing.
165. Don't waste time envying those with more success than you. Emulate them.
166. Respect your teacher! And respect yourself.
167. Playing music is hard. If you want an easy hobby, try video games.
168. If you can't play it right three consecutive times, you don't know it yet.
169. You might not make it as a musician, but think how you'll feel if you don't try.
170. It really is never too late to learn improvisation. At least memorize the C Blues Scale: C, E-flat, F, F-sharp, G, B-flat, and C. Now make something up with it.
171. People who practice diligently are people for whom music is a priority. Not an "interest." Not a "whim."
172. Study the songs you admire. Try to figure out why they work as well as they do.
173. If you make a mistake, don't get upset with yourself and end up making more as a result. Just say "oops," fix the problem, and get on with it.
174. From now on, don't call it "nervousness." Nervousness is just another name for excitement. Excitement is energy. Call it energy.
175. If someone's music is so original that it strikes you as bizarre, appreciate, if nothing else, their guts.
176. Performance anxiety tip #5: An audience's awareness of your mistakes is directly proportional to how much you let the mistakes show on your face.
177. Bad gigs are at the very least great teachers -- and the inspiration for many funny stories.
178. Don't condemn yourself for your mistakes. Learn from them.
179. Praise other musicians. Always. Partners or strangers. What goes around comes around.
180. Sitting down and simply playing through your songs is not practicing, it's playing. Practicing means fixing what's wrong with a song by working out the hard parts, fixing mistakes, and making it better than it was yesterday.
181. Be proud. Be confident. Never cocky.

182. Be an accountant for the money. Be a musician for all the other reasons.
183. Playing music is supposed to be hard. It cuts down on the competition.
184. Play Christmas carols -- or any kind of music -- at a senior center or rest home. You will rarely find a more appreciative audience.
185. Compliments to fellow musicians return in kind.
186. You won't reach your goals if you don't have goals. Write the most important one down. Use present tense. Be specific. Tape it to your music stand. Read it often.
187. Regard and care for your instrument as you would a lover.
188. Nobody likes a show-off. Watch your attitude.
189. Great tone is simply distinctive tone -- tone that is all yours.
190. A musician's style is mostly the product of his limitations. If we all had equal, flawless ability we would all sound alike.
191. Don't treat your practicing as an "all or nothing" issue. If you can't practice for as long as you know you should, at least play for what little time you can. Anything is better than nothing.
192. Find a practice partner by hanging notices in local music stores. Playing with another person will keep you disciplined.
193. Never criticize other musicians. It only points to our own insecurities. Find something positive to say or keep quiet.
194. Learn "Happy Birthday" and play it over the phone to unsuspecting friends on their special day. Don't sing. Don't say a word. Then hang up.
195. Send a brief thank-you note to anyone who refers you for a gig, or who makes a special effort to attend one of your performances.
196. Printed music is not without flaws -- typos, over-simplifications, and so on. Exercise your creativity by making changes or corrections as you see fit.
197. Record your practice sessions from time to time. Get used to the "distraction" of a tape recorder now; you may find yourself in a recording studio some day.
198. One of the best ways to stick to a practice schedule is to HAVE a practice schedule. Choosing when (and if) to practice almost never works. Make it official: Choose a time that works for you and stick with it.
199. Read biographies of famous musicians -- especially autobiographies -- for the ultimate in inspiration.
200. Never tune down. Always "tune up." If your pitch is too high, adjust it until it is too low, then tune up to the correct pitch. It's much easier to hear right from wrong. (And stringed instruments will stay in tune longer.)
201. After you've finished learning a piece, take the time to enjoy it before moving on to the next one.
202. Before being taken aback by someone's criticism of your music, remember that there are millions of people who don't care for the Beatles, who think Beethoven is boring, or who have no use for Duke Ellington.
203. Never lend out your music books. And as for your instrument -- nobody, but nobody touches it!
204. Performance anxiety tip #6: When looking out at an audience, focus at a point just above the top of their heads instead of into their eyes.

