

Thriving (Not Just Surviving) in College and Beyond: a helpful guide for college musicians

by Dr. Brad Meyer



Get "A's"

- Classes + Music = Priority
 - o everything else = distractions
- If you get less than an "A" -> rethink/restructure
- "A's" = opportunities
- Academic "rule of thumb":
 - o A's = keep studying/practicing hard
 - o B's = increase the quality and/or amount of studying/practicing
 - o C's, D's, F's = get tutoring; increase your quality and/or amount of studying/practicing

Mental Health

- See a professional counselor - every 1 to 2 weeks
 - o You will learn life skills; not just temporary relief
- Long Breaks = time to "recharge"
 - o sleep, family, book, new solo, activities, vacation, etc.
- Short Walks = quick "recharge"
 - * 5-min. Body Scan: <https://youtu.be/dBNc5dQh8zQ>
 - * 30-min. Body Scan: <https://youtu.be/6d0cq7YQmMY>

Financial Health

- School = #1 job (everything else is secondary)
- Part time jobs -> only if absolutely necessary; don't work more than needed
- "Debt Snowball" (Dave Ramsey) -> Attack smallest debt; once paid off, attack the next smallest debt
- Make a budget -> stick to the budget

PERSON A's Financial Overview (monthly)			
INCOME (after taxes)	NECESSITIES	RETIREMENT/SAVINGS	NON-ESSENTIALS
Job 1: \$3800	Rent: \$1200	Savings: \$400	Apple music \$10
Job 2: \$200	Water: \$80	Retirement: \$400	Netflix \$15
-----	Electricity: \$100	-----	Hobbies \$100
-----	Car Loan: \$300	-----	-----
-----	Car Insurance: \$100	-----	-----
-----	Vehicle Gas: \$100	-----	-----
-----	College Loan: \$200	-----	-----
-----	Health Insurance: \$300	-----	-----
-----	Food: \$300	-----	-----
-----	Internet/Cable: \$120	-----	-----
-----	Cell Phone: \$150	-----	-----
-----	Music Equipment: \$100	-----	-----
TOTAL: \$4000	TOTAL: -\$3050	TOTAL: -\$800	TOTAL: -\$125
\$4000 (INCOME) - \$3050 (NECESSITIES) - \$800 (RETIREMENT/SAVINGS) - \$125 (FUN) = \$25 (LEFT OVER EACH MONTH)			

Dave Ramsey's 7 Baby Steps

- Step 1: **Save \$1,000**
- Step 2: **Pay off debt**
- Step 3: **3-6 month fund**
- Step 4: **Invest**
- Step 5: **College**
- Step 6: **Pay off house**
- Step 7: **Give**

daveramsey.com/getstarted

Physical Health (the “Big Three”) -> improves energy, mental focus, and self-confidence

- Eat Regularly
 - Add meals into your schedule
 - Have emergency food in your locker, dorm, apartment, etc.
 - Make your own health (as possible) meals
- Sleep Regularly
 - Make it as consistent (as possible)
 - Make it a part of your daily schedule
 - Set alarms to turn off screens
- Exercise Regularly
 - Do something/anything regularly
 - Team sports = new friends + healthy competition
 - Individual exercise = do something, but don't overdue it
 - Variety = “spice of life”

**Point of diminishing returns -> everything in moderation*

Music

- *Practicing with Purpose* by David Kish
- Goal setting
 - Large-to-small
- Use Apps (Calendar, Reminders, Notes, Alarms, etc.)
- Vary your practice; be efficient with breaks
- “Trust in the process”

Remember What You Love About Music

- Enjoy a Rehearsal
- Listen to something you already enjoy; listen to something new
- Play something you already know; play something new
- Not everything you play needs to be the hardest piece you can learn
 - *Schraffur by Fritz Hauser (10 min.)**

Think Outside “The Box”

- Take your music outside (to a public audience)
- Video record all your solos (even etudes) = video resume
- Take recitals on tour (schools, universities, art galleries, churches, retirement homes, etc.)

