



Studio Policies

The Suzuki Method

The Suzuki Method for teaching and learning instrumental music was conceived and created by Japanese violinist and pedagogue Shin'ichi Suzuki (1898–1998) dating from the mid-20th century. Suzuki's central belief is that all people – especially children – are capable of learning from their environment, and that talent is developed rather than inborn. The essential components of his method spring from the desire to create the right environment for learning. With the right environment and support, *every* child can learn to play the violin. The Suzuki Method offers a stepwise, clear, and proven path to learning an instrument. Please read “Nurtured by Love” by Shin'ichi Suzuki for more information on the Suzuki Method – its history and ethos.

In practical terms, the main aspects differentiating the Suzuki Method from other approaches are:

- Parental involvement in lessons and practise
- Learning aurally, via regular listening to the repertoire
- Group lessons as well as individual lessons

Taking each of these in turn:

Role of Parents

A parent is expected to attend every lesson, bring a notebook and writing materials, and take notes (and photos, videos as appropriate). The parent must also work with his or her child in practising outside lessons. (A caregiver who is committed and regularly involved in your child's music study may take this role or share it with parents.) In the Suzuki environment, there exists a teaching triangle between teacher, student, and parent. Each is essential to the learning process and the student's success. For more advanced or older students, parents may simply remind their child to practise, ensuring that it happens and that main points are addressed, with the student taking more responsibility for practising. It is not realistic to expect a very small child to progress at the violin without active parental support and involvement in lessons and practise.

Students must practise 5 days per week outside lessons with parental support as above. For a guide to the minimum practise expected: Children aged 3-4 should practise 10 minutes per day, and add 5 minutes per day for each additional year of age. (So a 7-year-old would practise 25 minutes per day, etc.) Bear in mind that these are *minimum* practise amounts; if your child is happy and

engaged and wants to do more, that's great and will result in faster progress. For older beginners, speak to me about practise requirements.

Listening

Students must also listen to the relevant Suzuki repertoire 5 days per week outside lessons, and parents must facilitate this by putting on the CD or playing the electronic music file (as on iPod, iPad, etc.). This can be done as ambient sound while the child is doing something else i.e. during homework, bath time, going-to-sleep time, or in the car.

Group Lessons

All students once they can "Twinkle" (play the Twinkle variations and theme, which are the first pieces in Book 1) must attend group lessons in addition to their individual lessons. Group lessons are imperative to achieving success in learning the violin via the Suzuki Method and provide informal, friendly performance opportunities, ensemble playing, concerts, and more. They also provide the opportunity for friendships and a social learning environment, which have a positive effect on students' motivation and enjoyment.

My students take part in Little Venice Suzuki Group, at St Augustine's High School in Kilburn. This well established Suzuki group of about 70 students meets about 5 times per term, Sunday mornings during term-time. Students attend 2-3 45-minute sessions, which, depending on their age and level, will include violin class plus Dalcroze, theory, note reading, chamber music, or orchestra. There are termly concerts, and the group participates in London-wide performance platforms and festivals run by the umbrella organisation London Suzuki Group. Advanced students who are active participants in their school's music program and/or local youth orchestra, summer and term-break music camps and similar may opt out of group lessons (discuss with me).

It is strongly advised to observe group lessons before starting lessons, so that you and your child can see first-hand what they offer. Little Venice Suzuki Group welcomes observers; speak to me about a day to observe.

Studio Logistics / Etiquette

For lessons at my home, the front door will be left unlocked during teaching hours. Please push open and enter quietly from the hallway via the second door on your right (dining room), closing the door firmly behind you (but not latching it). Quietly get your instrument out and set up to play (shoulder rest on, bow tightened and rosined). If you are early, please sit at the dining room table and observe the lesson currently underway.

Parking on Hillcrest Road and surrounding streets is free and unrestricted other than between 3-4pm and 9-10am weekdays. If you require a parking pass because your lesson is during a restricted time on a weekday please contact me and I will supply this, with the cost added to your termly bill. (Please do not park in the lot behind to the left of our house as the spots belong to other people.)

Please be on time for lessons. Arrive on time for lessons with enough time to go to the bathroom / get instruments out etc.

Parents or carers, please bring the notebook for recording practise points and writing materials to every lesson, and take notes so that you can guide your child's practise at home. Please switch mobiles off or to silent in lessons and refrain from texting and checking emails. Please do not use mobiles for note-taking. Do, however, use mobiles for taking pictures or videos to guide home practise.

Children awaiting their lesson and siblings may use the dining room table for quiet activities (homework, iPads on silent, reading and colouring are fine) and if you desire, a quiet snack (please tidy up). Please don't bring noisy toys to the lesson as this is distracting for both teacher and child.

Children should use the toilet if needed before rather than during their lesson. The downstairs loo is down the hallway before the kitchen. (Please leave the bathroom as you would wish to find it!) To avoid the spread of colds and to avoid getting anything sticky on their instruments, children should wash hands before the lesson.

If you would like to enter your child for graded music exams (ABRSM or Trinity), festivals, auditions or school concerts, advise me so that we can use lessons to prepare your child for a successful exam or performance.

Lesson and Fee Structure, Notice Period, Cancellation Policy

Each term typically consists of 10-13 individual lessons. My studio also has two concerts (June and December) where students perform solo pieces with piano. The out-of-pocket costs for this event (venue rental, accompanist) are shared among participating students and invoiced with the next term's fees; they have tended to be around the £40 mark per student. (My time related to the concerts is included in normal lesson fees.)

Fees for lessons are billed termly at the beginning of each term, payable on invoicing. Payment in halves can be arranged – half at the start of term, half at half term break – please discuss with me if this would be helpful. For partial terms when we are just starting to work together, lessons may be paid on a pay-as-you-go basis on the day via either cash, cheque or bank transfer.

Please let me know with a half-term's notice if you do not intend to continue lessons or if (for students on longer than a 30-minute lesson) you want to reduce the lesson time. Stopping or reducing lessons mid-term does not merit a refund. I will give a term's notice in advance of any fee rise.

Lessons which are canceled with more than 48 hours notice or by me will always be made up or refunded. For lessons which are canceled by you with less than 48 hours notice, I will make every effort to reschedule. A final week at the end of term is always made available for make-up lessons. Lessons during summer can be arranged on an ad hoc pay-as-you-go basis. Fees for group lessons are billed separately by Little Venice Suzuki Group.

All student families must be members of the British Suzuki Institute (BSI) and London Suzuki Group (LSG). You agree to pay the membership fee each year. Every student must also participate in at least one BSI or LSG event each year.