

How To Practice: We Need A Doctor!

Let's say that you're a more experienced musician at this point and regularly apply *CSP*, *Traffic Lights*, *The 3x Perfect Rule* and practising in *Bite-Sized Bits* at home. You even remember your wise and knowledgeable teacher telling everyone that a small amount of focused practise each day results in greater and more lasting progress than cramming in a single, longer session the night before your lesson or performance. Sounds like you're ready to LEVEL UP!

This advanced musical tool is called *We Need A Doctor!* because real life doctors provide two valuable services to their patients: they diagnose issues based on their observations and prescribe therapies.

Think you've got what it takes to become a musical doctor and solve all manner of musical problems? Great – you're hired!

Step 1: Diagnosis

Analyse a piece of music you're working on by reading and playing through it. Your job is to identify which elements of the music are the most difficult for you to perform accurately. Some common examples would include:

- Fast scale runs
- Tricky rhythmic pattern
- Slurs, trills or other challenging articulations and ornaments
- Uncommon sharps or flats
- Playing high notes accurately and with a beautiful sound

Pick ONE challenging element from your piece of music to focus on.

Now consider what it is that makes this musical phrase hard for you to play on your instrument. We'll call this answer your professional diagnosis.

Next comes the creative bit of the process...

Step 2: Prescription

This is where you earn all that money (of which there is none, because what I'm giving you here is a learning tool not a university degree).

Find one or two SHORT examples in your sheet music of the problem you identified back in Step 1. Your challenge as the doctor is to come up with a simple activity that targets the skills you would need to play these musical phrases well, and that could be completed in just a couple of minutes each day. Musicians are busy and sometimes highly distractible people, so your prescription needs to get straight to the core issue.

For example, here's what a musical doctor might diagnose and prescribe for one of the common problems given in Step 1.

PROBLEM	DIAGNOSIS	PRESCRIPTION (THERAPY)
Fast scale run sounds messy and feels unsteady.	Incorrect or unfamiliar fingerings / slide positions.	Play short section slowly, as written. Play it all slurred. Play it all staccato. Play it with a crescendo. Play it with a diminuendo. Play it swung. Play it backwards. Play it inverted. Play it the original way again. Easier right? Play it by memory! REPEAT DAILY FOR ONE WEEK, a bit faster each day.

There isn't one correct prescription for each problem you will encounter as a musician. If the cause of this player's messy scale runs was actually the key signature (e.g. they were forgetting the necessary sharps or flats to make that scale run sound the way it should) then the therapy might look quite different, but you get the idea. If your prescription can hit on one of the other challenges in the piece at the same time then even better!

You can find the video lesson for *We Need A Doctor* in the Video Directories page of my website, MusicLessonsWithMrTaylor.com ☺