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How to Practice if you are "Stuck"

How many times has a parent (or teacher) heard – "I can't go any further – I can't work out the note or finger" and the student does not practice any more for the week.

There are many options for these types of problems to ensure that daily practice is still met. If you follow these steps listed I am sure the obstacle will be overcome:

- 1) Work out the note (everyone has the ability to work out the note on the page). Use the lines and spaces sayings if you need to.
- 2) Find the note on the piano / keyboard. Count up or down from "C" if you have to.
- 3) Practice one hand – either the entire song, or small sections at a time.
- 4) Practice the other hand – either the entire song, or small sections at a time.
- 5) Little by little put the hands together slowly. This might mean that you work on one or two bars at a time – play them over and over. Work on the next one or two bars – play them over and over, then gradually join the bars together.
- 6) Try at the end of "learning" the individual bars to play the song through from where you started working on it to the end with no stopping. If there are still bugs to iron out, work on them separately again.

It is very important to practice your music like you are performing it at the beginning of the practice session – work hard to play it from beginning to end. Where there are problems, isolate them out and work on them separately, then at the end try it again like a performance. Resist the temptation to go back and repeat the mistakes that you just did wrong, and try not to talk yourself during this practice or when mistakes happen.

Spend **one day a week** practicing all your favourite songs and making sure they are "maintained" to be able to use them to play for people. Why spend such a long time learning a song and making it sound wonderful, to never play it again once it has been "passed". Your music really requires a maintenance period where you keep the songs sounding good.

The same applies to scales. There is nothing worse than spending 6 months learning the next grade scales, then sitting the exam and having a scale asked from the previous grade. You should keep all scales learnt to date, practiced, then you will not have to re-learn them at a later date.

Please try very hard not to bring the same problems back to your next lesson. It is very difficult to teach when the passage that had been scrutinised with a fine tooth comb comes back the following week exactly the same or worse than the week before. This is very frustrating and wastes the time of both student and teacher.