

**7 UNTOLD
TRUTHS AND
1 DIRTY
LITTLE
SECRET YOU
MUST KNOW
BEFORE YOU HIRE
A MUSIC TEACHER**

COURTESY OF: DAVID MOTTO

YOU NEED TO KNOW THE TRUTH

Before you hire a music teacher, you need to know that you've found the perfect teacher. To do this right, you need real-world information, the behind-the-scenes stuff that most people have never heard about.

After all, you're going to spend a lot of time, effort, and money working with this teacher. You need to know they're the right choice.

There are many guides available online that give you the basics of what to look for in a music teacher. Here are links to a few of them:

<http://www.melbay.com/faqs/selectinstructor.asp>

<http://www.mtna.org/parent-and-student-resources/choosing-a-music-teacher>

<http://musiced.about.com/od/beginnersguide/bb/ndex.htm>

<http://matadornetwork.com/life/how-to-choose-the-perfect-music-teacher/>

These guides have a lot of terrific information and great advice. Reading them will definitely be useful for you. But, they don't tell the whole story!

There's a whole different set of insider information you need to know if you want to have a great experience taking lessons. Music teachers themselves know how valuable this information is, but very few of them are willing to talk about it. Some of them will even be upset that I'm sharing this information with you (especially their dirty little secret).

What you're about to read is not the usual information about finding a music teacher.

This guide isn't like the usual guides for finding a music teacher.

There's a whole set of insider information you need to know if you want to have a great experience taking lessons.

TRUTH #1: MAKE SURE THE TEACHER HAS EXPERIENCE TEACHING SOMEONE LIKE YOU

Sure, it's easy to say that your music teacher needs to have experience and be really good and have a lot of students who stick with them for a long period of time. All of this is true. But, there could be such a teacher in your area who is absolutely the wrong teacher for you.

And, this teacher might be willing to take you on as a student and even do a good job teaching you. But, they're still not right for you.

I'll use myself as an example. I've been teaching for over 25 years and have taught everyone from absolute beginners to university music majors to professionals. I've written books on learning musical instruments, I'll show you exactly how to practice, and you will become a very good musician if you follow my advice.

But, I'm best teaching students who can carry on a good conversation with me, with a lot of give and take. So, I never teach anyone younger than 13 or 14, and I prefer to teach adults.

And, if someone just wants to learn songs—doesn't want in depth knowledge of their instrument, doesn't care about any music theory, isn't concerned with building great technique—then I know I'll lose interest in their lessons. I'm just the wrong guy.

So, I refer potential students who fit these two categories to other teachers in my area. I can tell you that every music teacher has these feelings about certain types of students.

Make sure any potential teacher likes to do the type of teaching you're looking for. It's not enough for the teacher to be professional and experienced. They must have the specific experience that will actually help you.

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TRUTH #2: DO NOT HIRE THE CHEAPEST TEACHER IN TOWN

This isn't just about "you get what you pay for." Occasionally, a very inexpensive teacher will be just fine. Usually, however, they're inexperienced at teaching and sometimes haven't even been playing for very long. You don't want to be their guinea pig. Let them figure out their teaching methods on someone else.

In the U.S., music lessons generally range from \$20/hour to \$75/hour. But, you'll seldom find this wide of a range of pricing in any one geographical area. Most of the good teachers in one area charge approximately the same price, with teachers in rural areas and small towns generally charging much less than teachers in major cities.

If, in your area, most music teachers are charging between \$25 - \$30 per hour, and you see an ad on Craigslist or on a flier or wherever for \$15/hour, do **not** hire this person. (In some big cities, where the good teachers charge \$65 - \$75 per hour, you'll need to stay away from the \$30/hour teachers.)

If these low-priced teachers were good at teaching and had a great reputation, they would be charging approximately what other teachers are charging. You're not looking for the cheapest bargain when you take lessons. You want high quality. You're investing time and money in yourself.

Some bonus information:

Unless absolutely every music lesson teacher in your area offers one free lesson and you know this is the normal practice where you live, do **not** take lessons from a teacher who says the first lesson is free. Only teachers who absolutely have to offer a free lesson to attract students will make this offer. The good teachers don't need to.

***You need to
find out what
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TRUTH #3: DO NOT HIRE A TEACHER WHO COMES TO YOUR HOUSE

There are three reasons not to hire a music teacher to give you lessons in your home.

REASON 1: They're inexperienced

Teachers who will travel to you are usually just starting out in their teaching career. Otherwise, they'd be established with lots of students and maybe even a waiting list. They wouldn't have time to travel to you. They'd be seeing students every hour in their teaching studio.

There are obviously exceptions to Reason 1, but most teachers who drive around a lot to teach are not the best teachers in the area.

Even if you've found the world's best music teacher, and they're willing to travel to your home, there are two more compelling reasons not to hire them.

