

WELCOME TO PRACTICE.COM

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What is it?

Practice.com is a sequential system of music instruction that allows instrumental students to pass through a series of exercises providing them with a strong, fundamental understanding of music notation and developing the necessary skills for excellent performance.

Here's how the system works: A student receives a list of exercises to prepare, records the exercises on his home computer then sends the recorded files to the Practice.com website. The recordings are then evaluated by Mr. Lumpkin and a new list of exercises is sent to the student usually within 18 hours. Recordings are evaluated 20 days per month.

There are a total of 1,575 small exercises in the series derived from Band Today by Ployhar, books 1, 2, 3; Technic Today by Ployhar, books 1, 2, 3; rhythm exercises, and scales. Students typically take three years to complete the exercises, but some students have completed them in as little as one year.

Practice.Com Software (PCS) is currently in beta testing and will continue in this mode for several weeks. If you choose to use PCS, my payment will be your continual feedback. I need to know what's working, what isn't, what ideas you have to make things better. When the beta testing is over, there will be a \$19.95/month charge to use the service.

How do I get started?

First download the Practice.Com Software (PCS) at <http://4cdrecordings.com/>, click Practice.com.

You'll also need to download Audacity Audio Software. It's the software with which the student will make recordings on your computer. You can download it at <http://audacity.sourceforge.net/download/>

All files at the Practice.com website are Zipped. Mac files will automatically unzip when you click the files. PC users with an UnZipper installed will have the same experience. If you need a free, easy to use Zip utility, Google JustZipIt.

There is no need to install PCS. Simply drag the Practice Folder to your desktop or any location on any drive and begin using it. Do not change the Recordings folder or the RecordingsSent folder. PCS will not work without them. If you need to move the

Practice Folder, move the entire folder with it's contents.

Here's how to produce your first exercise recordings...

1. Email Mr. Lumpkin and ask for your first exercises to be placed on the server: MrLumpkin@comcast.net. PCS will not work until your exercise files are on the server.
2. Double click PracticePC.exe (PC) or PracticeOSx.app (Mac). You'll find it in the Practice Folder you've downloaded.
3. Enter your ID number.
4. Click Get Next Exercises. Your next exercises will load into the program from the server.
5. From the Popup Menu just below Get Next Exercises, select the exercise you'd like to record.
6. Click Record. The first time you click Record, you'll get a screen that allows you to tell PCS where the Audacity Audio Software is located. You'll usually find it in the Program File folder (PC) or the Application folder (Mac). If you make a mistake and need to start over, click Reset. This clears PCS memory and allows you to relocate the appropriate folder for Audacity. Once you have correctly located the appropriate folder, PCS will remember the location. You should never have to play hide and seek again.
7. Audacity should now be open. Wait! Do not record until you've correctly configured Audacity. You'll only need to configure it one time.
8. In Audacity, go to Edit/Preferences (PC) or Audacity/Preferences (Mac).
9. Click the Audio I/O tab.
10. From Recording/Channels select 1 MONO.
11. Check to see if your sound card is setup correctly in the Audio I/O tab.
12. Same screen, click the File Formats tab.
13. Drag the OGG Export Setup/OGG Quality slider to zero, all the way to the left.
14. Click OK.
15. Now that you are on the main Audacity window, click the down pointer next to the right microphone. Select Monitor Input. The level meter will now be active.
16. Do a sound check to make sure the level meter moves as close to zero as possible while rarely touching it. Be sure you play exactly the same way you want to record. Use the microphone level slider near the left microphone on the screen to adjust levels. Your sound card software may provide additional controls.
17. To record, click the record button.
18. To stop, click the stop button.
19. To play, click the play button.

20. If you mess up on your recording, simply click the "X" on the top left of the audio wave graphics next to Audio Track. The wave file will disappear. Click Record to try again.
21. Be sure to check your file for accuracy. Make sure that the metronome can be clearly heard and that record levels are set correctly.
22. When recording is correct, go to File/Export As Ogg Vorbis.
23. When the Save Ogg File As screen appears, hit Ctrl-V. This will automatically place the correct name of the audio file in the Save As box.
24. Navigate to the Recordings folder of the Practice Folder. If you save the file anywhere else, you will not be able to send it to the server.
25. Click Save.
26. Close Audacity. When asked whether you want to save, answer No. You've already saved as an Ogg file.
27. Now that you are back in PCS, click Completed Recordings. There you'll find a list of exercises that you have recorded. You may send them now by clicking the Send button, or you may wait and send all of your exercises at once. Be aware that once you send an exercise to the server, you cannot redo the exercises before Mr. Lumpkin hears them.
28. Repeat the above process to record and send additional exercises. You will not need to setup Audacity again.

