



Lesson 19

# **The Practise-in-Sections Practice Method**

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David Dempster

<b>Course</b>	<b>Read &amp; Play Music</b>
<b>Book 2</b>	<b>Read and Play Simple Tunes with Two Hands</b>
<b>Lesson 19</b>	<b>The Practise-in-Sections Practice Method</b>

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## LESSON 19:

# THE PRACTISE-IN-SECTIONS PRACTICE METHOD

[Reminder to readers of American English: In British English, 'practice' (noun) and 'practise' (verb) are spelled differently.]

I showed you the Practise-in-Sections practice method back in **Book 1**. How have you been doing using it?

Maybe you found playing with one hand so simple that you didn't really need this method. But playing with two hands is not quite so easy, and I believe you'll find this very helpful.

# MUSIC THEORY

## BUILD YOUR KNOWLEDGE

### My story

First I'd like to tell you the story of how I came to figure out this practice method.

My dad was a pretty fine violinist. He also played the piano, and I don't think he'd mind me telling you that his piano playing was not quite as good as his violin playing.

He had books of classical piano music that he loved to play. But he'd make mistakes every time he played. Not only that, but he'd keep making the *same* errors. He'd play a piece with mistakes, and 5 years later he was still playing the same piece with the same mistakes.

And here's my own story. I started playing the piano at age 4, but after some time I stopped. Years later, I got the urge to start playing again, and I asked myself 'how come I stopped?'

And that's when I realized that my dad and I had the same difficulty. **We didn't know how to practise effectively.**

I decided to find out how to practise so that I'd end up playing without mistakes.

And one of the main methods I worked out is *practising in sections*.

## Practising in sections

Let's say you're sitting down to learn a new piece of music for two hands.

How will you go about learning to play it?

Perhaps the 'obvious' way is to start at the beginning of the music and play through to the end.

And that's fine if the piece of music is easy for you, so you can play it flawlessly the first time through.

But if the music is challenging, it doesn't work well to play it all the way through over and over. If you play with mistakes, you'll probably still be making mistakes after playing it 5 times or more. And if you're applying Know-Before-You-Go to avoid mistakes, you'll be playing very slowly and it will still be slow going after 5 repetitions.

Many students practise like that, and it's one reason they give up.

There must be a better way.

And there is: practising in sections.

Here's how it works. You take a small section of the music (such as one measure), and play it over and over until you can play it well. Then go on to the next section.

I find that practising a new piece in sections works better than playing all the way through. Much better.

Watch this video now. It's a **Book 1** video so it shows how the method applies to playing with one hand. Then we'll do an exercise with two hands.



Click the blue box above,  
or find the video on your Book 2 Course Materials page at  
[www.dempstermusic.com](http://www.dempstermusic.com)

# PRACTICAL

## BUILD YOUR SKILL

I've deliberately chosen a rather challenging piece of music. That way, you can see for yourself how much more effective your practice is when you do it in sections.

### Exercise 1:

## Practise the whole piece

In this exercise, I'll let you see for yourself some of the difficulties you run into when you practise the piece all the way through.

# 1 Play

1. **Play** this piece of music all the way through. Don't stop and repeat any parts. Just keep going to the end.

Musical score for a 3/4 time signature piece. The score consists of two staves: a treble clef staff and a bass clef staff. The treble staff contains a sequence of eighth notes with fingerings: 1, 3, 5, 1 4, 4, 5, 3, 4. The bass staff contains a sequence of notes with fingerings: 5, 1 3, 4, 1 2, 4, 3, 5, 1 2. The piece ends with a double bar line.

# 2 Play again

1. **Play** it all the way through one more time. Again, don't stop and repeat any of it. Just keep going to the end.

**Question:** How did that go? Was it fun? Or frustrating? Fast or slow progress?

Now we'll take the same piece of music and practise it in sections. Let's see how this goes.

## Exercise 2:

### Practise section 1

#### 1 Play

1. **Play** just the first section of the music, shown below. This section consists of the upbeat, then the first full measure, then one more note. Apply Know-Before-You-Go for Two Hands. Take it very slowly.

pickup

1 3 5

5 1 3

first full measure

one more note

2. **Repeat** that section until you can play it accurately and easily.

