

## 11 Going Slower is Faster

We *all* focus too much on *how fast we play*, and too little on *how we sound*. And we *all* avoid practicing slowly, even though we're told, over and over, that it works.

There are times to build up speed. But we're often better off practicing *slowly and attentively much of the time*.

Slow practice is effective. It allows us to find the notes reliably and comfortably. It lets us build important habits like listening, playing in time, being calm while playing, relaxing, and thinking ahead.

The paradox of slow practice is that once you can do these things slowly, speed comes almost by itself.

In teaching the martial art of aikido, when I can get students to slow down the execution of a technique, they *always* make immediate, noticeable progress. To be effective, aikido requires you to be relaxed, calm and centered. When a self-defense technique is slowed down, as with a slowed-down tune, it may not seem so fun, or even realistic. But when students do slow down, they may realize that their shoulders tense when they raise their arms, or that they flinch at a certain point, or some small change in body position that affects the outcome. If you never practice except at full speed, it's almost impossible to recognize any of these sensations, and certainly not possible to correct them.

Many aspects of learning happen more quickly when we move slowly.

*Today I will practice more slowly. I'll use the slower speed to help me notice the details of my playing and correct them.*

Excerpt from the book Best Practice: Inspiration and Ideas for Traditional Musicians by Judy Minot. More info at [www.judyminot.com/bestpractice](http://www.judyminot.com/bestpractice)