Now that you've done all the setups, here's the short list to prepare an exercise...

1. Click Get Next Exercises.
2. From the Popup Menu, select the exercise you'd like to record.
3. Click Record.
4. When recording is correct, go to File/Export As Ogg Vorbis, hit Ctrl-V, and save to Practice Folder/Recordings.
5. Close Audacity. Don't save.
6. When your files are ready, click Completed Recordings, then Send.

Frequently Asked Questions...

I can't get the program to work.

Call Mr. Lumpkin, 615.262.0951 or have a computer guru friend help you.

I stumbled on an exercise while recording. How do I correct the error?

Click the "X" on the top left of the audio wave file and start again.

Do I need to announce anything on the recording?

No. The file name identifies your I.D. number and exercise.

I'd like to do more than three exercises. How can I make that happen?

Each time you turn in correct exercises, your allowed exercises will be increased by one. You can accrue up to 12. For example: If you turn in three correct exercises today, you'll be able to do four tomorrow.

On the downside, if you've worked your way up to six exercises and miss 4, you'll only be able to do three the next time. You always get to do three regardless of your history. It's always better to turn in four accurate exercises rather than twelve that have errors.

Skipped exercises do NOT count against you, but beware, if your habit is to always skip to the easier exercises, you may find that you will eventually have only difficult exercises on your list.

I don't understand an exercise. What do I need to do?

Here's are some ideas...

- Read the information in your exercise book. Often that will solve your problem.
- Ask a friend who's already completed the exercise for help. Play it for him. Let him give you some feedback.
- Ask you school's music teacher for help.
- Call Mr. Lumpkin... 615.262.0951. He's always glad to help.
- Email Mr. Lumpkin by clicking the Mr. L. button on PCS.

- Sleep on it. Scientist tell us our brains figure things out during a good night's sleep. There are some exercises that take several days to develop the skills to play. For this reason, you should always practice ahead so that you're not recording every exercise cold.

I'm working on an exercise that just seems to fast for me. Help!

Sixth graders may reduce tempos by 10 metronome points, fifth graders by 15, fourth by 20. If this doesn't solve the problem, practice slowly with the metronome gradually increasing the speed. It may take several days for the tempo to work. Always be practicing ahead.

I've recorded all my exercises and would like to go back and check one to make sure it's correct before I send it. How can I?

Click Completed Recordings. Double-click the recording you'd like to hear. There are two ways you can make corrections...

1. If Audacity opened up automatically, just "X" the wave file and start again. Go to File/Export As Ogg Vorbis and resave your work. When Audacity asks if you want to replace the file, answer Yes.
2. Double click the Audacity program on your computer. File/Open the file you'd like to change. "X" the wave file and record again. Go to File/Export As Ogg Vorbis and resave your work. When Audacity ask if you want to replace the file, answer Yes. Be sure your file ends up in Practice Folder/Recordings.

The exercises I just downloaded are clearly not mine. What's happened?

Is your I.D. number correct? If you've entered the wrong I.D., delete the ScreenData file in the Practice Folder. Restart PDS. Enter the correct I.D. Click Get Next Exercises. That should correct the problem. You will have to relocate Audacity when you click Record.

If this doesn't solve the problem, contact Mr. Lumpkin, 615.262.0951.

I decided to re-record an exercise, but it no longer appears in the Exercise Pull-Down Menu. What gives?

Once you send an exercise to the server, it cannot be sent again unless reassigned in the next lesson.

When are the recordings evaluated?

Typically they're graded in the morning between 7am and 3pm. Recordings are evaluated 20 days per month.

How do I know when my exercises have been graded?

When you click the Get Next Exercises button, the software will tell you if new exercises are available. Most exercises are graded within 18 hours of upload on evaluation days.

I sent in an exercise that was not graded. What happened?

One of these three things happened...

1. You sent in the exercise after Mr. Lumpkin downloaded exercises for evaluation.
2. Mr. Lumpkin accidentally skipped the exercise. Please let him know.
3. There was a technical glitch. Please let Mr. Lumpkin know.

If the cause was #1 above, the exercise will reappear in the exercise list on your next download. You may do the exercise again, or just skip it because you know it's already on the server ready for the next evaluation.

You can avoid #1 by sending in all you exercises at the same time.