



Music Practice
Noise Nuisance
Environmental Protection

Noise – Music Practice

The Environmental Protection team receive regular complaints of noise nuisance from music practice in residential property, outbuildings and rented premises. While this is mainly drum practice, most musical instruments can cause annoyance, especially if they're amplified. One of the biggest sources of complaint is drumming practice, and we cover that especially in the guidance below. But here's some general advice about music practice that may help to keep the peace...

Practice Times

Talk to your neighbours and find out what the best time is for you to practice so you can minimise any disturbance to them. Avoid practicing early in the morning or late at night and remember, most people are at home trying to relax in the evening. Remember to include weekends and bank holidays in your agreement. Establishing a regular pattern to your practice will help you to improve, but might help you come to a compromise with your neighbours. Whatever agreement you come up with, stick to it.

Where to practice

Consider location carefully. Rooms with adjoining walls to neighbours may be an issue. When practicing, keep windows and doors shut. Remember, conservatories have poor sound insulation properties. If you're in an outhouse in the garden, think about insulation if you're going to be audible to other people. As a general rule, the more you plan to practice, and the louder the instrument you play, the further away or the more insulated you should be.

Electronic alternatives

While drums, electric guitars and keyboards are built for noise, they are ideal for practicing using headphones – this keeps everyone happy.

Drums

Drums are noisy, and the constant pounding, especially from someone learning to play can quickly cause annoyance to neighbours. If you're investing in a kit, it might be worth getting some practice pads too. Practice pads are rubberised discs, that are placed on the top of the drum skins, and cymbals. The centre section responds to the drumstick with a similar feel and bounce as the actual drum head. The practice pad set can reduce the sound output of the drum set

and cymbals by up to 90% (manufacturers claim). In addition a large pillow or old duvet can be placed inside the bass drum to deaden its sound. With practice pads you can still practice on a full size kit to improve your technique, but without the loud noise, and the pads can easily be removed for gigs/rehearsals in a more suitable location. The drum kit can also be put on a thick rubber or a dense foam mat to reduce the noise transmitted into the floor and into a neighbour's property through the structure of the building. Old underlay/carpet can be used as a cheap way of doing this.

Alternative locations

Serious about your band? You need to find a proper rehearsal space to really make some noise. Look up "rehearsal rooms" in the yellow pages, there's facilities out there, make use of them.