REASON 2: You won't learn as much

When a teacher enters your home, you may not be able to give them your full concentration. At home there are distractions. It could be very difficult for you to completely forget about all the activities going on in your house and all your responsibilities there. Will you really be able to fully engage for your lesson?

Also, when you're home you feel comfortable—perhaps too comfortable. Having a lesson won't feel like a special activity. You'll feel completely different than if you had to travel to your music lesson with your instrument, sheet music, and accessories in hand.

Both of these aspects of staying at home for your lesson mean you are likely to learn a lot less at home compared to going somewhere else specifically for a music lesson.

Can you fully concentrate in your own home?

REASON 3: The quality of the lesson will suffer

The teacher won't teach as well in your home. They've just traveled to you and may not yet be fully concentrating. If they got stuck in traffic on the way to your home, for example, they'll still be thinking about that.

Even more important, there's no way a music teacher can have everything they need with them when they travel to you. They won't have all their gear, teaching materials, books, instruments, recordings, computer, etc. In their own teaching studio, they have all their resources available for you. This allows them to give you a better lesson in their studio.

***Teachers give
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TRUTH #4: TELL THE TEACHER WHAT YOUR MAIN GOAL IS AND MAKE SURE THEY REACT IN A SUPPORTIVE WAY

First of all, don't start taking lessons unless you know **why** you're taking lessons. Have some sort of a goal. Maybe you have a specific song you want to learn. Or, there might be a style of music you've always wanted to play.

So, tell the potential teacher what your goal is. If there's silence on the other end of the phone, or if they try to push you in another direction, that's a bad sign. If the teacher likes your goal, appreciates that you have a goal, and expands on the goal, that's a good sign.

For instance, you might say your goal is to learn Led Zeppelin songs. If the teacher says, "Well...that's okay...but first...you should learn scales and arpeggios and technique for a year, then we might be able to start that process," that's a bad sign. If they disagree with your goal, there will eventually be friction between you and your teacher.

If the teacher says, "Led Zeppelin would be terrific for you. I've had many students learn those songs. We'll start on one Led Zeppelin song right away, and I'll enhance your skills by showing you technical exercises like scales and arpeggios that will directly help you play those songs better," now you've got the teacher you want.

Even better is the teacher who first asks about your goals and your primary reason for wanting to play an instrument and then tells you how they will help you achieve your goals. If you find that teacher, sign up for lessons right away!

If you tell a teacher what your goal is and they answer you with silence, that's a bad sign.

TRUTH #5: ONLY HIRE A MUSIC TEACHER WHO CAN GUIDE YOUR PROGRESS IN BETWEEN LESSONS

Most music students think the most important part of the lesson process happens at the lesson itself. And, it's true that during your lesson you get specific advice from your teacher and feedback about what can be improved.

But, think about it. You see your music teacher for only 30 – 60 minutes a week. All the rest of the week, in between lessons, you're on your own. During this time is when you make improvements and have breakthroughs in your playing.

You need a teacher who can clearly guide you through this process. They must have a system in place to help you in between lessons. This system should help you remember:

- **exactly what happened at the lesson**
- **what you should be working on until your next lesson**
- **how you should do this work**
- **your specific goals as you work on this stuff**
- **exactly what is expected of you when you show up at the next lesson**
- **anything interesting that was talked about at the lesson**

Without such a system, it will be incredibly difficult for you to make any progress between lessons. With such a system, it's like your teacher is there with you as you practice, reminding you of exactly what you should be doing.

All your improvements and breakthroughs happen in between lessons.

The system can be in many forms. It can be a book. (My book is the *Musician's Practice Planner*, which is specifically designed to guide musicians in between lessons.) It can be a recording: you could leave the lesson with a CD recording of the lesson or a DVD of the lesson. It could be your own page on the teacher's website or notes in your smart phone.

If your music teacher uses a loose piece of paper, only writes a few notes in your sheet music or music book, or does nothing at all to guide you between lessons, you need another teacher.

Having you remember exactly what to do in between lessons is one of the top tasks of any great music teacher. The teachers who don't care about this don't care about you. And, all the best music teachers are caring people who want you to do your best.

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www.moltomusic.com/find-a-music-teacher

TRUTH #6: MAKE SURE YOU LIKE WHERE THE LESSONS ARE LOCATED

This Truth covers a pretty wide range of things.

First, there's the general area where your lessons will be. You'll want it to be convenient to get to. You'll need to make sure you won't be stuck in traffic getting there and that parking isn't too difficult. And, you'll need to feel comfortable with the neighborhood.

Then, there's the actual location of the lessons. The three most common places for music lessons are in the teacher's home, at a music store, and at a music school. For lessons in a home, there should be a space specifically for lessons. If you are allergic to dogs or cats, find out if there are pets in the house. For schools or music stores, you should like going there and get along with the staff you'll see before and after every lesson. If you want to avoid the place, you'll have a miserable time.

Finally, you must feel comfortable with the actual teaching studio. Make sure that your overall impression is that you want to be there. You won't want it to be too dirty, messy, or unorganized if these are important issues for you. The teacher should provide whatever is needed to make the lesson successful. And, you should feel at home during your lessons so you can be yourself.

