

The Mason Music Recital Countdown

8 Weeks Out: Select Your Song

Work with your teacher to pick a song you are excited about that you can learn to play with confidence. Pick something too easy and you'll be bored. Pick something too hard and you will struggle to do your best. Find a great song that challenges you just the right amount and get to work listening to it and playing it with your teacher.

7 Weeks Out: Memorize Your Song (Chunking and Chaining)

Break your entire piece up into smaller 'chunks' and memorize each chunk. Then start 'chaining' the chunks together, adding them to each other and putting the whole piece together. You should be practicing your piece 5 days a week, at least 15 minutes a day. Be sure to take breaks for some free play. Play your other songs for fun and give your brain a break. Then back to work chunking and chaining. You may not have your entire piece yet if your teacher is still giving you parts of the song to work on. That's ok! Work with what you have and you'll be fine. You still have plenty of time to get ready. Keep it up!

6 Weeks Out: Practice It Slow and Correct

By now you are on your way to memorizing your piece. Make sure you practice it slow. Sometimes it's even harder to play a song slow. When we play a song fast, it's easy to hide mistakes in the speed. Slow it down, play it correctly, and add to your speed little by little. You've got this! Keep up the good work. We promise it will pay off.

5 Weeks Out: Start In The Middle

Practice starting at different places in the song. Start in the middle, start at the chorus, pick any part to start and play to the end. This will build your confidence in the song and help you pick up in the middle if you get stuck during the performance. Leave room for mistakes and practice recovering from them. If you practice this way, a tiny mistake during your performance won't trip you up. By the end of this week, you'll be halfway to the recital!

4 Weeks Out: Rehearse Your Introduction

Halfway there! Great job. One part of your preparation for the recital you don't want to forget is introducing yourself and your song. This is super easy, but for some, it's the scariest part. Not to worry! Practice this at home and your fears will shrink the day of the performance. All you need to say is your name and the title of the song you are playing. However, you can feel free to get creative and have fun with it! Let your personality show, or keep it simple. Either way, practice it ahead of time and you'll be glad you did. "Hi, my name is Will Mason and I'll be playing Stairway to Heaven by the best band in the world, Led Zeppelin."

3 Weeks Out: Practice With Distractions

Part of the excitement of live performances is that you never know what might happen - babies cry, people sneeze, the sound system feeds back, the lights flicker. Any of these can throw a performer off their groove. Not to worry! You can practice this too! Have a family member get creative with interruptions and distractions while you are practicing. Nerf guns allowed (just no head shots)! The point of the game is to complete the piece, no matter what. The day of the recital, you are going to be so prepared you will have a blast. Almost there!

2 Weeks Out: Rehearse With A Small Audience

At this point, you know your song. I mean, you have it down! You know it backwards and forwards, and you have so much confidence in your ability to play it. It's a great idea to go ahead and rehearse it in front of a small audience to get your jitters out. You can possibly do this at school, a friend's house, or your lesson studio (we have impromptu lobby performances, students swapping rooms to practice their songs for each other, etc.) You can also do this at home with your friends and family. If you can play your song in front of your little brother, you can play it at the recital! You're doing great. Keep pushing, getting better, and get that last 5% improvement. Let's take a B to an A!

Week Of The Recital: What Am I Going To Wear?

Go ahead and think through *all* of the details of the performance day. What are you going to have for breakfast? What are you going to wear to the event? What is it going to feel like to perform your piece? How are you going to celebrate? What we're really talking about here is technique called visualization. Visualization is an incredibly powerful way to prepare your mind for a performance. Michael Phelps, winner of more Olympic gold medals than anyone in history, is famous for his [intense visualization rituals](#). If it's good enough for Michael Phelps, it's worth a shot!