

Rehearsing your Viva Voce



For many students, the Viva Voce is a good alternative to a performance. However, just like a performance, it is vital that you prepare your Viva Voce well in advance. Regular rehearsal is vital as it will help you find gaps in your research and calm your nerves before you present it.

Notice that we're talking here about *rehearsal* and not *practice*? **Practice** is something you do on your own and could involve anything from figuring out the best structure of your summary sheet to verbally describing your short musical examples out loud. When you **rehearse**, you are seeking feedback on what you think is a finished product.

NOTE: Sometimes you might find it useful to rehearse a shortened version of the final viva in an effort to build up your confidence with talking in more depth about your topic.



GOOD REHEARSAL STRATEGIES

Structure your time

In the same way you would for a performance, have a clear idea of how much time you have and come up with rehearsal times accordingly. You will need to coordinate this with the people you are rehearsing with (your 'marker'). To begin with, this may be a fellow student or family member but eventually it will be with your teacher.

Need v Want

Rehearse what you need to rehearse, not what you want to. Small areas of focus to begin with, then gradually build up to larger chunks of your Viva. Again, this is just what you would do for a performance.



Take it seriously

Go over your notes and prepare for the rehearsal, just like you would for the real thing. There's no point in skipping over a question you're asked, saying "I'll have that done before it's due" or stopping half way to check your notes.

Be aware

Know when you need to go back to 'research mode'. This is why it is important to get teacher feedback sooner rather than later as a 'subject expert' like your teacher will be able to tell if you have 'depth' in your knowledge, rather than just what is written on your summary sheet. You may need to go back and focus more intently on one or two specific points covered in your Viva or there may be some terminology errors that your friends or family may not pick up.

Record it

This can be uncomfortable for some people but it's a great way to review your overall presentation. You may be surprised at how your body language, clarity of explanations or level of enthusiasm is completely different to how you perceived them during the viva! It is so easy to record on your phone, tablet or laptop and it's a great way to help with the next suggestion...



Self reflection

Use a recording of your viva to make observations about your presentation. Not just your content knowledge but all of the things mentioned in the previous point. Rather than stopping at these observations, come up with ideas on how to improve on each aspect and develop goals to achieve improvement.

Ask a teacher (or a fellow student) to set aside some time with you to practice your Viva Voce at least a couple of times before it's due. The following pages are provided to help you reflect on these rehearsals and for you to record your teacher's feedback.

Short Rehearsal ①

Decide if you want this rehearsal to be 2, 3 or 5 minutes in length. It's a chance for you to focus on just one aspect of your topic. You should do this under exam conditions and make sure you include your examples and demonstrations as you would for the finished viva.

Date.....

Title of Viva Voce	Course Topic Represented

What did I do well? _____

What didn't work? _____

How would I mark myself for the following categories? (This is not meant to give you a mark, just highlight your strengths and weaknesses)

	Outstanding	Very good	Good with some errors or inconsistent	Inconsistent with errors	Needs a lot more work!
A musicological focus					
An understanding of the chosen topic					
An understanding of musical concepts					
Relevant musical examples that support the discussion					

PEER/TEACHER OBSERVATIONS: _____

What do I need to do to improve? (Be specific!) _____

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Full Rehearsal ①

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