

## SMART Practicing: Mr. Jacques' Failsafe Fixes for Frequently Frustrating Flaws

In band, we are masters of musical multitasking. Despite this, even the most experienced musicians must practice. Successful practicing involves isolating and focusing on a challenging element, then reintroducing the other elements. Be sure to use the below methods whenever you practice to increase your productivity and decrease your frustrations.

**Slow-Mo!** – Slow down the tempo when the notes are going faster than your fingers, or, when your fingers are going faster than the notes. Be sure you maintain a steady tempo when you practice slowly.

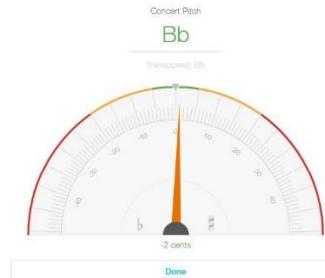


**Long Tones** – Take slow-mo, then go so slow that it's just one note at a time for as long as your breath will take it. This will help you focus on your tone quality and pitch. Always adjust with the mouthpiece, tuning slide, or head joint for the concert Bb (remember: flat = in, sharp = out). Other notes may require slight adjustments up or down with the lips.



Click here for the tuner.

Tune your instrument (A=440Hz)  
Oboe



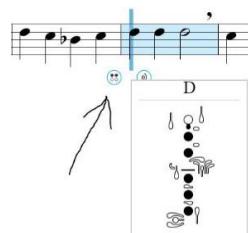
Center your note in the green area.

**Divide and conquer** – Are you overwhelmed by a bunch of black on the page? Or, is it just one spot that's throwing you off? Either way, "divide and conquer" is the solution for you. Break a section into individual measures, or even just a couple notes to finger it out. Remember: you don't always have to start from the beginning while practicing on Smartmusic. Just click where you want to start and press record. Don't forget to slow down the tempo.

MERRILY WE ROLL ALONG—

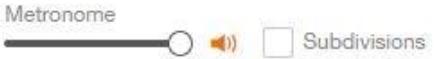


Click here to listen to any note.



Click here to see the fingering of any note.

**Timing is everything** – This popular saying applies to practicing too! Use the metronome to control the tempo and help you double check the note lengths.



**3<sup>rd</sup> time's the charm!** – Once you've taken any of the above practice strategies and cleaned up a section, be sure to play it correctly at least 3 times in a row. You may not think this works, but once you try it, you'll become a believer. Feeling stuck? Remember to turn on "my part" and press play to hear your section being performed.



While listening to your parts being played, use any below strategy:

**Air and Fingers** – Is your own sound distracting you? Not anymore! Remove your embouchure from the equation, and you'll be focused entirely on fingerings, articulations, and rhythms. Percussion: take your sticks and practice on any soft surface—grass, carpet, a pillow, etc.

**Note Names in Rhythm** – Are you still finding notes by spelling “Every Good Boy Does Fine” or “All Cows Eat Grass,” Say note names with or without your instrument in your hand in the tempo of the music. Once you've done this, add fingerings to help connect it to the instrument.

**Sing it!** – If you can sing it, you can play it. Get these tunes stuck in your head by singing your parts. Nervous about singing? Don't worry! We'll all be singing during parts of our rehearsals. Everybody's doin' it, kids!

### Turning In Assignments

To see your assignments, go to [home.smartmusic.com](http://home.smartmusic.com), enter your username/password, then log in. On the home page, find “my pending assignments” and select “play” on the assignment. Once you select your instrument, read the instructions, then practice it by pressing record at the tempo that works best for you. Once you're ready to record it at the assigned tempo, press the record button. You can record as many takes as you want until you are satisfied. When you are ready, go to “my takes” to review your recordings. To submit your assignment, choose your best take and press “submit.”

The image shows the SmartMusic software interface. At the top, there's a navigation bar with links for Home, My Takes, Tracks, Display, Assessment, Mute / Solo, and Loop. Below the navigation bar, there's a dropdown menu labeled 'Temp' showing 'Most Recent' assignments: '3 - 80 bpm - 88%' (checked), '2 - 80 bpm - 76%', and '1 - 80 bpm - 72%'. To the right of the dropdown is a 'Delete' button, a 'Save' button, and a 'Submit' button, which has a large red arrow pointing to it. Below these buttons is a 'Count Off' section with a '4' and plus/minus buttons. Further down, there's a 'Tracks' section with a play/pause button and a 'Display' section showing musical notation in 2/4 time with a treble clef. The notation consists of various notes and rests.

To watch the video of these directions, go to <http://tinyurl.com/SmartMusicAssessment>