205. Don't take your music too seriously. Or yourself. Think: "big picture."
206. Check with XM Satellite Radio for dozens of channels of uninterrupted digital quality music in every style imaginable. Go to [xmradio.com](http://xmradio.com). It's the best ten dollars a month you will ever spend.
207. If you're not in the mood to practice, at least "play" something. If you're not in the mood to play, at least "listen" to something.
208. Never analyze yourself while you're playing. Wait until afterwards -- if ever.
209. Loud mistakes sound better than timid, over-cautious, "correct" playing.
210. Remind yourself often how wonderful it is to have the gift of music; to create vibrations that can stir emotions in others and tell stories without words.
211. Audience have short attention spans -- keep intros and improvisations short ... get right to the good stuff.
212. Audiences have long memories -- end with the biggest bang you can!
213. You can't review everything. That's okay, you benefit in many ways even from those songs you've forgotten how to play.
214. Never let the passion fade from your music. It is the one thing that will get you through the plateaus and bad days and burnout phases when even money, discipline, or self-bribery can't.
215. Know the lyrics to the song you're playing. Even if you don't sing. The meaning of the song will influence, for the better, how you play it. And, whether you like it or not, the words matter to the listener.
216. Before making a big purchase, do your homework. Ask around and read trade magazines or log on for product reviews.
217. There is such a thing as over-practicing. You've over-practiced if you find yourself sanitizing each and every note to the point when the thrill is gone, when the piece offers nothing more than tedium, if stupid mistakes start to crop up in a piece that was perfect last week. At the very least, give an over-rehearsed song a few days' off.
218. If you're still in school, here is one of the many fringe benefits of playing music: Up to 36% higher math scores. Music IS math.
219. Another fringe benefit of being a musician: Lower levels of stress and an improved immune system.
220. Visualize your way to a great performance: Don't keep imagining that things will go wrong or they will. Picture yourself giving a great performance -- daily. Program yourself for success.
221. Buy a crate of old sheet music at a flea-market or yard sale. Sight-read through everything, keep the treasures you find. It will be the best few bucks you ever spend.
222. Pauses and hesitations are symptoms that we are practicing a piece too fast, too soon. Slow it down, no matter how slow it needs to be, until the pauses are gone. Then, gradually speed it back up.
223. Most musicians play too softly. Play good and strong. Your tone, precision, confidence, and impact will shine through better than ever.
224. A group rehearsal is not the time for musicians to be stopping every ten seconds to fix or learn their parts. This is to be done at home, on your own time. Group rehearsals are for putting everything together.
225. Expect things to go wrong during performance: strings will break, reeds will crack (and so will voices), amps and P.A.'s will die, drum heads will break, annoying people will annoy you, music will fall off the stand, the van will blow a timing belt. Accept these and other inevitabilities. This is

life for we musicians.

226. There is an audience for everything. It is your job as an eclectic artist to find them.
227. Don't try too hard to get it right. It is usually counter-productive.
228. Know a set of Christmas carols.
229. Memorize at least a few of your best pieces for those times when someone says, "Play something!"
230. Buy CD's by local musicians and groups. We're all in this together.
231. Try to break up your daily practice time into two or more segments. Your attention span won't falter and your energy level will stay higher.
232. Irish fiddle tunes make great speed and dexterity exercises. And they're more fun than scales. So are Charlie Parker's legendary bebop melodies.
233. In the real world passion and professionalism are valued more highly than perfection or precision.
234. It is your call as to whether you should become a tightly-focused specialist or a jack-of-all-trades. Each has its advantages.
235. Best advice you will ever get: "Learn tunes, learn tunes, learn tunes."
236. Next best advice you will ever get: "Shut up and play yer guitar." (Frank Zappa)
237. Worst advice you will ever get: "Get a real job!"
238. Articulate: Accents, slurs, staccato, etc. They add pizzazz. Don't wait for the music to ask for them.
239. The most successful tunes are almost always quite simple. Think about why that might be.
240. Every new skill is at first a hassle but soon a habit. Give it time. What other choice do you have?
241. Show up early. Don't make people worry unnecessarily.
242. Buy just one good music book during the next twelve months and learn it inside and out.
243. Write down your excuses for not practicing. They look even more ridiculous than they sound.
244. Performance anxiety tip #7: Love your audience. Love dissolves fear.
245. Being in "competition" with our fellow musicians or bands may breed improvement, but cooperation will bear fruit that is ten times sweeter.
246. When auditioning someone, remember this: If they lack talent, they will get better. But if they display serious personality flaws, these will likely worsen as they get to know you better.
247. When you're the one being auditioned, remember this: They have to like you. And you have to like them.
248. Performance anxiety tip #8: Accept it. Accept the anxiety. That which we accept about ourselves tends to dissipate.
249. Don't presume that you will be fed at every private function you play at. Be prepared by stuffing a few granola bars into your instrument case.
250. True pros are never late, never unprepared, never without the proper equipment, never ones to dump negative energy onto the other musicians. True pros are there to do a job.
251. "Taste is the enemy of creativeness." (Pablo Picasso)

