

We tell our students to go home and practice, but do they know how?

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Eastman Strings



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# The problem...

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“Your attitude, not your aptitude, will determine your altitude.”

*- Zig Ziglar*

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# Teacher Survey About Student Practice

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## Answer these questions:

- ❖ Most of my students practice regularly.
- ❖ My students have everything they need in order to practice at home.
- ❖ My students set practice goals and know what to practice.
- ❖ My students know and utilize a variety of practice strategies.
- ❖ I grade my students on the amount of practice they complete.

**<https://tinyurl.com/practicehabits>**



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# Student Practice Habits Survey

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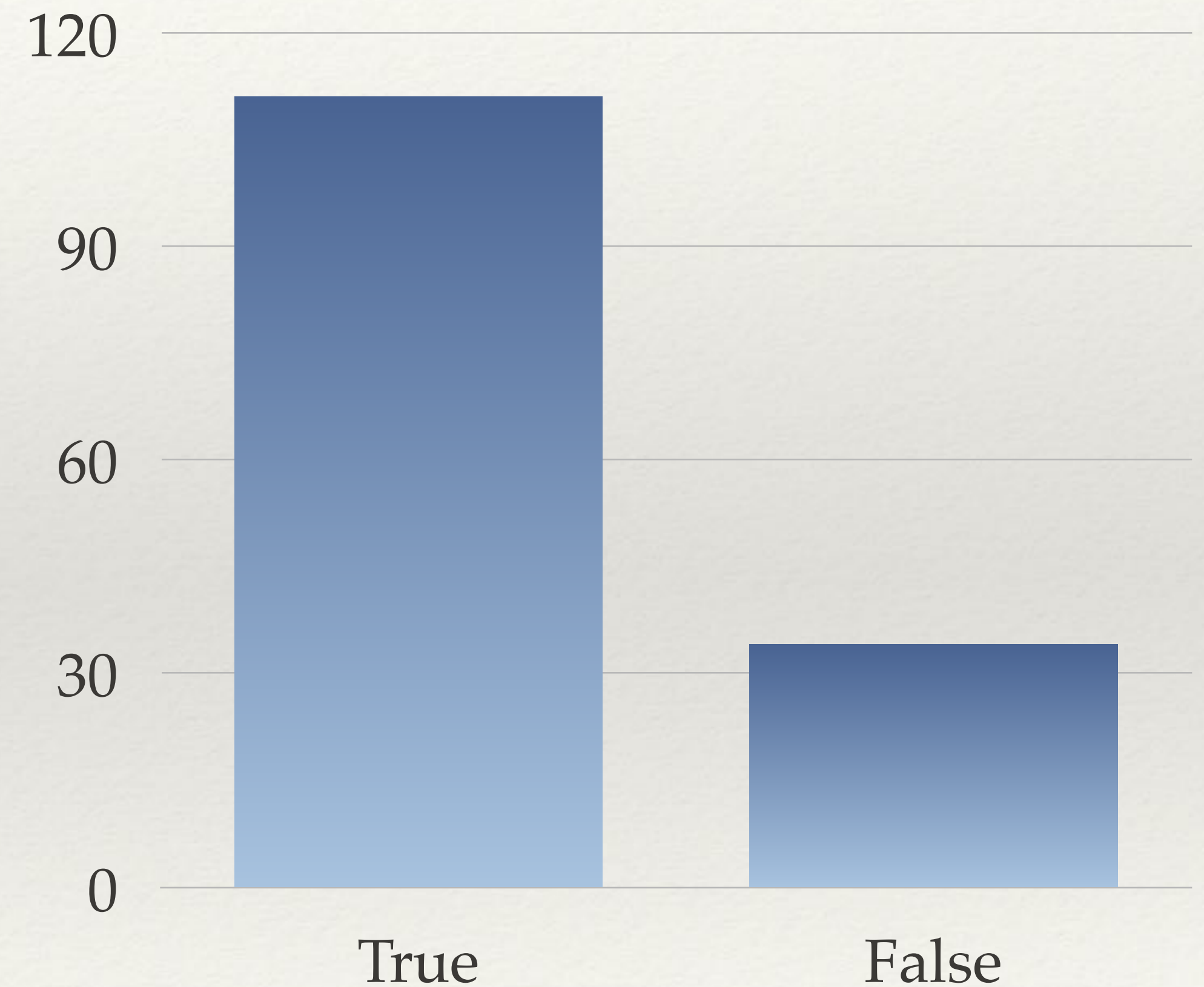
- ❖ Beginning of the semester (kids are motivated)
- ❖ ~150 high school students
- ❖ Among 5 levels of orchestras (from remedial to elite)
- ❖ Anonymous (an attempt to get the most honest responses)