All of these issues are a measure of personal taste. Find a teacher who teaches in a location you like.

You must feel comfortable with the teaching studio.

TRUTH #7: TAKE ONE LESSON WITH A TEACHER BEFORE YOU MAKE A COMMITMENT

There are many pieces of advice about what should happen when you first start working with a new music teacher.

Some people say ask for a free first lesson. That has drawbacks however. Most music teachers offered free first lessons early in their teaching careers, and they found that many students were just looking for a free lesson and not really trying to find a teacher. So, a lot of teachers resent being asked to work for free.

Some students (and especially parents whose child will be taking lessons) want to observe a lesson. Observing a lesson can be very helpful. The problem with observing a lesson is that the teacher won't be acting naturally. They know you're there, and your presence affects the lesson they're giving. Plus, many teaching studios don't have enough space for you to be there observing.

The best thing to do is to go take a single lesson from a music teacher you're considering hiring. You'll be able to assess if they have the knowledge and expertise needed, the level of patience you require, the right personality for you, and a whole lot of other subtle things that let you know that studying with this teacher will work well for you.

If you follow your instincts, after just one lesson you'll know if you want to continue taking lessons with this teacher. The main thing is you need to trust your music teacher. You have to know they have your best interests at heart. If you have some sort of gut reaction that you just don't like this person and can't exactly explain why, do **not** study with this person.

So, don't sign up for 15 weeks of lessons, sight unseen. Don't look for a freebie. Just go take one lesson and see if you like it.

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THE DIRTY LITTLE SECRET OF MUSIC TEACHERS

Okay, here's the dirty little secret you were promised. This secret is true even for the very best music teachers out there—the ones you should be taking lessons from.

Ready? Here it is:

Your teacher will not remember your last lesson.

Think about what this means:

You show up for this week's lesson, and you're ready to play and excited about the breakthrough you may have had this week. Your teacher, who truly is just as excited as you are about your progress, will need a reminder about what you did at the last lesson.

Very few music teachers will ever share this secret with their students. But, forgetting lessons is inevitable.

Here's why:

Really good music teachers (and I mean the absolute best ones out there—caring, talented individuals who know their stuff and truly want you to excel) are seeing 20 – 40 students a week. It would be unrealistic to expect that they will remember exactly what you did at the last lesson and every detail you talked about.

The best music teachers know that this is true, and they do something about it. They always have a system in place so they remember what happened at the last lesson.

This system is first and foremost for you. You need to leave each lesson with a clear plan of what to do until your next lesson. (See Truth #5 above.) But, the system is for your teacher also. When you arrive at that next lesson, they'll quickly look over the notes and practice plan from the last lesson.

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They need to jog their memory, and with their system in place, they will be able to remember everything from the last lesson. Really, it only takes about 30 seconds, and they're ready to go.

You **and** the teacher need to know what happened last week, what the goals and expectations were, and any little something that was said that really became the theme of the last lesson—some nugget of wisdom or some new technique you were supposed to try or a clarification of some music theory you were confused about.

All the best teachers make sure they have a way to remember exactly what happened at your last lesson. They know it's impossible to remember without some type of system, and they have this system in place for you.

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WHAT TO DO NEXT

Make sure you follow all the advice in this special report. Knowing these 7 Truths will save you a lot of time, money, and grief and give you the best opportunity to find the perfect music teacher.

But, don't expect that taking lessons will be a magic bullet. Even the world's best teacher can only help you so much. You'll need to do some work on your own!

To do that work efficiently and effectively, you need the best advice available on how to practice and learn your instrument. With this information, you'll get the most out of your lessons.

So, learn everything you can about the best way to master your instrument. Know the top strategies for creating highly focused practice sessions. With this information, you'll turbocharge the whole process of mastering your instrument.

During your lessons, your music teacher will show you **what** you need to learn. In between your lessons you need to know **how** to learn it.

[Click here for information on **how** to master your instrument.](#)

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR



David Motto is a musician, writer, teacher, and expert on the best way to learn musical instruments. He is in demand throughout the United States as a speaker and teacher. David is the coauthor of the best-selling book, *Musician's Practice Planner*, and the author of three instructional books for the bass guitar. His latest books are *The Ten Minute Virtuoso* series.

David is also the owner of Molto Music Publishing Company and writes the blog on the Molto Music website. He has taught private lessons for over 25 years and was a member of the music faculty at San Francisco State University for 12 years. He has performed on over twenty commercially released albums and is a member of the Recording Academy—which gives him the privilege of voting for the Grammy Awards.

David has done countless hours of research on exactly what helps musicians excel. He has accumulated a huge body of information on what works and what doesn't work to master a musical instrument. This raw information has been turned into 101 specific strategies that save musicians hundreds of hours and transform their playing.

[Click here for more information on these strategies.](#)

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