

# MENTAL PRACTICE

by Dr. Brian A. Shook

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## I. Introduction

- A. Mental Practice – practicing music without your instrument
- B. Why do we need to do mental practice?
  1. Gives chops a rest
  2. Eliminates errors that are made physically
  3. Builds confidence because each repetition is perfect
  4. Maximizes practice time

## II. Types of mental practice

### A. Physical

1. Airflow
2. Finger dexterity
3. Articulation
4. Finger/tongue coordination
5. Ear training (with or without singing)
6. Tempo/rhythm (with egg shaker)
7. Transposition

### B. Musical

1. Listen to recordings of the same or similar music to get more ideas
2. Mentally rehearse each phrase just the way you want it to sound
3. Exaggerate all dynamics in your mind during mental repetitions
4. Memorization

### C. Imagery

1. Extra-musical elements
  - a. Tell a musical story
  - b. Provide a soundtrack to a movie scene
  - c. Paint a picture
2. Self-instruction
  - Turn the practice room into a private lesson by setting up a chair where your favorite teacher/performer will figuratively sit and listen to you. Then proceed to play your lesson with the “teacher” stopping you and making corrections/suggestions.
3. Pantomime - express meaning through gestures accompanied by music

### D. Visualization

1. Performance
  - Imagine how your favorite performer would play that piece and then imitate him/her
2. Stage presence
  - a. Visualize the performance venue, other performers, audience, and acoustics of the hall
  - b. Do a mental run-through of the performance/recital—how it feels to walk out on stage, take a bow, play first entrance, count through rests, play final cadence, and enjoy making music
  - c. Turn yourself into an audience member and watch yourself give the entire performance perfectly and with confidence (musically and physically)

## III. Conclusion

- A. Incorporate a variety of these techniques into your daily practice
- B. Be creative and develop your own types of mental practice
- C. Balance with physical playing so practice never becomes stale or boring

#### IV. Resources for further reading

*Effortless Mastery* by Kenny Werner  
*Fight Your Fear and Win* by Don Greene  
*The Inner Game of Tennis* by W. Timothy Gallwey  
*The Mental ABCs of Pitching* by H.A. Dorfman  
*My Lessons with Kumi* by Michael Colgrass  
*The Musician's Way* by Gerald Glickstein  
*Perfect Wrong Note* by William Westney  
*A Soprano on Her Head* by Eloise Ristad  
*The Centered Skier* by Denise McCluggage