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# Student Practice Habits Survey

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- ❖ My practice is deeply meaningful to me; I seldom feel bored.

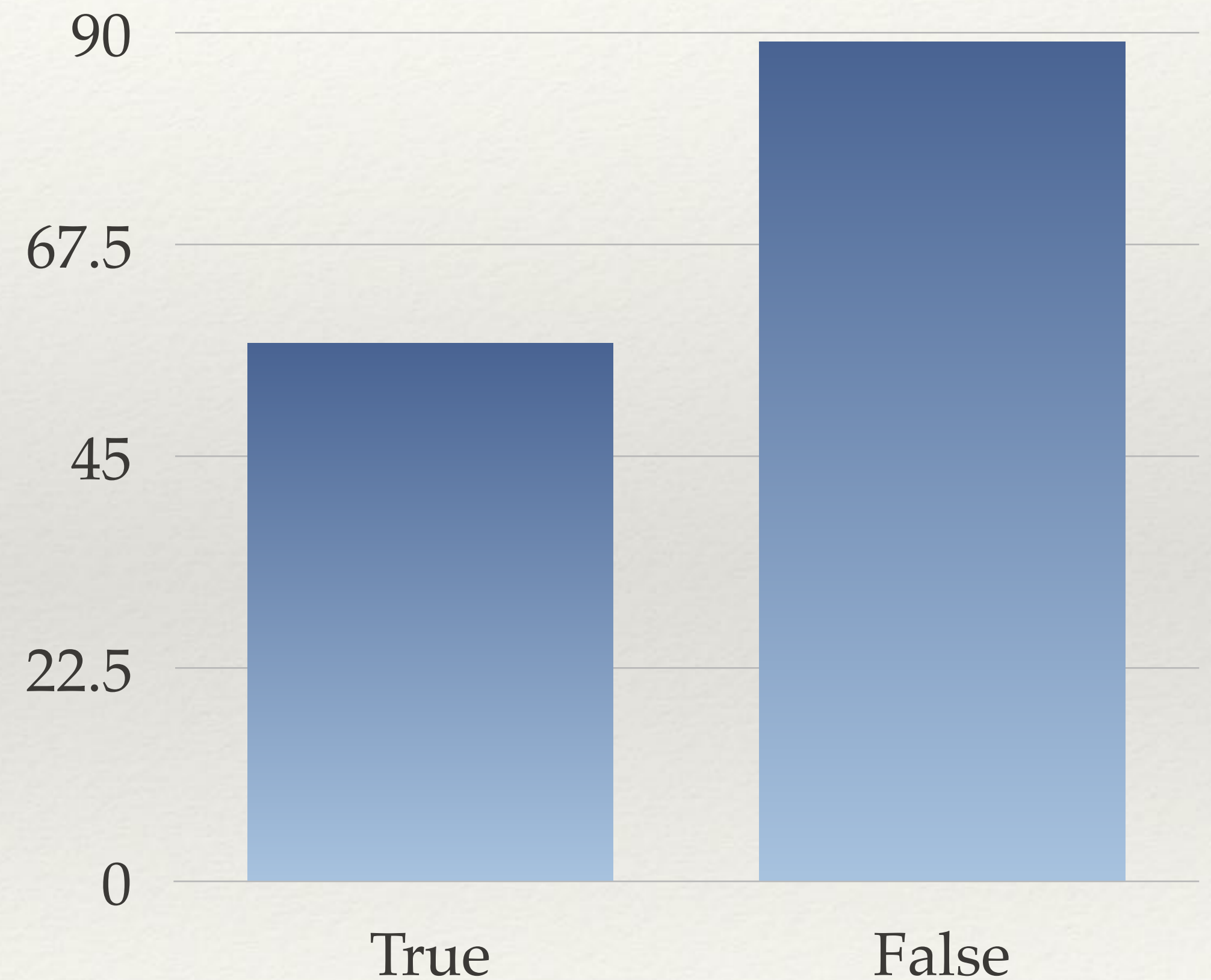


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# Student Practice Habits Survey

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❖ I keep to a regular practice schedule.

