

## Suggestions for Preventing Injury in Musicians

1. Avoid playing more than 20-25 minutes without a 5-minute break. Use the break to review scores, clear your head, or even listen to a recording of the last 5 minutes of your last practice session.
2. Stretch, warm up, and work gradually into practice sessions.
3. Reduce total playing time to compensate for increased playing intensity (recording session, preparation for audition or recital difficult program, stress, new instrument, altered technique)
4. Intersperse repetitive rehearsal of individual passages throughout a practice session to avoid overworking one set of muscles. You will learn faster and more safely if you play a passage 5 times every 10 minutes over the course of an hour, rather than 30 times in a row.
5. Begin to increase practice time weeks to months in advance of recitals or auditions.
6. Return to work gradually after a layoff.
7. Begin slowly and increase gradually any unaccustomed use of the hands (e.g. gardening, typing, sports).
8. Avoid unnecessary muscle tightness when you play. Excessive shoulder lifting or neck twisting may lead to muscle spasm and reduce the fluidity of movement in adjacent muscles. The burden of supporting the weight of instruments can be reduced by straps, posts, pegs, shoulder pads, and chin rests. Violinists and violists should adjust their supports so that the instrument can be held without *any* elevation of the left shoulder.
9. Be attentive to posture. Slouching in a chair for hours daily will eventually take its toll in back and neck problems. Good posture will reduce the work of small forearm and hand muscles by enabling large shoulder and back muscles to support the combined weight of the arms and instrument.
10. Don't neglect your general physical and mental health.