

How Do You Get to Carnegie Hall? 8 Keys to Deliberate Practice.

by Jeff Cobb

(taken from book, *Talent is Overrated* by Geoff Colvin)

1. Deliberate practice is highly demanding mentally, requiring high levels of focus and concentration.

You've heard it before – no pain, no gain. But the authors also stress that you have to be “fully absorbed” in your practice for it to truly be effective. This is suggestive of the [concept of “flow.”](#)

2. It is designed specifically to improve performance—to strengthen it beyond its current levels.

This is the part that says you can't just put in time and expect to get significantly better at anything – you have to consistently stretch yourself, and then stretch some more.

3. It must continue for long of periods of time.

This is Gladwell's 10,000 hours/10 years. The authors go on to say “Basic research on expert performance suggests that the benefits it generates cannot usually be attained with less than 10 years of continued, vigorous effort (e.g., Ericsson, 2006).”

4. It must be repeated.

Even though repetition alone won't get you to the level of excellence, you also won't get there without it. Perhaps this why the word “Practice” is repeated three times in the old joke.

5. It requires continuous feedback on results.

Sometimes you can tell on your own whether you are doing things right. I know when I hit a wrong note on the guitar, for example. But very often this is the area where having a great teacher, coach, or mentor can make all the difference.

6. Pre-performance preparation is essential.

This is where goal setting comes in – you have to know where you want to go if you expect to get there. And as the authors stress, goal-setting “should involve not merely outcomes, but also the processes involved in reaching predetermined goals.”

7. It involves self-observation and self-reflection.

As you practice, you need to be continually aware of your own performance and be focused on correcting and adapting as appropriate. This kind of in-the-moment self-assessment is critical regardless of whether a teacher is involved.

8. It involves careful reflection on performance *after* practice sessions are completed.

In addition to being aware of your performance as you are practicing, you need to look back on it once you are done and determine where you stand with respect to your overall goals. What might you change the next time to ensure ongoing progress?