

# A RECIPE FOR PRACTICE SUCCESS

by [Sydney Carlson](#)

A productive practice session starts with establishing a routine. Your routine must be one that touches on the pillars of flute playing, your technique and your tone. If you focus a portion of your daily practice on tone and another on technique, you will be setting yourself up for growth and success.

**TONE:** You have to ask yourself what do I want to improve in my sound? Focus? Flexibility? Endurance? Intonation? A little bit of everything?! Daily practice on long tones, intervals, harmonics, and playing with a drone, will help to build awareness of how you need to manipulate your embouchure and create resonance within your body to find your most resonant, responsive and flexible tone.

Long Tones are great for establishing a finely tuned embouchure and increasing your breathing capacity. You can go through the entire range of the instrument every day. You can start with the classic *De la Sonorité* of Marcel Moyse, and then create your own long tone studies. You can practice playing a long series of scales on a single breath. I like to think of them as long tones with moving fingers. Keep track of the amount of music you are playing on a single breath and expand it regularly.

Harmonics are like weightlifting for your embouchure. By creating a beautiful resonant sound with a wide dynamic range using harmonics, you are teaching the embouchure how to shape and direct the airstream. Harmonics help to create depth and color in the sound.

**INTERVALS:** Interval Studies build confidence. If you practice an exercise with wide intervals using various dynamics and articulations every day you will sail through large intervals with ease in your repertoire.

**INTONATION:** Intonation is perhaps one of the most challenging skills to practice on our own. Looking at a tuner is a great first step but working with a tuning CD or drone is even better! Play slow scales against a drone. Practice little melodies against the drone, carefully tuning intervals. Improvise to the drone, while listening and adjusting to its immovable pitch. These techniques will help you to avoid the dreaded “bad tone” day.

**TECHNIQUE:** Practicing the technique of flute playing is like putting money in the bank. When you are learning a new piece, you should not have to struggle with technical issues. By practicing scales, arpeggios, and trills every day, you will be building technical strength. There are so many books from which to choose: Taffanel and Gaubert’s *17 Daily Studies*, Marcel Moyse *Exercices Journaliers*, Paul Edmund Davies *28 Day Warm*



*Up Book*, *The Scale Book* by Patricia George and Phyllis Louke, and *Practice Books for Flute* by Trevor Wye. Organize your practice by keys, maybe related to some repertoire you are learning. Be sure to regularly touch upon all the keys. Branch out beyond the basic major, minor, and chromatic scales, by exploring whole tone, pentatonic and octatonic scales.

Practice your technical exercises in a wide variety of articulations and through the entire range of the instrument. Keep track of your tempi by using a metronome. Try using the metronome in creative ways. For example, have the metronome clicking on the upbeats or only one pulse per bar. Find an App to spice up your practice. For example, the CHORDBOT app lets you create chord progressions, allowing you also to create your own scale and arpeggio routines with a fun beat backing you up. After you have begun a consistent habit of daily work in both tone and technique, you will notice amazing things that begin to happen in your flute playing.

