

54 Tracking Small Wins

It can be difficult to perceive the incremental gains we make in one day's practice. *We need to find ways to shed light on our progress.* Practice is more pleasurable when we can tell it's helping us improve. Without a doubt, one of the biggest obstacles we face is that *if we don't have fairly constant reminders that we're improving, we won't be motivated to practice.*

The basic idea is simple: *We need to identify and clearly articulate short-term goals that are both measurable and achievable.*

Put It into Practice

Set out goals for yourself that can be achieved in a day or a week.

A goal for the day might be:

- Being able to play the notes of the tune, or even just the “A” part, without looking at the music
- Playing the tune in rhythm, even at a very slow speed
- Taking the speed up by 10% - for the whole tune or just part of it
- For a tune I already know, adding just one skill I'm currently working on (e.g. adding a bowed triplet, playing an alternate chord progression, or playing the tune three times without stopping)

A goal for the week might be:

- Playing through a set of chord changes in three keys without stopping or hesitating
- Playing the tune without music at a certain speed
- Sitting down, picking up the instrument, relaxing, and playing the tune the first time, at a slowish speed, without major problems
- Playing a difficult note, or set of notes, with good tone

Keep Track

Your note-taking habit will pay off here.* Every day (or so) scribble a few words. Here are some of mine:

*Point au Pic - 75%!!!
A section - bowing pattern practice.*

The act of writing itself helps remind us that we're making slow but steady progress. If we need the proof, we can look back at our notes.

It took me a long time to learn to do this. I usually overestimated what I could do in the time I had, and so was continually disappointed with myself. It took dialing my goals way back, and keeping track, to be able to see that change was happening.

*Today I'll begin setting measurable and achievable daily and weekly goals.
Then I'll track my progress.*

* See 18 - Taking Notes