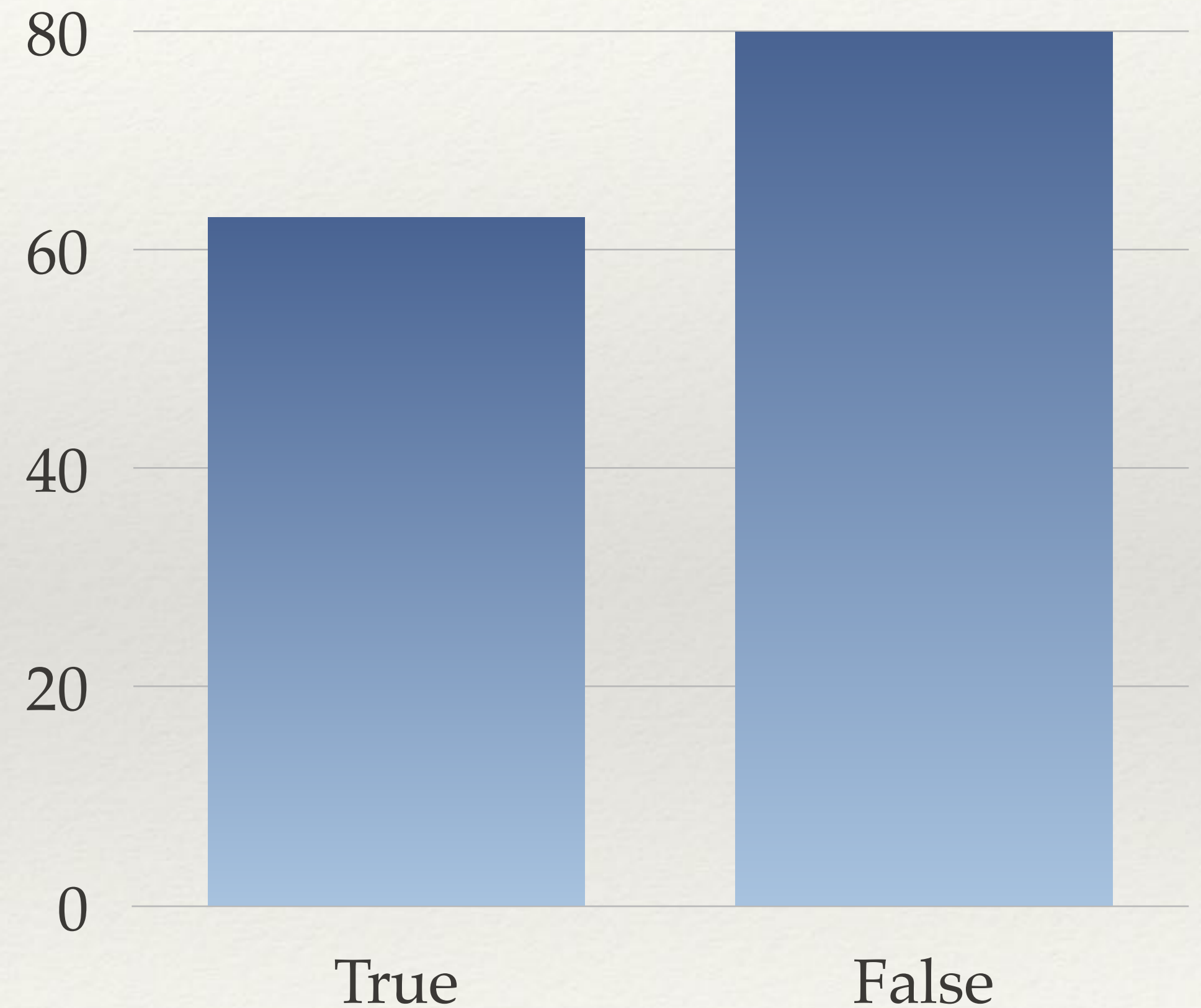


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# Student Practice Habits Survey

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❖ I feel like I can learn my music in class without practicing at home.