Beyond School

- Things don't change (very much) – You are the sum of your habits/experiences
- Everything in life is circular -> Appreciate/recognize the ups; learn/deal with the downs
- Your first job:
 - You will want to “set the world on fire” (a.k.a. “teenager in a Ferrari”)
 - Figure out the traditions of the place you're at and try them
 - Change happens slowly and only if everyone (above and below) is on board



PRACTICE STRATEGIES

from *Practice with Purpose* by David Kish

CHUNK IT: work smaller chunks of music one at a time, especially challenging chunks

LOOP THE CHUNK: play each chunk of music 12-15 times (or until clean), then run longer chunk/entire piece

LEARN IT BACKWARDS: Learn the piece starting at the last music phrase, then work backwards to the beginning of the piece

REPEAT AFTER ME: figure out which parts of the piece are repeated so that you can have a better mental picture of the entire composition.

PUZZLE PIECES: make a copy of your piece and cut it up into lines/phrases, then practice those singular lines/phrases by themselves

BLINDFOLD: practice with eyes closed (or blindfolded) to work on muscle memory and playing areas

AUDIO ASSESMENT: record a small chunk or entire piece, listen back and notice what you can change

VIDEO ASSESMENT: video record yourself and watch without audio. You can do this with slow-motion video as well

USE A METRONOME: use a metronome and make tiny tempo increase after having played a chunk perfectly several times

SLOWER IS FASTER: work a chunk at 50% speed (or slower) so that you can play it perfectly several times, then barely bump up the speed (2-3% each increase)

PENCIL POWER: bring a pencil so you can mark in important things to notice/remember: stickings, phrases, circle challenging chunks, etc.

RHYTHM VARIATIONS: change the rhythm of something to make it either straight rhythm or a consistent rhythm (especially good for working scales)

SINGING IN THE SHOWER: sing the music out loud to increase understand of musical phrases, as well as decreasing anxiety in public performance

SUPERMODEL: learn a piece exactly the way a famous performer played it on a recording

3X PERFECT: learn a chunk and be able to play it three times perfectly before you can move on

PHRASE IT: learn a chunk of music with several different phrasings so you can find what phrasing you like best

COMMERCIAL METHOD: practice one skill during a TV show's commercial break

DUETS WITH YOU: record yourself playing one part of a duet, then listen back while you play the other part of the duet

STAIR STEPPER: learn a piece or scale of music very slow, then every day increase the tempo by 2-3 bpm until you reach your desired tempo goal

COMPANY'S COMING: learn your piece along with a recording. Especially good with concertos

THICK ACCENT: overdue the fix of an issue. If your accidentally accenting the first note your diddles, make up an exercises where you only accent the second note of your diddles

THINK IT, SING IT, PLAY IT: do exactly that with a chunk of music: read through it with your eyes, sing it out loud, then finally play it on the instrument

POWER PRACTICE: separate your practice sessions into a bunch of 10-minute sessions where each 10-minute session you focus on only one small concept/chunk

Schaffur by Fritz Hauser

- find a tempo that allows everybody to keep the pulse going for about 20 minutes
- use plastic chopsticks to produce an ongoing scratching sound on a surface that provides friction (natural drumhead, gong, anything really..)
- use, instruments that sound different when not being dampened with the one hand that is not busy with scratching.
- for starters you want to practice the constant pulse with everybody on a similar surface (like e.g. the edge of a table) to sync the tempo and to make sure that the sound is even with everybody.
- when using the instruments start with dampened sounds and only eventually let go the other hand and free the sound of the object/instrument.
- start with one player, then let the others join.
- for the end of the piece however, it is good to create a common decrescendo.
- do not try to find a precise end. Let the silence install itself like falling snow.

Remember:

- this piece only works when the overall sound is held in balance. Only then the overtones will arise and the whole mobile of sounds starts to float in the air.
- there are no solos. When someone is too loud, the others are too soft. When someone is too soft, the others are too loud.
- a good length for the piece, including start, slow crescendo, and end would be about 15-20 minutes.
- every time you perform this piece you will hear something different: enjoy!
- LISTEN!