

Teaching Music Online - Tips

Technology is continuing to play a larger role in private music lessons. This could be an unusual situation for some teachers, but some simple suggestions will help this go more smoothly.

Teaching lessons online provides you with an opportunity to reach students who are at a greater distance or who are unable to meet you for in-person lessons.

Here are some tips to help you get started!



Use what you've already got in the house. Your desktop, laptop, computer, iPad, tablet or smartphone should serve well for these lessons. You just need an internet connection and a device equipped with a camera and a microphone.



Check your internet connection. Whether you're using Zoom, Skype, FaceTime, Google Duo, or some other video chat program, set up a sound/video check with a colleague, friend, or family member to make sure your setup is working. Ensure that you can see and hear them and that they can see and hear you.



Limit the bandwidth usage of other household members while you're teaching online. Let them know when you will be teaching and ask them to limit their web activity, including online gaming, streaming videos, etc. during that time. This will reduce delays and freeze-ups in your connection with your students.



Use an external microphone and/or speaker for your device (if available). It will help you transmit and receive more detailed sound than through the speakers built into a phone or tablet.



Create a clean backdrop for online lessons. Aim the camera so that students will not see your family members or other distractions in the background. Reduce household clutter from the video frame to ensure that you don't have glare or reflections from lights behind you.



Make sure that there is enough light on both you and on your student's side of the connection to see each other well.



Hold your calls in a quiet environment. It's difficult to communicate over background noise. Use headphones or earbuds if possible to hear details in your student's playing.



Remember that good teaching is all about communication and making a personal connection with your students. Find ways to make the learning special for your students so that they look forward to your sessions, whether it is online or in-person.



Try an asynchronous approach to some facets of the lesson (if you have a slower internet connection). For example, students can send a video performance of their scales and exercises, or an appropriate portion of their lesson. You can then review and comment on them via text or email. Explain this approach to the student and their parents so that they don't feel shortchanged on face-to-face time in the actual lesson.



Try muting or turning off your camera on your device while your student is playing (if you experience delays and glitches). Students can also mute or turn off their camera while you're playing.



Set aside an hour or so at regular periods during which students can text, email, or call with issues. This will give them access to relatively quick feedback and reduce the sense of isolation from their teacher. This will also help them stay engaged in their studies as this situation progresses.



Keep your online teaching sessions with students brief, e.g. 45-60 minutes in length. It can be difficult for students and instructors to maintain concentrated focus online for an extended period of time. Offering a series of short, manageable online learning activities with students is preferable to one long session.



Keep Calm and Teach On!