

Daily Harmonica Practice Schedule

A student once told me that they had fifteen minutes to practice a day and asked me to advise them on how to practice.

My first response was, “Practice in the way that’s most enjoyable for you.” I’ve seen many people quit harmonica over the years. It seems to me that the thing that keeps people playing over the long run is their enjoyment of the instrument. As Mythologist Joseph Campbell says, “Follow your bliss and doors will open where you never knew there were doors”.

That being said if you only have fifteen minutes to practice a day I would recommend you divide your time into one “long” session and several “short” sessions.

Example of 15 Minutes of Practice divided into Four Sessions:

- **2 Minute Session in the morning**
- **2 Minute Session in the afternoon (lunch break)**
- **2 Minute Session in the late afternoon**
- **9 Minute Session in the evening**

I would recommend that you pick a “Chugging Train-Time Rhythm Pattern” and focus on it for the entire two minutes on all three of the 2-minute sessions (For example “Tucka (1,2)↓ Toodle (1,2)↑”) I will be calling the rhythm you choose to focus on, your **“Focus Rhythm Pattern”**. It doesn’t matter which rhythm pattern you choose to focus on as long as you pick one and stick with it. For a review of the rhythm patterns click on the name to [Level 2 Step 2](#) and [Level 2 Step 3](#)).

In the longer 9 minute practice session I would recommend that you warm up for two minutes on your *“Focus Rhythm Pattern”* and then spend your remaining practice time learning some new techniques (perhaps working on one of my online lessons).

I recommend that you stick with the same *“Focus Rhythm Pattern”* for several days, weeks or months. If at any point you notice that you no longer enjoying yourself or progressing, switch to a new “Chugging Train-Time Rhythm Pattern” and make that your new *“Focus Rhythm Pattern”*.

What I have proposed to you would be one possible way to practice that would enable you to play several times a day. Studies show that learning through repetition will generally increase your leaning speed significantly. In other words, you will learn faster if you play for short periods several times a day than if you practice a lot once in a while. *Check it out for yourself and find out what works for you.*

Would it possible for you to practice three or more times a day for around two minutes and then play more whenever you have time? If so, are you willing to set an intention to do this everyday for a while? How could you organize your life to make this happen?

Suggestions:

- **Keep the harmonica with you as you journey through your day** (I like to remove a harmonica from its case, and keep it in my front pocket inside of a zip-lock bag)
- **Pick one rhythm pattern and focus on it.** I've found that improving on one simple rhythm pattern has had a way of developing every aspect of my playing (If you wish to play all the rhythms daily that's fantastic but pick one pattern to focus on make it your best friend. I recommend "Keeper of the Winds")
- **ABOVE ALL!!! ABOVE ALL!!! ABOVE ALL!!! HAVE FUN!!!** I'm pleading with your inner-critic to just let you enjoy yourself. Forget about trying to improve or do it "right". There's time for that. Let these "one-minute" harmonica breaks be all about the fun. I'm confident that over time you'll find that improving will happen naturally and automatically.
- **Give your tongue the space and time to learn to dance.** If it's more enjoyable for you to practice the rhythms without the hands that's fine. What most important is that you fully relax your tongue to the point that it almost feels "sloppy". Then allow your tongue to dance with the wind of your breath.
- **Breath from your Diaphragm!!!!!!** 'nuff said.
- **Practice without the harmonica.** Focus on fluttering your tongue against the roof of your mouth as if the roof of your mouth was a drum. Notice that by doing this you can play your breath to a beat. I call this "Air Harp" and I believe that practicing without the harmonica is extremely valuable. Practicing air harp will give you the opportunity practice the rhythm patterns even if you don't have your harmonica on hand ("Air Harp" also makes it easier to practice in random situations like driving in the car, folding laundry, while taking a walk...)
- **If you're enjoying yourself play for more than a minute.** Generally the more you practice the better. But if your inner-critic is being hard on you, it might work against you in the long run. Please don't underestimate the power "one fun minute of harmonica playing" especially when done several times a day.

Bottom line, I encourage you to find a way of practicing that works for you and support you in moving toward the fun.

www.FreeHarmonicaLessons.com

www.JPAllen.com/shop