252. You probably won't get as good as you want. But you will get as good as you expect.
253. Blow every audience away! If any ex-girlfriends or ex-boyfriends happen to be in the audience, so much the better.
254. One of the best ways to develop an original style is to be influenced by many others from many different styles. You will become an intriguing "stew" of all those influences.
255. Don't forget to have fun when you play. You really will play better for your effort.
256. In how many other occupations or endeavors can one expect to be applauded every three minutes? Appreciate that.
257. Play in front of people every chance you get. The elderly, the kids next door, your own kids, your spouse. If you never display your work it's like the artist who hides all his sketches in his underwear drawer.
258. "Whatever is good to know is difficult to learn." (Greek proverb)
259. Potential employers, agents, etc. expect you to be nothing more than a businessman who only moonlights as a musician. Act the part.
260. Sight-read everything you can get your hands on. Read it through just once, then move on to the next one.
261. Assume that the directions to the performance you got will be wrong on occasion. Keep your cell phone charged.
262. Videotape your group's next gig or practice session for priceless insight into your stage presence and body language -- painful though it may be to watch.
263. Know your responsibilities: At weddings, make 'em cry. Rock concerts, make 'em yell. Parades, make 'em happy. Church, make 'em "see." Clubs, make 'em dance. Restaurants, let 'em eat.
264. Guitarists: Don't forget extra strings, picks, and cords. Brass players: Don't forget Chap-Stick. Drummers: Please bring an extra shirt!
265. Never bring your bad mood to a rehearsal or performance. Leave it in the car.
266. Once in a while, socialize with your band-mates simply as friends -- outside of musical settings.
267. Don't expect people you know to come hear you play if you don't ask. Start a mailing list and send announcements or emails to all your supporters.
268. Aspiring pros: Design your own contracts and get everything in writing: number of hours, pay, special requests, etc.
269. If they tell you to turn down, do it. If they think you're too loud, no amount of talent will convince them otherwise.
270. No matter what the weatherman said, never play electrical instruments outdoors without an awning.
271. When hobnobbing with the politically-correct crowd, tell them that you're a "vibrational systems engineer."
- 272.
273. Sooner or later, you're going to have to join the video demo bandwagon, pictures being worth a thousand words and all that.
274. Performance anxiety tip #9: Don't just practice until you get it right -- practice until it gets easy.

