

BRENDAN FINUCANE

CELLO STUDIO POLICIES

Location and Rate

I teach after school at the Chicago Waldorf School and at my home studio at 6951 N. Ridge Blvd. Beginners and younger students typically take 30-minute weekly lessons (\$50/lesson.) Intermediate and older students typically take 45-minute weekly lessons (\$75/lesson.)

Payment is via cash, check or Zelle, and should be made at the beginning of the month, or on the day of each lesson.

Cancellations

In case of conflicts with regularly scheduled lessons, a 48-hour cancellation notice is preferential. A make-up lesson for the week may be possible, subject to mutual availability. If your child is sick, please let me know as soon as possible. Missed lessons without notification are charged at the usual rate.

Multiple missed lessons will negatively affect progress on the instrument.

Lesson Expectations

Students should be on time for each lesson, as I generally cannot teach beyond each scheduled lesson slot.

Students are expected to be ready and prepared to begin the lesson at the start time, having used the washroom and had a snack. Nails should be trimmed short, as long nails make proper technique and intonation difficult.

Students should come to the lesson with their practice journal and all sheet music, and I will begin each lesson by asking the student to report on practice progress during the week.

Daily Practice

Consistent, goal-oriented daily practice is the biggest predictor of success on the cello. I spend a portion of every lesson developing the executive functioning skills students need to set goals, break down problems, and evaluate their own progress.

Such consistent, goal-oriented daily practice leads to good progress, which leads to accomplishment and increased confidence, which in turn leads to further motivation and then further practice. A daily routine should be established right away -- it can be as short as 5

minutes or as long as necessary to touch on all material. I write weekly practice assignments in the student's practice journal for review and practice at home.

On days when practice isn't an option, simply sitting with the instrument ("hugging the cello") or listening to a recording of the music for a few minutes is the best option. More advanced students can implement "head practice" -- reading the sheet music and going through the fingerings and bowings with an imaginary cello.

Practice Session Content

A good practice session should include the following. Check in with your child to make sure they're touching all the bases.

- 1) Planning and setting a goal
- 2) Warm-up (focus on listening and fundamental technique)
- 3) Scale or other exercise
- 4) Solo repertoire (the main piece the student is learning)
- 5) Ensemble repertoire (orchestra, Knights of Jazz String Band)

Inspiration

In my experience, inspiration is integral to motivating daily practice, and I encourage my students to explore the affective dimension of their relationship with music and the cello every lesson.

Four ideas to support inspiration at home:

- 1) Share videos of excellent cello performances. [Here](#) is my youtube playlist.
- 2) Warm up for a few minutes with big, full bows on the open strings. Aim for a powerful, rich tone. Listen closely. Feel the resonance in your body and in the room.
- 3) Take a moment to envision yourself with the cello in the future. Are you performing for someone? Who's in the audience? What are you playing? Then take another moment to plan how to get there.
- 4) Take some time during the practice session to play something with exaggerated emotion. As you play, try to give the music an angry character, a dejected character, or perhaps the feeling of exuberance!

Daily Listening

Listening to examples of the music being learned is vital, and if possible should happen daily. If music is like a language, then immersion is the goal! The commute to/from school is a great time to listen to cello recordings.

For Parents/Guardians:

I encourage you to attend the lessons when possible, especially during the first year. At the lesson, you can observe, take notes, and note how to practice any new skills. In this way, you can support your child in their home practice.

Please also review what I write in the practice journal each week with your child on the day after the lesson. The most important practice day is the day after the lesson, as the student has the best chance of recalling and integrating new ideas and skills, and setting meaningful practice goals for the week.

Regarding daily practice, It is totally normal for children to go through periods of struggle. Helping to build good habits and routines from early on is helpful. Dedicate a specific space, and a specific time every day to music practice. Leave the instrument out of the case and a chair in place if possible, to lower practice friction. Encourage a short session rather than completely skipping a session. Scheduling impromptu recitals, perhaps for grandparents or cousins (via Zoom or in-person!) can also help with motivation.

I encourage you to take a moment during the week to ask your child to play something for you. Give them honest and gentle feedback -- compliment them on their progress and encourage them to keep practicing.

Summer Lessons

Lessons are expected to continue during the summer when the student and I are both in town. This helps keep up the momentum of progress, and it is also nice to decouple cello from school.

If you are planning a long trip, consider bringing the instrument to practice (if space permits!) or at least music and recording to practice fingerings, bowings and note names.

Recitals and Dress Rehearsals

Students are expected to perform at least once per semester at the scheduled recital. In addition, they should be prepared one week prior to the recital, and participate in the recital "dress rehearsal."

Recitals are a great opportunity for the student to show their work to family and friends. The recital gives the student a goal to aim for and kickstarts the “Practice -> Progress -> Feelings Of Success -> Motivation -> Practice” cycle.

Knights of Jazz String Band

I encourage all my students with at least one year of playing experience to audition for [Knights of Jazz String Band](#). The ensemble rehearses weekly, and performs regular gigs. Participation necessitates commitment and practice.

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