

Advice for Parents with a Young Violinist:

The most helpful parents give honest, positive encouragement, but not every day:

Good encouragement:

“Sounds like you're working hard.”
“I'm so proud of you for practicing on your own.” -encourages individual effort, not results
“I'm impressed you can do all of that *on your own!*” -young students have ownership over VERY few activities.

Bad encouragement:

“Are you sure it's supposed to sound like that?” - discourages making mistakes, takes away ownership, and encourages useless performance-practicing
“Don't you have to clean your room or do some other menial, quieter activity?”
-passive aggressive way of discouraging practicing

Parents can set up a healthy environment for practicing:

The best environment for practicing is usually a quiet, closed room, without distractions. This room has a mirror, and hopefully some sunlight! It shouldn't feel like a prison cell.

Students who practice in open family rooms tend to do very useless performance/practicing. Students who practice in echoing bathrooms tend to misjudge their sound production. Students who are encouraged to play with practice mutes have no sense of appropriate sound production, and intonation also suffers.

Parents can help students schedule time

Young children especially, have very little control over their lives, and this is especially true in regards to time management. Most children and most teenagers are terrible at keeping schedules. That's not completely their fault. Many schedule items are unknown and out of their control.

If meals, errands, and other activities take place at unpredictable times, there's little chance that any child will practice regularly.

If violin practice is scheduled at a regular, predictable time, the student is well-rested, and the student is not over-scheduled, **regular practice is not difficult to achieve.**

I just don't think my child is practicing well:

You're right, they probably aren't! The best we can do as parents and teachers is model appropriate behavior and continually test in a low-stakes setting, such as private violin lessons. Allow children to make many mistakes in a safe environment. With time, habits will change.