275. For God's sake, don't stop in the middle! Make something up, repeat the last part again, fake it, jump to another tune. Most people will think you planned it.
276. Perseverance pays off.
277. People who play too loud or who improvise too fast annoy just about everyone.
278. When looking for work, don't forget to check out churches.
279. Small audiences deserve just as much effort and enthusiasm from you as large audiences.
280. Never join a band whose members can't describe what they do in one sentence.
281. The best band situations are democracies.
282. Try to steer clear of those "Who's better" discussions.
283. Get into the habit of referring to the notes of a scale by the numbers 1 through 7. Thus, in the key of C, C E G A D becomes 1 3 5 6 2. In F, 1 3 5 6 2 is F A C D G. For starters, transposing becomes much easier. So does communicating with horn players whose instruments are in different keys. Pros do this all the time.
284. Ditto for chords (use Roman numerals). Thus, in C, C F G becomes I IV V. In F,  
285. I IV V becomes F B-flat C.
286. "Congratulate yourselves if you have done something strange and extravagant and broken the monotony of a decorous age." -- Emerson
287. Veterans: Take a week or two off from practicing or playing once a year. Use this time to look back at your progress, re-examine priorities, and set new goals. And you will be amazed at how fresh your playing will be when you start back.
288. The secret for good chemistry within a group is simple: Listen to each other, not just to yourself. The results are amazing. But how often we forget.
289. Wrong notes are fleeting, often unperceivable misdemeanors. Inaccurate counting is a protracted and blatant capital offense!
290. "Music speaks what cannot be expressed, soothes the mind and gives it rest, heals the heart and makes it whole, flows from heaven to the soul." -- Anonymous
291. According to many record producers, good first impressions are made upon listeners by a song's feel -- not lyrics, not melody, not technique -- feel. That is to say "the big picture." "The overall." How it all fits together.
292. Balance your skills: note-reading, chord work, improvisation. All three are necessary and important in all styles of music.
293. No matter how untrained your ears, make an all-out effort to learn recorded music by ear. Learn how those tunes are "really done."
294. Practice with purpose: a small goal or two each day instead of unfocused inefficient repetition or simple meandering from one tune to the next. For example, say "today I want to clean up the sloppy intro, then fix the poor timing on the second verse."
295. "Good music is good no matter what kind of music it is." -- Miles Davis
296. Too tired? Not in the mood? Bad day at work? Just sit down and play anyway.
297. Sometimes it seems that the art of music is being supplanted by synthesizers, MIDI, and computers. But there will always be an audience for a musician who can walk into a room carrying nothing but his instrument, sit down, and just play.

298. Memorize as much of your music as possible. Your reading will get a bit less attention, but your ear and your sense of feel will improve greatly.
299. What stops most beginners from continuing with their new hobby is not a lack of ability but a lack of patience.
300. If you perform in a group, pack a deck of cards or a book of MadLibs in your instrument case for convenient, between-sets R & R.
301. Tag every piece of equipment you own, especially mike and music stands, with brightly-colored strips of plastic tape to prevent mix-ups.
302. "The Real Book" contains hundreds of the best songs of the 20th century and is absolutely essential, regardless of your style. Many professionals aptly refer to it as the "Bible." Go to: [musicdispatch.com](http://musicdispatch.com).
303. Men: Own a tux. Rental agencies will often sell used, well-cared-for tuxes for a song.
304. Before forking over hard-earned dough on the latest piece of gear, ask yourself: Will the audience appreciate its presence enough (Will they even notice?) to justify the cost and the extra learning and set-up time?
305. "We need magic, and bliss, and power, myth, and celebration and religion in our lives, and music is a good way to encapsulate a lot of it." -- Jerry Garcia
306. Some things musicians should not do themselves: Promo photos, logo or flyer design, appraising songs we write, instrument repair, being agents. One thing we should do ourselves: Approve of our performance and our ability.
307. The Beatles were once rejected for a recording contract. Don't take rejections too seriously or personally.
308. Engrave your social-security number onto every valuable piece of equipment you own. Insure them anyway.
309. Murphy's Musician's Law #1: No sheet music is 100% error-free. Murphy's Musician's Law #2: No performance is either. Accept this truth and eliminate 80% of your pre-performance jitters.
310. As with eating well, needing to practice everyday is forever. But it's fun, so who cares?
311. Write out your musical New Year's resolution and leave it on the front of the refrigerator all year as a reminder.
312. Don't get so caught up in details (E.g., wrong notes) that you miss the "big picture" (E.g. playing with feeling and enthusiasm).
313. Foresee potential audience comments, reactions, even heckling, and come up with snappy responses ahead of time.
314. "All I try to do is write music that feels meaningful to me, that has commitment and passion behind it." -- Bruce Springsteen
315. Regardless of their talent, keep drinkers and substance abusers out of your group. Seek musicians you can depend on.
316. A death in the immediate family is the only forgivable excuse for missing a gig.
317. Ask to be paid at the start of the gig. Start on time!
318. Playing a difficult passage a hundred times or more to learn it is not as absurd as it sounds. The truly dedicated will do whatever it takes.
319. Don't measure yourself against anyone on a CD. CD's are so edited and processed and digitally

airbrushed. No one sounds that good live.

