



# Help! My child wants to play the violin

*The parent's guide to nurturing a young violinist.*



By Laurel H. Ryce

## **A word from the Author**

Do you have a son or daughter that has been asking to play an instrument? Do you, like me, think the violin is a good starting instrument for your child? As a parent who has groomed two young violinists, I am here to share some of what I know (and what I wish I had known) with you.

## So where do you go from here?

I choose the violin for my first child after being advised to do so by my sister, who is an educator. She said that the violin is a good instrument to start with because it's small and will grow with the child.

Because the instrument is sized to the arm length of the player, it changes as the child grows. Some children grow fast and rapidly change sizes while others are slow growers. I have two daughters who were young violinists and one changed instruments rapidly and the other took her time.

Playing an instrument develops discipline. The discipline of working on a piece to perfection level. Perfection changes based on the place you are in your music journey. Music relieves stress and can be an outlet for emotions. It builds self confidence especially in children. It gives them something to take pride in. Playing the violin helps with posture, and music in general helps with memory and focus. Music can also give your young one the opportunity to earn income from performing and teaching as well as eligibility for scholarships

## **But I don't have a violin!**

Find a music store that carries violins. You can buy the instrument or rent one. Many parents of young violinists opt to rent their instruments because children grow rapidly and it's much easier to exchange sizes. It is very important that your child doesn't play on an instrument that is too big or too small for them as it will affect their ability to maintain proper posture while playing their instrument.

Some shops will allow you to rent and enable a portion of the rental will go towards the purchase of an instrument in the future. If you are opting to purchase an instrument, be sure to have your child measured for the appropriate size instrument and have a violinist check the instrument out to be sure it is worth the cost. It's important that your young violinist know that this instrument is not a toy. Before you pick up the instrument explain to your child that the violin is delicate and fragile and should be treated with as much tenderness as a newborn baby. When it is finally time to pick up the instrument, make it a special day for them! To this day, my oldest

daughter claims that the day we picked up her first violin at age 3 is her earliest memory!

## **How to choose a teacher**

Before you look for a teacher, decide what your goals are. Some teachers can be rigid and strict and not fun and engaging. The right teacher can influence not only the quality of your child's playing, but also their motivation to continue learning the instrument.

Not all exceptional violinists will make exceptional teachers. Don't assume that just because a musician's playing is impressive that they will be able to duplicate that with your child. There are many excellent teachers out there but not everyone will be right for you. Talk to teachers, visit their studios, set up trial lessons, and talk to other parents if possible.

## **Practice makes perfect!**

Make sure you set aside time to practice. It is Important to work on the current material, but like mathematics, music requires more time spent in

review than in new material. For a 3 year old, 8 or 10 minutes two or 3 times a day is great. Make sure listening time is spent. Find older students to play with them and for them and find younger students for them to play for.

## **Keeping the magic alive**

Keep sessions fun. It's okay to include some type of reward system as you practice with them. A simple thing as a jar that you try to fill with colored paper that you write little encouraging words or affirming words. Or a board that you fill with stickers. Your goal is to create a love for practicing within your child that will be so deeply ingrained in them that you no longer need to provide incentives. Always end the sessions at a peak before they get tired or lose interest. Do this even if they want to continue so they are eager to go back to their instrument the next time.

When my eldest daughter was small, she would get very hot when she played. I'm not sure if she was really hot or just using it as an excuse. So when she would complain about being hot I would I would allow her to

remove an item of clothing. Before we knew it she was down to her underwear playing her violin under the fan with a smirking smile. It took some work, but we made it through the entire practice session!

For her sweet sixteen she had a large formal event, and for her talent display she played two songs on her electric violin one of which was "Feeling Hot,Hot,Hot". I shared the story and we handed out fans and friends and family followed her in a Conga line fanning her as we danced to the music!

As the parent of a young violinist there may be times that they may not feel like practicing. That is to be expected, but you are their coach and you just have to encourage them to practice just as you would encourage them to take a bath, clean their room,or brush their teeth.

Remember that playing an instrument is an honor and a privilege and should be treated as such. Don't ever make make it seem like a punishment.

## The Gift of Music

My family and I have had many fun years enhanced by the study and appreciation of music. Even if your child does not become a professional violinist, allowing them to explore the violin will be a wonderful experience. They will be able to enhance their discipline, dedication, creativity, sense of responsibility, and knowledge of music. And if nothing else, they will be able to understand and appreciate the hours of hard work and dedication it takes to produce the music they hear and enjoy every day! May the gift of music bring your family as much joy as it has brought mine.

## The Joy Continues

Once your little one gets started on their musical journey, keep them engaged and excited by checking out <https://www.weimaginemusic.com/>. The online shop features stories, coloring pages, and practice logs to keep your young violinist excited about music! The item I am most excited to recommend is the first book in the We Imagine Music book series! Let's hear what it's author (my daughter) Kenesha T. Ryce has to say about the series:

“Imagine a book that allows a young violinist to hop inside their instrument into a fairy tale land where their musical questions are answered with a fun folk tale (and the real technical answer just to cover all the bases). Here, the young musician is allowed to travel into the world of music where the violin becomes the geographical landscape for stories that will help them remember and execute musical techniques.”

Visit [weimaginemusic.com](http://weimaginemusic.com) today, and subscribe to the mailing list to be kept in the loop about new products and resources to help you along your journey!

Play on!

Laurel H. Ryce