

# Perceptions and Time Use of University Voice Students During Self-Guided Practice Sessions



Dr. Alan J. Martin, Music Department • SUNY Oswego



## Abstract

Research data on the self-perceptions, self-efficacy, and attitudes of musicians in practice rooms during self-guided practice sessions is currently limited, and few studies to date have investigated singers' attitudes towards practicing and perceived behaviors across multiple self-guided practice sessions. Therefore, the purpose of this study was to document through questionnaire data and observations the perceptions and activities of university vocalists (N = 40) across 5 self-guided practice sessions with attention to (a) duration of practice sessions compared to previously expressed estimations, (b) participants' attitudes and strategies with respect to vocal practicing, and (c) participants' perceived practice activity vs. actual practice activity.

## Research Questions

1. What are the actual durations of participants' full practice sessions across the five sessions examined for this study?
2. How do the self-estimated durations of participants' typical practice sessions compare to actual durations?
3. What do questionnaire data suggest about participants' attitudes and strategies with respect to vocal practicing?
4. What are the differences between participants' perceived first practice activity vs. actual first practice activity?

## Method & Procedures

Participants	Initial Questionnaire	Practice Audio Recordings
N = 40 • Females (n = 22) and Males (n = 18) • Graduate (n = 22) and Undergraduate (n = 18) • Vocal Performance (n = 29) and Non-Performance (n = 11) • Various reported years of voice lessons  All enrolled in voice lessons at school in USA or UK	Three sections: • Demographic information • Practice frequency and duration • Practice attitudes and strategies Completed once (prior to recording, online)	Activity • Free choice Duration • No upper limit • Suggested minimum duration of 15 minutes Venue(s) • Any location of convenience • Must have been previously used for practice

## Results

### RQ1 (Actual Practice Durations)

Participant	Session 1	Session 2	Session 3	Session 4	Session 5	Mean	SD	
1	0:21:38	0:18:57	0:19:57	0:51:28	0:27:53	0:27:59	0:13:35	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Grand mean practice time duration = 0:28:14 (SD = 0:13:39)</li> <li>• Range (all sessions): 0:03:56 (Participant 27, Session Four) to 1:18:42 (Participant 29, Session 1)</li> <li>• Range (participant means): 0:05:04 (Participant 27) to 0:51:22 (Participant 18)</li> <li>• Mode = 17 minutes</li> </ul>
2	0:47:25	0:31:42	0:21:27	0:34:11	0:37:12	0:34:23	0:09:23	
3	0:19:36	0:17:32	0:15:25	0:18:31	0:22:37	0:18:44	0:02:40	
4	0:19:02	0:50:33	0:52:59	0:15:57	0:19:29	0:31:36	0:18:29	
5	0:31:07	0:35:41	0:39:04	0:36:58	0:34:14	0:35:25	0:02:59	
6	1:08:30	0:57:18	0:25:40	0:22:30	1:14:28	0:49:41	0:24:12	
7	0:10:03	0:11:01	0:15:05	0:15:00	0:11:08	0:12:27	0:02:24	
8	0:17:40	0:21:26	0:24:48	0:24:12	0:16:16	0:20:52	0:03:49	
9	0:51:59	0:38:29	0:30:01	0:45:52	0:36:33	0:40:35	0:08:31	
10	0:28:45	0:20:20	0:18:32	0:17:33	0:34:43	0:23:59	0:07:27	
11	0:23:53	0:28:03	0:16:53	0:31:58	0:33:15	0:26:48	0:06:39	

(sample of data)

### RQ2 (Comparison of RQ1 Data to Self-Estimated Practice Durations)

P	Estimated Daily Duration	Estimated Sessions Per Day	Estimated Session Duration*	Mean Session Duration	Difference	
1	0:45:00	1	0:45:00	0:26:00	-0:19:00	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Grand mean difference = -0:09:00</li> <li>• Range: -1:35:00 (Participant 38) to +0:27:00 (Participant 6) (SD = 0:27:00)</li> <li>• Twenty-two participants (59.4%) overestimated their practice time and those 22 participants did so, on average, by 0:24:00</li> </ul>
2	0:30:00	2	0:15:00	0:34:00	+0:19:00	
3	1:00:00	1	1:00:00	0:19:00	-0:41:00	
4	0:30:00	1	0:30:00	0:32:00	+0:02:00	
5	0:30:00	1	0:30:00	0:35:00	+0:05:00	
6	0:45:00	2	0:23:00	0:50:00	+0:27:00	
7	1:00:00	2	0:30:00	0:12:00	-0:18:00	
8	0:30:00	1	0:30:00	0:21:00	-0:09:00	
9	1:00:00	2	0:30:00	0:41:00	+0:11:00	
10	1:00:00	4	0:15:00	0:24:00	+0:09:00	

\*Estimated Individual Session Duration =  $\frac{\text{Estimated Total Practice Duration Per Day}}{\text{Estimated Number of Practice Sessions Per Day}}$   
(sample of data)

### RQ3 (Attitudes and Strategies)

Self-Reported Frequency and Routine	Practice Attitudes and Strategies	Self-Reported Starting Behaviors
All participants: • Reported practicing about five days per week on average (M = 5.03, SD = 1.25). • A majority of participants (n = 26, 65%) indicated they followed an established practice routine • Participants who described their routines typically mentioned warm-up followed by repertoire study	Participants on average reported that they: "Usually" or "frequently" • Listened to the advice of their voice teachers, enjoyed practicing, found it easy to focus while practicing "Half of the time" to "frequently" • Set targets to achieve during each session, heard advice on how to practice from their voice teachers	All participants' top responses: • Practice - "Vocal warm-up exercise" (n = 30 [75%]) • Repertoire - "Listening to a recording of the piece" (n = 18 [45%])

## Results (cont.) – RQ4 (Difference between Perceived and Actual Starting Practice Activities)

Modal

- Most (n = 34, 85%) participants evidenced Singing Voice [non-repertoire] as their modal, or most frequent, starting behavior across five practice sessions

Previously described

- Most (n = 36, 90%) participants indicated prior to practice session recordings that they typically began practice with either "Vocal warm-up exercise" (n = 30, 75%) or "Technical exercises or scales" (n = 6, 15%)

There was no significant difference between these modal and previously described starting practice behaviors,  $\chi^2(1) = 1.14, p = 0.28$

## Discussion

**Participants, on average:**

- Practice five days per week for a duration of 28 minutes per session, although they may think they practice longer
- Report having an established practice routine
- Overestimated duration of practice time by ~32%
- Received advice on how to practice (significantly more undergraduate students did so)

Average practice duration of 28 minutes may align with advice in some professional literature to practice in short bursts

**These data highlight:**

- Importance of instructor input, supervision, and guidance
- Potential implications of regular scheduling of practice sessions

**Suggestions for future research:**

- Interviews with participants and their voice teachers
- Video recordings of practice sessions
- Revision of questionnaire instrument