320. Don't measure yourself against anyone. You are you, not them. Besides, being competitive bites.
321. If you've had it with the club scene, there are many alternatives: private parties, weddings, dances, carnivals, corporate functions, campgrounds, schools, art centers, restaurants, malls, conventions, and cafés to name a few.
322. Never stop appreciating your gift.
323. Try to imagine what music will sound like in a hundred years. Now try to play it!
324. Performance anxiety tip #10: Chamomile tea.
325. You don't need to be the best. You just need to love what you do. People will come.
326. How do you know which excuses for not practicing today are acceptable and which aren't? It's simple: None of them are.
327. No matter what you may need, you can find it on the Internet. Try Google-ing Guitars, Trombones, Used Musical Equipment, Piano Sheet Music, Wedding Music Lyrics, or anything else you may need and see what happens.
328. Give every performance your best. Just don't try too hard, y'know what I mean?
329. Audiences care far less about your mistakes than on the bad mood these mistakes put you in.
330. Stop comparing how well you play to how well others play. Stop comparing how well others play, too.
331. For fun after a rehearsal or gig, write down a bunch of song titles containing the noun "LOVE." Change love to "LUNCH." They still work almost every time! "Money Can't Buy Me Lunch," "Lunch stinks," "Savin' All My Lunch For You."
332. Is being a musician cool or what?
333. Quit whining that you need a better instrument. Spend that time practicing.
334. You don't need to be paid for every single performance. Freebies still count as practice. Freebies still go on your resume. Freebies still get your name around.
335. "If we were all determined to play the first violin we should never have an ensemble. Therefore, respect every musician in his proper place." -- Robert Schumann
336. Your mistakes matter to you about a hundred times more than they matter to your audience ... assuming they even notice them at all. Chill out.
337. Everyone is going to be better than you at something. That's how it is.
338. 90% of music students are better than they think they are (the main exception being 13-year-old rock guitarists). Does your self-assessment need an upgrade?
339. You can now buy personal cassette four-track recording studios for \$100. Even digital multitracks are dropping below \$500. Both are great for recording demos, working out multiple parts to a song, or even creating your own "one-man quartets."
340. Why are you a musician? If you've never pondered that question, it is never too late.
341. Music matters. It's fun. It's meaning. It's energy. It's feeling. It's art. It's culture. The world needs music. The world needs YOU!
342. "It's easy to play any musical instrument: all you have to do is touch the right key at the right time and the instrument will play itself." -- J.S. Bach

343. If you can't, or refuse to learn, to read music, it will take you about five times longer to learn a song than those who can. Quit wasting our time and yours. Learn to read. It doesn't hurt.
344. Practice in front of people. A lot. Family, lovers, neighbors, kids, pets, strangers at a park, friends at a party, anyone who will listen. You will get VERY good at it!
345. "I don't want you to play me a riff that's going to impress Joe Satriani; give me a riff that makes a kid want to go out and buy a guitar and learn to play." - Ozzy Osbourne
346. Say "I'm an outstanding musician" one hundred times a day. You will live up to that standard.
347. Playing carefully and cautiously is very overrated. Actually, it's lame.
348. "Music gives a soul to the universe, wings to the mind, flight to the imagination, and life to everything." - Plato
349. Love yourself. Love your instrument. Love your music. Love your audience.
350. Very few people are "wrong" when they say something about music that you disagree with. There are no hard and fast truths in this business. Only opinions, views, and preferences.

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