

Q. What is the basic philosophy of the Suzuki method?

A. The Suzuki philosophy deals with more than teaching a child how to play an instrument. It seeks to develop the whole child, to help unfold his or her natural potential to learn and become a well-rounded person. The purpose of Suzuki training is not to produce great artists, but to help every child find the joy that comes through making music. Through the Suzuki growing process, children thrive in an environment of support; they develop confidence and self-esteem, determination to try difficult things, self-discipline and concentration, as well as a lasting enjoyment of music and the sensitivity and skill for making music.

Q. What is the best age to begin Suzuki lessons?

A. Generally, children begin their study at either four, five, or six years old. The guitar teacher will begin children between the ages of four and nine, as long as they have not yet learned to read music.

Q. What if my child is not in this age range?

A. If your child is younger than four, consider one of our group classes for young children. These are programs which teach basic musical concepts of rhythm, singing, and movement and are ideal for children who might not yet have the attention span for private lessons. If your child is older, consider traditional private lessons.

Q. If we decide to start piano lessons, do we need to have a piano? What if we have a keyboard?

A. You are expected to have a piano before enrolling in the Suzuki piano program. A keyboard is different from a piano and will not serve as a substitute.

Q. If we decide to start lessons, how do we get an instrument?

A. Your teacher will help you find an appropriate instrument to rent or purchase.

Q. What is the schedule for lessons?

A. **Private** lessons are scheduled at a day and time agreed upon by parents and the teacher and are usually taught in the NIU Music Building (alternative arrangements are at the mutual convenience of parents and teacher). There are 14 lessons in the fall and spring and six lessons in the summer. Teachers' schedules fill fast and new students may have to go on a waiting list until a space opens.



During the first few weeks, one parent attends a weekly lesson to get a preliminary idea of how to play the instrument. After that, the parent, student, and teacher meet on a weekly basis for a private lesson.

In addition to private lessons, there is a **group** lesson every other week for guitar and violin students and parents. The piano groups meet once a month. Group lesson schedules are printed in the current program booklet or can be found on-line.



Q. What can we expect from the lessons?

A. The Suzuki method provides a step-by-step methodical approach with an emphasis on posture, ear training, and basic musical technique. Teachers place great importance on building enthusiasm for learning through games and other motivational techniques. Depending on their progress, most children begin to learn to read notes and to work in the printed repertoire within the first year of lessons.

Dr. Suzuki said that his first concern is creating ability, not adding pieces to the repertoire. For this reason, the process of lessons and the learning of music may seem slow, especially at first. Writes Dr. Suzuki:

“By slow beginnings and by repetition (which children seem to love), musical knowledge grows in the spirit of the child. A fundamental principle is to work up the planted ability to the highest possible point. Learn one thing, and practice and polish it every day for perhaps three months. During this time, listen to the best performers in the world on records continuously. Then, soon, one will be able to play better, more excellently. By this time it is no longer technique only but the possession of spirit and heart.”

When a child can play a piece, she does not drop it in order to go on to a second piece. Rather, she continues to play it, using her older pieces to develop additional skills. For this reason, any Suzuki-trained child is expected to be able to perform at any time any piece that she has ever studied. The music, once learned, becomes a part of her. This level of training is not easily reached. It takes constant listening and repetition.

Q. Why does a parent need to attend lessons?

A. In order to help your child at home, it is essential that a parent is present at the lessons to watch attentively and make notes. Taping the lessons may be helpful. Basic to the Suzuki method is the role of the parents as teachers at home. Writes Suzuki educator Clifford Cook:

The parent who takes the young child to a short lesson once a week is the teacher in the home the other six days of the week. When nothing happens in the home (or where what happens is at cross purposes with the teacher's instructions), the prospect is hopeless. Often a parent says, "I am no musician. How can I teach my child?" The answer is this: By playing the record or tape being studied, regularly, for the child at home, and finally, by patient encouragement of the children, regularly, at home.

Q. What else is involved for parents?

A. Creating the interest in music and a good ear are the main functions of the Suzuki parent. The child must hear good music from an early age. It is up to the parent to see that this takes place daily. You should see to it that your child listens regularly to the music recommended by your teacher.

The Suzuki method is based on ear training. Before a child is asked to play a piece, he should have it thoroughly ingrained in his mind. It is much easier for him to play after he has already memorized it. Later, his ear and his intuition will be so well-trained that he may be able to play a piece even before it is presented to him.



Your teacher will recommend various concerts and workshops that your child and you might enjoy. There are many concerts and recitals available for free in the NIU Music Building throughout the school year.

Q. What about practice?

A. Daily practice, even for a short time, is essential. With young children, parental participation in the process of practicing will be necessary. Later, children will be able to practice on their own.

Q. Who are the teachers?

A. All of the community school's Suzuki teachers have extensive teaching experience and Suzuki training. More information about the teachers is available in the biography section of the current program booklet.

Q. Are there recital opportunities for children?

A. Recitals are integral to the NIU program. At the end of each semester, all Suzuki students participate in a recital, which is held in the Recital Hall or Concert Hall of the NIU Music Building. Occasionally, the students perform for residents of senior citizens' homes or for schools. A schedule of recitals is printed in the program's booklet and is available on-line.

Q. What is the cost of the program?

A. Up-to-date registration fees are printed in the program booklet. This booklet is available from the office at any time. However, you will have several expenses in addition to the cost of your lessons:

- Purchase or rental of an instrument that is the correct size for your child. Your child's teacher will be able to help you find an instrument.
- Printed music in the Suzuki repertoire. Children begin playing by playing by ear, but as soon as the teacher finds the student ready, he will begin learning to read music.
- Books: Your teacher will recommend several books, such as Ability Development from Age Zero or Nurtured by Love by Shinichi Suzuki, which are essential for your understanding of what is going on in the training of your child. The Suzuki Concept, edited by Elizabeth Mills, is excellent for practical suggestions.
- Tape recorder or CD player. It is important that your child listen to music as often as possible. Children like to replay their lessons, practice sessions, favorite pieces, and concerts they have enjoyed.
- A tape or CD of the music your child is studying.

Q. I would like to observe a lesson to see if this program is right for my child. How do I go about arranging this?

A. Observation of Suzuki lessons in progress is highly recommended before registering your child for the NIU Community School of the Arts Suzuki Program. We would be happy to help arrange this. Call the office at (815) 753-1450.

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**THE SUZUKI PROGRAMS
OF
NORTHERN ILLINOIS UNIVERSITY
VIOLIN, PIANO, GUITAR**



The Suzuki method instills in children a keen musical ear and a true love of music, and is a highly successful way to teach young children how to play an instrument. Children who are Suzuki trained play beautiful music, not just notes, because they depend not only on note reading but on imitation of the sounds they have memorized.

This information sheet was prepared to answer the questions asked most often about NIU's Suzuki Program. If you have further questions, please call the NIU Community School of the Arts office and we will help you or put you in touch with one of our teachers.

We hold an orientation meeting early in the fall in the Recital Hall of the Music Building. And you are always welcome to observe lessons and attend recitals. Call for schedule details or check the website.

(815) 753-1450
www.niu.edu/extprograms