

PREPARATION TIMELINE FOR RECITALISTS



Set a timeline to make the recital enjoyable for the performers and audience and to make the event stress free. Recitals help students appropriately finish a piece, rather than move on to another before the current piece is memorized and polished.

Write an appropriate date on each line, beginning with three to four months out. Then check the blank to show what you have accomplished.

Date _____ (3 to 4 Months Before) 

- ___ List the song(s) below that you will perform to allow plenty of time to practice. _____
- ___ Begin practicing the most difficult parts first, like the ending.
- For piano players:
 - a. ___ Only practice each hand separately, and alternate hands frequently. (Remember to keep your nails clipped.)
 - b. ___ Begin memorizing small segments from the start with each hand separately. Then practice playing it in your mind.

Date _____ (2 Months Before) 

- ___ From the start, focus on interpreting the music. When you see an expressive marking, like *cresc.*, remember to begin playing softly so that the last few notes will sound louder. Don't begin so loud that you end up with a poor tone quality because you are playing too loud. Also, increase your volume gradually to be effective.
- ___ If possible, listen to recordings of your piece to hear how other performing artists play it. Start by listening to their technique.
- ___ To speed up your memorization, analyze your song to determine what measures or phrases are repeated.
- ___ Play the sections of the piece at a slow tempo to:
 - a. bring out the expression.

- b. allow for accurate practicing, and without picking up bad habits.
 - c. condition the hands for playing with control. Then when the tempo is picked up, your hands are more in control with improved technique.
- ___Continue to practice difficult parts first, and practice slowly at first and then pick up the tempo. Use a Metronome if necessary.
- ___Record yourself playing to identify what parts you need to polish, paying attention to the dynamics and the tempo.
- For piano players:
 - a. ___Work on the parts for left hand and right hand separately, frequently alternating between right and left hand. (piano)
 - b. ___Begin by learning short segments at a time. Train your fingers to play the passages up to tempo. Don't get overwhelmed by trying to play the entire piece from the beginning or with both hands together.
 - c. ___Practice with good articulation and technique.
- ___ Send out Save the Date to family and friends.

Date _____ (One Month Before) 

- ___Continue memorizing your piece, and practice playing it by memory slightly slower, then faster than the performance speed with few errors.
- ___If you are playing a duet or with an accompanist, start rehearsing together.
- ___Practice recovering from mistakes, and figure out how to keep your audience from knowing you made an error.
- ___Focus on phrasing, proper technique, and articulation. Both hands must work together as one. Imagine how your hands are always in a dialogue with each other, Consider that your left hand will never play independently of your right hand.
- ___Invite family and friends to your recital and provide the details. (Maybe send a printed invite in the mail or an email invite)

- ___ If you forget a part, avoid starting the song from the beginning again. Instead, figure out points where you can start right in.
- ___ Practice the piece slowly and also play it faster than the performance speed paying attention to dynamics. In that way, if you get nervous, you'll know that the performance speed is not your fastest speed.
- ___ Pay special attention to every note so that the audience will hear distinct notes.
- ___ Videotape yourself to check your posture, to see if you are playing with feeling, and to identify areas in which still need work. You don't want to look like a machine.

Date _____ (Two Weeks Before) 

- ___ Play your entire piece from memory.
- ___ Check your timing and rhythm for accuracy using a metronome.
- ___ Perform as much as you can for family, friends, pets, and stuffed animals, for your music class at school, and even in front of the mirror. Essentially, play for anyone who will listen.
- ___ Establish a constant routine to mentally be "in the zone" and physically ready for the recital.
- ___ Visualize yourself at the performance by walking on stage, introducing yourself and your piece, performing, bowing, and leaving the stage.
- Practice at different times of the day, and vary your length of practice.
- ___ If in doubt about the dynamics, start and end each phrase softly.
- ___ Listen while you are playing.
- ___ Confirm with family and friends the date of your recital and remind them of the location and what time it starts.
- ___ Before you begin to practice, 'compose' yourself. Remind yourself that you are well-prepared and that you know what you want your music to portray. Then review the tempo and dynamics in your mind before you start playing.

Date _____ (1 Week before) 

- ___ Plan what you are going to wear for the recital.
- ___ Know what place in the program you will perform.
- ___ Find out what the procedure is for going on and off stage.
- ___ Present sneak-preview recital at home for family, friends, or pets.
- ___ Know what time to report and the location of the recital.
- ___ Get a good night's sleep the day before your recital.

Date _____ (Day of the Recital) 

- ___ Think of ways to relax.
- ___ Eat ahead of time so that you are not hungry during the recital, and plan ahead if you need to bring a snack and water.
- ___ If applicable, remember to bring your music and/or bring it on your iPad.
- ___ Warm-up before you leave for the recital. Practice scales and or arpeggios and play through your music, but don't overdo.
- ___ Check your tuning before you begin.
- For piano players:
 - a. ___ Sit at the piano and get centered and stay focused. Take a deep breath and silently count to three before placing your hands on the keyboard. Think through the tempo of the first few measures before beginning to play.
 - b. ___ When finished, place hands on your lap. Then stand, smile, and face the audience before bowing. Why bow?
- ___ Relax, show off your musicianship, and enjoy the day.
- ___ At the end of your piece, stand straight. Then with your feet together and your hands at your sides, bow from your waist, not from your neck. Count to three while bowing or say a phrase like "So many songs, so little time." Remember that body language speaks as loud as words. Stand up and smile, and leave the stage.