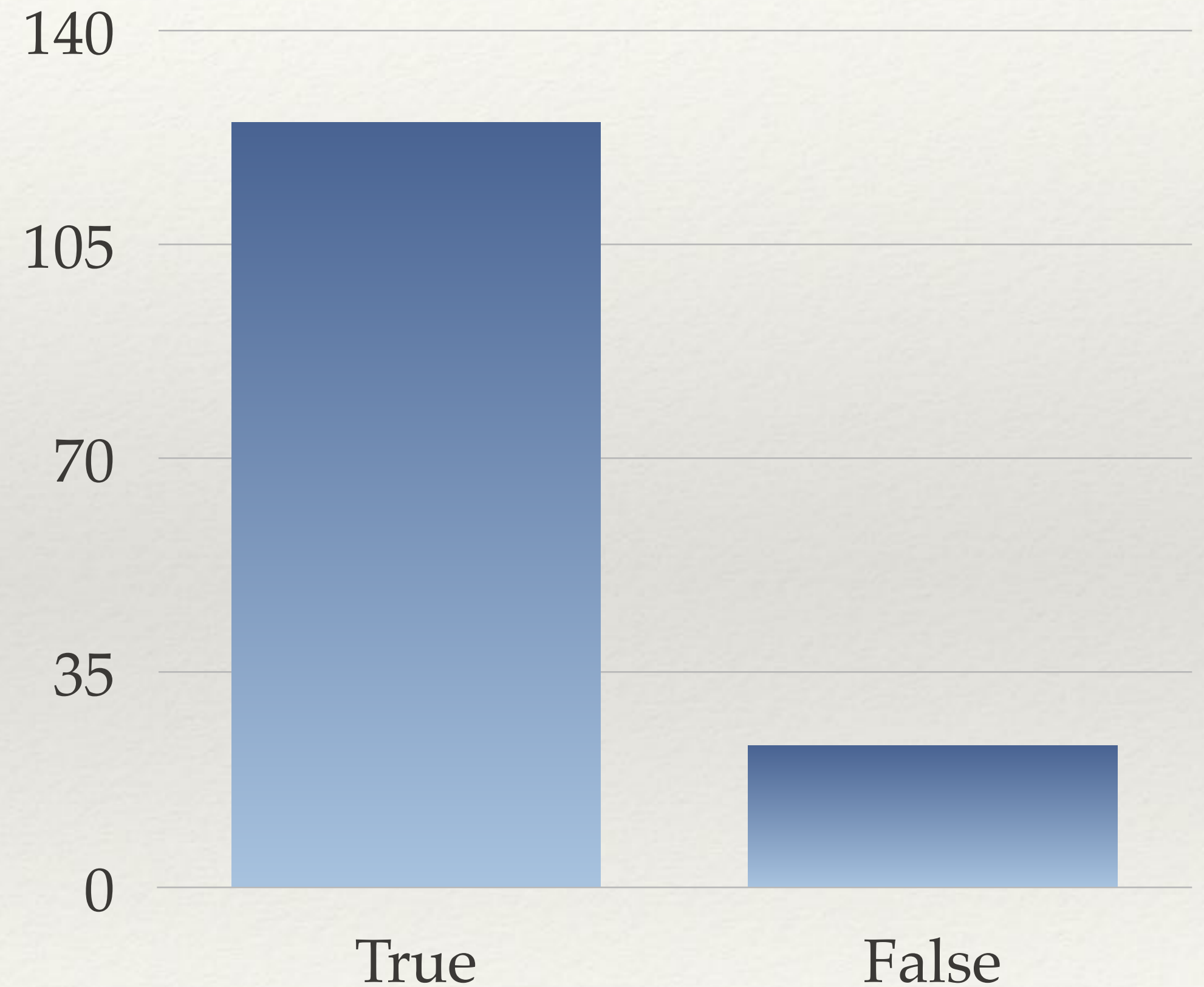


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# Student Practice Habits Survey

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- ❖ My practice space at home is fully equipped with the things I need.

