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While it may be true that there are no shortcuts anywhere worth going to, there are certainly ways to needlessly extend the path. We often spend a lot of time because no one has ever taught us the most effective and effective way to practice. Whether it's learning how to code, improving your writing skills, or playing a musical instrument, practicing the right way can mean the difference between good and great. You've probably heard an old joke about a tourist who asks a taxi driver how to get to Carnegie Hall, only to say: Practice, practice, practice! I started playing the violin at the age of two, and for as long as I remember, there was one question that haunted me every day. Am I training enough? What do the performers say? I scoured books and interviews with great artists, looking at a consensus on the practice of time that would ease my conscience. I read an interview with Rubinstein in which he stated that no one should train more than four hours a day. He explained that if you need so much time, you probably don't do it right. And then there was the violinist Nathan Milstein, who once asked his teacher Leopold Auer how many hours a day he should practice. Auer replied: Practice with your fingers and you need all day. Practice with your mind and you'll do the same in 1 1/2 hours. Even Heifetz pointed out that he never believed in practicing too much, and that excessive practice is as bad as practicing too little! He claimed that he practiced no more than three hours a day on average, and that he did not practice at all on Sundays.It seemed that four hours should be enough. So I breathed easily a little bit. And then I found out about The Work of Dr. K. Anders Eriksson. When it comes to understanding experience and expertise, psychologist Dr. Ericsson is perhaps the world's leading authority. His study is the basis for a 10,000-hour rule that assumes that it requires at least ten years and/or 10,000 hours of deliberate practice to achieve expert performance levels in any field - and in the case of musicians over 15-25 years old in order to reach an elite international level. That's pretty big numbers. So big that at first I missed the most important factor in the equation. Deliberate practice. This means that there is a certain type of practice that makes it easier to achieve an elite level of performance. And then there's another kind of practice that most of us are more familiar with. You'll notice that much of the practice resembles one of the following different patterns.1 Broken Recording Method: This is where we just repeat the same thing over and over again. Same tennis pitch. Same passage on the piano. Same Powerpoint. By From it may look like a practice, but in many ways it's just a thoughtless repetition.2 Autopilot Method: This is where we activate our autopilot system and coast. Read our sales pitch three times. Play golf. Run through the piece from start to finish. Hybrid method: Then there is a combined approach. For most of my life, practicing meant playing through a piece until I heard something I didn't like, at which point I would stop, repeat the pass over and over again until it started to sound better, and then resume playing until I heard the next thing I wasn't happy with, at which point I would repeat the whole process again. Three problems Is prepared, there are three problems with the practice in this way.1. It's a waste of time: Why? On the one hand, very little productive learning occurs when we practice this way. That's why you can practice something for hours, days or weeks, and still don't improve all that much. Worse, you actually dig yourself a hole because what this practitioner model does is reinforce unwanted habits and mistakes, increasing the likelihood of more consistently inconsistent performances. This also makes it harder to clean up these bad habits as time goes on - so you will essentially be adding to the amount of future practice time you will need to eliminate these unwanted tendencies. According to a saxophone professor I once worked with: Practice doesn't make it perfect, practice makes it permanent. 2. This makes you less confident: Also, the practice mindlessly reduces your confidence as part of you realizes that you really don't know how to produce the results you are looking for. Even if you have a high enough success rate in the most difficult passages, there is a sense of uncertainty in the depths of life that just won't go away. The real confidence on stage comes from (a) being able to nail it consistently, (b) knowing that it's not a coincidence, but that you can do it right on demand because (c) you know exactly why you nail it or miss it - i.e. you've identified key technical or mechanical factors that are needed to play the aisle perfectly every time.3 It's mind-blowingly boring: Practice mindlessly is a chore. We all meant parents and teachers tell us to go home and practice a certain passage x number of times, or to practice x number of hours, right? But why do we measure success in practice time units? What we need is a more specific results goal, results-oriented, such as practicing this passage until it sounds like XY, or practicing this passage until you can figure out how to make it sound like ABC. Deliberate Practice So what is it like Deliberate or mindful practice is a systematic and highly structured activity, that is, for lack of a better word, more scientific. Instead of thoughtless trial and error, it is an active and thoughtful process process testing where we are relentlessly looking for solutions to well-defined problems. Deliberate practice is often slow, and involves repeating small and very specific sections of the skill rather than just playing through. For example, if you were a musician, you could only work on an introductory solo note to make sure it speaks exactly the way you want, instead