

## New Ways to Practice your Scales by Amulet Strange

*Do you find yourself always starting at the beginning of the scale after you've messed up?*

*Does it sound better at the beginning of your scale compared to the top?*

*Are your scales different tempos?*

*Do you sometimes forget the high register fingerings?*

If you said YES to any of these questions, it is time to practice your scales differently!

### Why do we practice scales?

Because they are the building blocks for the music we play. So the more you practice your scales, the better your technique will be and the easier it will be to play music!

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The following are practice ideas I have found that work in my own practicing and teaching.

With patience and open ears, you can become a total boss at your scales!

### **RULE: Only play as fast as you can think!**

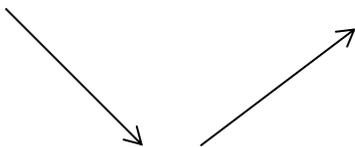
*If you mess up something three times in a row, you are going too fast. So SLOW DOWN and ALLOW your brain to process the work you are doing before picking up the tempo.*

### **RULE: Three times in a row perfect!**

*Why? So you can build up accuracy in your playing. Playing something perfect 3X in a row will give you the confidence and the assurance that you can play that passage perfect*

#### **1. Start from the top of the scale!**

Yes, this means starting from the highest note in the scale. It should sound like...



#### **2. Add a note at a time from the top!**

Start again from the highest note of the scale. This time, add one note at a time from the top until you have played just the top octave of the scale.

For example, in Bb Major....

Bb

A Bb

G A Bb

F G A Bb

Eb F G A Bb

D Eb F G A Bb

C D Eb F G A Bb

Bb C D Eb F G E Bb

### 3. Practice the fingerings ONLY with a metronome!

Sometimes it is really distracting to hear yourself practicing when you are solely trying to work out the fingerings.

So try practicing WITHOUT PLAYING. To do this, I typically have the metronome clicking and just finger along with the scale. (*Remember the rules!*)

Take note of how it FEELS to change between notes.

Goal: Get all of your scales at the SAME TEMPO. You don't want me or your band directors to know which scale is hardest for you by playing it way slower than the rest.

### 4. Change the rhythm!

My favorite way to improve finger technique is to change the rhythm while practicing scales, tricky passages, or even between two notes if it sounds messy.

Long Short & Short Long



Changing the length in a group of 16<sup>th</sup> notes



1      2      3      4

1 2 3 4, 1 2 3 4, 1 2 3 4, & 1 2 3 4 .

### 5. Change the articulation!

Pull out your handy dandy Taffanel & Gaubert packet (aka "technique" packet) for a list at the top of the page with varied articulation patterns.

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Remember, there is no need to be frustrated when you are practicing.

If you are getting worked up, take a moment to slowly breathe in and out or take a short break.

Only tackle one goal at a time. *Being overwhelmed is not fun and makes us procrastinate*, so have a few achievable goals in mind for every practice session. You will accomplish more by doing this.

These are a few ideas for now. More will come.... Happy Practicing! ☺