**Important!** Make sure you keep repeating it until it really is **accurate** and seems **easy**. That may take a lot of repetitions, possibly 10 or more. It doesn't matter how many (or how few) times you repeat it. All that matters is continuing until you can play it accurately and easily. When you can do that, go on to the next exercise.

## Exercise 3: Practise section 2

### 1 Play

1. **Play** the second section of the music, shown below. It is measure 2 plus one more note. Apply Know-Before-You-Go for Two Hands.

2nd full measure

one more note

2. **Repeat** that section *until you can really can play it accurately and easily.*

## Exercise 4:

### Practise sections 1 and 2 combined

#### 1 Play

1. **Play** the first 2 sections combined, as shown below. Apply Know-Before-You-Go for Two Hands.

measures 1 and 2

one more note

2. **Repeat** that until you can play it accurately and easily.

**Tip:** If you find this a struggle, go back and spend some more time on the previous 2 exercises (practising the first section on its own, and then the 2nd section on its own). Make sure you really can play those sections accurately **and easily**, and then come back to this exercise where you play both sections combined.

## Exercise 5:

### Practise section 3

#### 1 Play

1. **Play** the next section of the music, shown below. It is measure 3 plus one more note. Apply Know-Before-You-Go for Two Hands.

measure 3      one more note

2. **Repeat** until you can play it accurately and easily.

## Exercise 6:

### Practise sections 1-3 combined

#### 1 Play

1. **Play** the first 3 sections combined, as shown below. Apply Know-Before-You-Go for Two Hands.

The musical notation is in 3/4 time. The first three measures are grouped together with a bracket and labeled "measures 1-3". The fourth measure is labeled "one more note" with a line pointing to it. Fingerings are indicated by numbers 1-5 above and below notes.

Measure 1: Treble clef, quarter note G4 (finger 1), quarter note A4 (finger 3), quarter note B4 (finger 5).  
Measure 2: Bass clef, quarter note G3 (finger 5), quarter note F3 (finger 1), quarter note E3 (finger 3).  
Measure 3: Treble clef, quarter note D5 (finger 1), quarter note C5 (finger 4), quarter note B4 (finger 4).  
Measure 4: Bass clef, quarter note G3 (finger 1), quarter note F3 (finger 2), quarter note E3 (finger 4).  
Measure 5: Treble clef, quarter note D5 (finger 1), quarter note C5 (finger 2), quarter note B4 (finger 4).

2. **Repeat** until you can play it accurately and easily. If this is a struggle, go back and spend some more time on the last few exercises. Another idea: You can try playing measures 2 and 3 combined until that's easy, and then go back to playing measures 1-3.

## Tune 1:

### **Folk song, with a tricky left hand**

I'm going to give you the whole piece again. I want you to keep practising it in sections, just like I showed you in the exercises, until you can play the whole piece of music shown below.

# 1 Add one section at a time

1. Continue practising one section at a time on its own. When a new section is easy, combine it with the earlier sections. Carry on like that until you've learned to play the whole piece.

*Home on the Range*

The image shows a musical score for the piece 'Home on the Range' in 3/4 time. The score is presented in two staves: a treble clef staff for the melody and a bass clef staff for the accompaniment. The melody line consists of eight measures, each with a specific fingering indicated above the notes: 1, 3, 5, 1 4, 4, 5, 3, and 4. The bass line consists of eight measures, each with a specific fingering indicated below the notes: 5, 1 3, 4, 1 2, 4, 3, 5, and 1 2. The piece is written in a simple, accessible style suitable for a practice method.

**Question:** How did that go? Did you find you made faster progress than when you practised the piece all the way through?

Practising in sections has made all the difference for me.

If it didn't work for you, then of course you don't need to use it.

But I think if you get in the way of practising in sections, you'll make much faster progress.

## What's next?

In the next lesson is the new practice method I promised. Another tool to help you read and play music with two hands.

To find Lesson 20, click the green box:

**Go on to your next lesson**



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