

18 Taking Notes

My husband is a college professor. One of his common complaints is that students don't take notes. They think they'll remember everything. As musicians we aren't much better. Day after day we make headway, and assume that tomorrow we'll be able to pick up right where we left off. The next day we sit down and we're a blank slate with no idea what we did yesterday – especially if it wasn't actually *yesterday*.

A few notes can save a lot of time, and keep us pointing toward a goal consistently enough to achieve it.

My own notes are brief. I might list a particular technical exercise, a tune name and what I was focused on, and maybe notes on my progress. It might look like this:

*June 12 -
E string intonation. Tunes in F !!!
Le rêve du Québécois - string crossing B sect*

I also make notes on particular tunes, often directly on sheet music or electronic PDFs. I may highlight tough passages so that when I come back to practicing the tune I can work on those sections first. I may write notes on the “fine tuning” of the tune: “Don't speed up during B section,” or “Check transitions!”

This is what *I* do, and of course you may do something else. I may do something else next year. You could use an app, or electronic documents, or paper and pen. No matter what you choose, some form of note-taking is a powerful aid for practice.

If you know it's for your own benefit, taking notes doesn't have to be a burden.

Today I'll find a way to take notes on the things I want to remember.

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