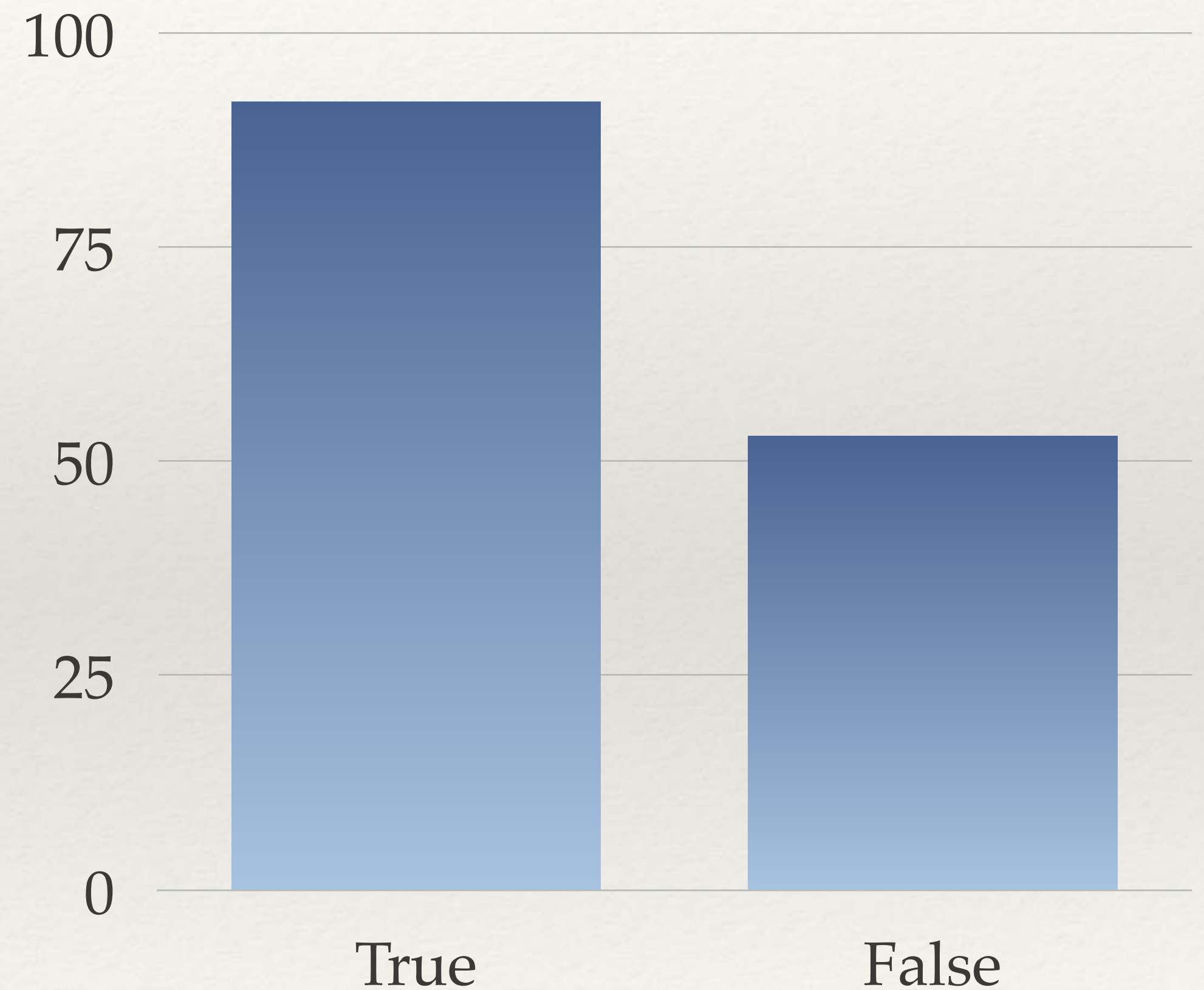


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# Student Practice Habits Survey

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❖ I set detailed goals before beginning to practice.