of playing the whole opening phrase. Deliberate practice also involves monitoring its activities - in real time and through records - constantly looking for new ways to improve. This means being observant and acutely aware of what is going on, so you can tell yourself exactly what went wrong. For example, was the first note sharp? Flat? Too loud? Too soft? Too harsh? Too short? Too long? Let's say that the note was too sharp and too long, not enough attack to start a note. Well, how sharp was that? A little? A lot? How long was the note than you wanted it to be? How many more attacks did you want? Well, the note was a little sharp, just hair too long, and required a much clearer attack in order to be in line with the marked articulation and dynamics. So why was the note sharp? What did you do? What do you need to do instead to make sure that the note is perfect in harmony every time? How do you make sure the length is just as you want it to be, and how do you get a consistently clean and clear attack to start a note so that it starts in the right way? Now let's imagine that you recorded every replay of the test, and could have listened to the last attempt. Does the desired combination of ingredients give you? Does this combination of elements convey the mood or character you want to communicate with the listener as effectively as you thought it would be? Does it help the listener to experience what you want them to feel? If it sounds like a lot of work, it's because it is. Which may explain why few don't take the time to practice this way. To stop, analyze what went wrong, why it happened, and how they might give different results next time. Just though it may seem like it took me years to figure it out. Nevertheless, it remains the most valuable and enduring lesson I have learned in 23 years of study. In the decades since I put the violin down, the principles of intentional practice have remained relevant no matter what skill I have to learn next. Whether it's practicing psychology, creating an audience for a blog, parenting, or making the perfect mash as I spend my time practicing remains more important than how much time I spend practicing. How to accelerate the development of skillsIn the current five principles that I would like to share with the younger version I hope you find something valuable on this list as well. Focus is everything: Keep practice sessions limited by the duration, which allows you to stay focused. It can be as short as 10-20 minutes, and and as long as 45-60 minutes.2. Timing is everything, too: Watch out for times throughout the day when you tend to have more energy. It could be the first thing in the morning, or right before dinner. Try to make your practice in these naturally productive periods when you are able to focus and think most clearly. What to do in naturally unproductive times? I say no guilt sleep.3. Don't trust your memory: Use a practical notebook. Plan your practice and keep track of your practical goals and what you find during training. The key to getting into the flow of practice is to constantly strive for clarity of intent. Have a crystal clear idea of what you want (such as the sound you want to produce, or the specific wording you would like to try, or specific articulations, intonations, etc. that you would like to be able to perform consistently), and relentlessly in finding all the best solutions. When you come across a new understanding or find a solution to a problem, write it down! As you practice more mindfully, you will start making so many micro-discoveries that you will need written reminders to remember them all.4 Smarter, not more complicated: when something doesn't work, sometimes we just have to practice more. And moments like this mean we have to go in a different direction. I remember struggling with the left-hand pizzicato variation in paganini's 24th Caprice when I was studying at Juilliard University. I kept trying harder and harder to make notes talking, but all I got was hurting my fingers, a couple of which actually started to bleed (well, just a little bit). Instead of persisting in a strategy that clearly didn't work, I forced myself to stop. I brainstormed solving this problem for a day or two and recorded ideas as they occurred to me. When I had a list of some promising solutions, I started experimenting. Eventually I came up with a solution that worked, and the next time I played for my teacher, he actually asked me to show him how I made the notes speak so clearly!5. Stay on target with a problem-solving model: It's extremely easy to drift into mindless practice mode. Keep yourself on the task by using the 6-step problem-solving model below. Identify the problem. (What result did I just get? Analyze the problem. (What makes it sound like this?) Identify potential solutions. (What can I adjust to make it sound more like I want?) Check the potential solutions and choose the most effective ones. (Which settings seem to work best?) Implementing the best solution. (Strengthen these settings to make the changes permanent.) Implementation monitoring. Do these changes lead to the results I'm looking for? Make Your Time CountIt doesn't matter if we're talking about perfecting violin technique, improving golf, becoming a better writer, improving improvement marketing skills, or become a more effective surgeon. Life is short. Time is our most valuable commodity. If you are going to practice, you might as well do it right. The most valuable lesson I learned while playing the violin is the creativity of PostNoa Kageyama is the Juilliard-trained violinist turned sports and performance psychologist. He specializes in teaching artists how to perform fully their abilities under pressure. Image remixes from dicogm (Shutterstock) and Tovovan (Shutterstock). Want to see your work on Lifehacker? Write to Tessa. 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