

A Guide to Practicing All-State Etudes
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These ideas are meant to help you as you prepare etudes, but they can be applied to all types of literature; (solos, etudes, large ensemble music, etc.).

- 1) Play through the etude from beginning to end S-L-O-W-L-Y. Use a metronome, and pick a tempo that will allow you to play every note, rhythm, articulation, and dynamic precisely. If the etude is very technical, this initial first reading will go extremely slowly. Avoid the temptation to race through the easy parts and slow down in the difficult passages. If you find yourself losing concentration, it is OK to stop and regroup during this first reading.
- 2) As you sight-read the etude, take note of the areas that give you the most trouble, perhaps even stopping to put a star or check by those places.
- 3) After the first reading, begin your practicing by systematically working through those passages that gave you problems. Here are some guidelines as you work these passages.
 - a) Practice slowly, then gradually speed up the metronome towards your target tempo. This method really works!
 - b) Pay special attention to unusual intervals, rhythms, and dynamics. These are the places where judges will be most critical. (Avoid neglecting the rest of the etude though!)
 - c) Other strategies include changing the rhythm of a difficult passage, working backwards through a passage measure by measure, adding one note at a time as you practice, and many more. Be creative in your practicing!
 - d) No matter what practice strategies you use, make sure that you can play each difficult passage correctly *many* times (at least 3 in a row) before going on to another passage or speeding up the tempo.
- 4) Once you have worked out the difficult passages, you can then integrate them with the rest of the etude. Continue to take note of problem areas, and stop to work on them if they continue to cause you difficulty.
- 5) When preparing for an audition (i.e. All-State), play your etude for as many people as will listen; your band director, your friends, your brother/sister, mom/dad, etc. Playing in front of people will help you feel more comfortable in the audition.
- 6) Record yourself, even if it's on a cheap tape recorder. Listening to recordings of yourself will help you spot faulty rhythm and intonation, as well as many other issues you may not notice while you are playing.
- 7) Above all, be kind to yourself and have fun. Avoid "inner monologues" that tear down your confidence. Be critical of your playing, but be supportive and constructive as well.