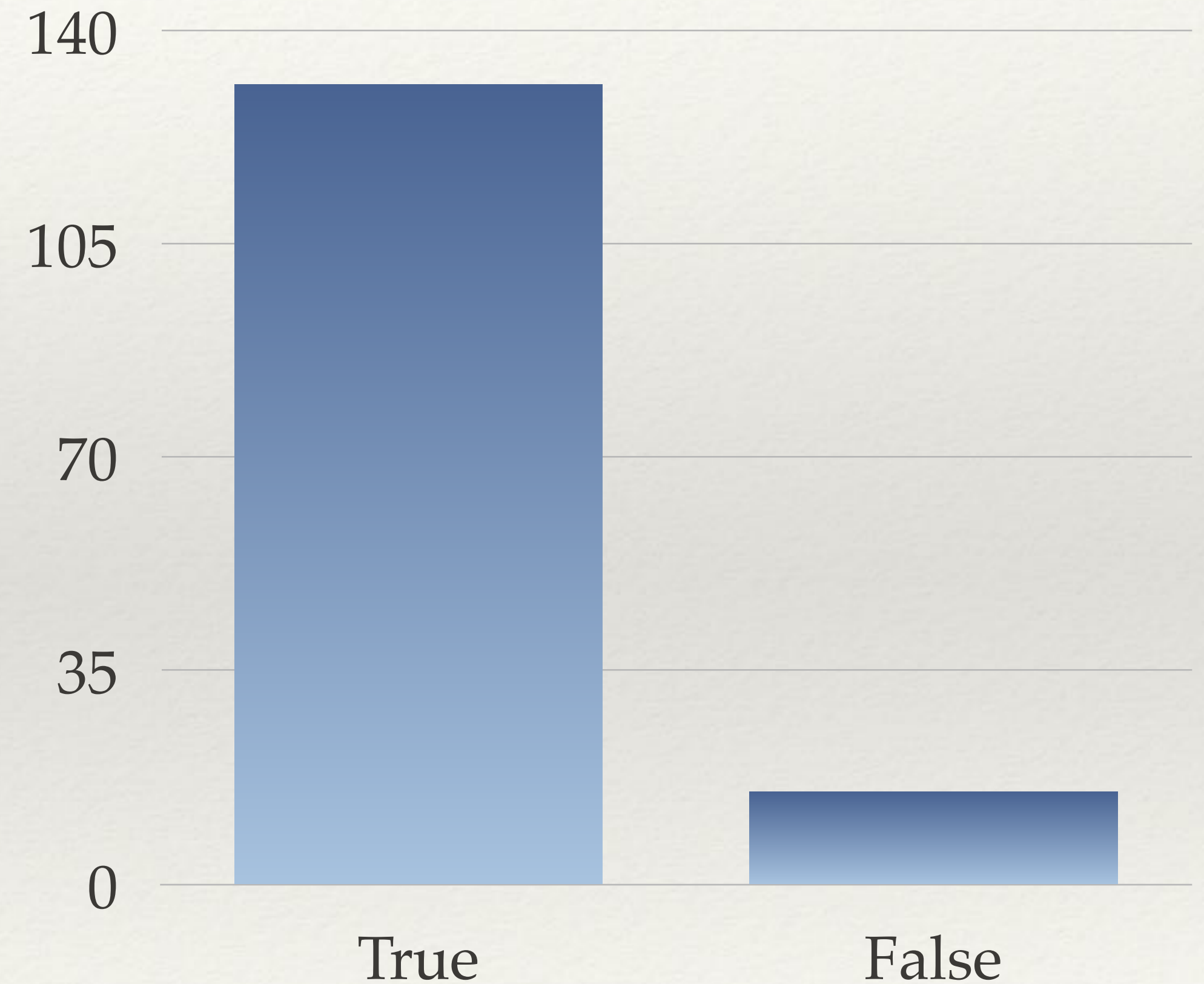


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# Student Practice Habits Survey

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- ❖ I typically feel a sense of accomplishment after practicing.

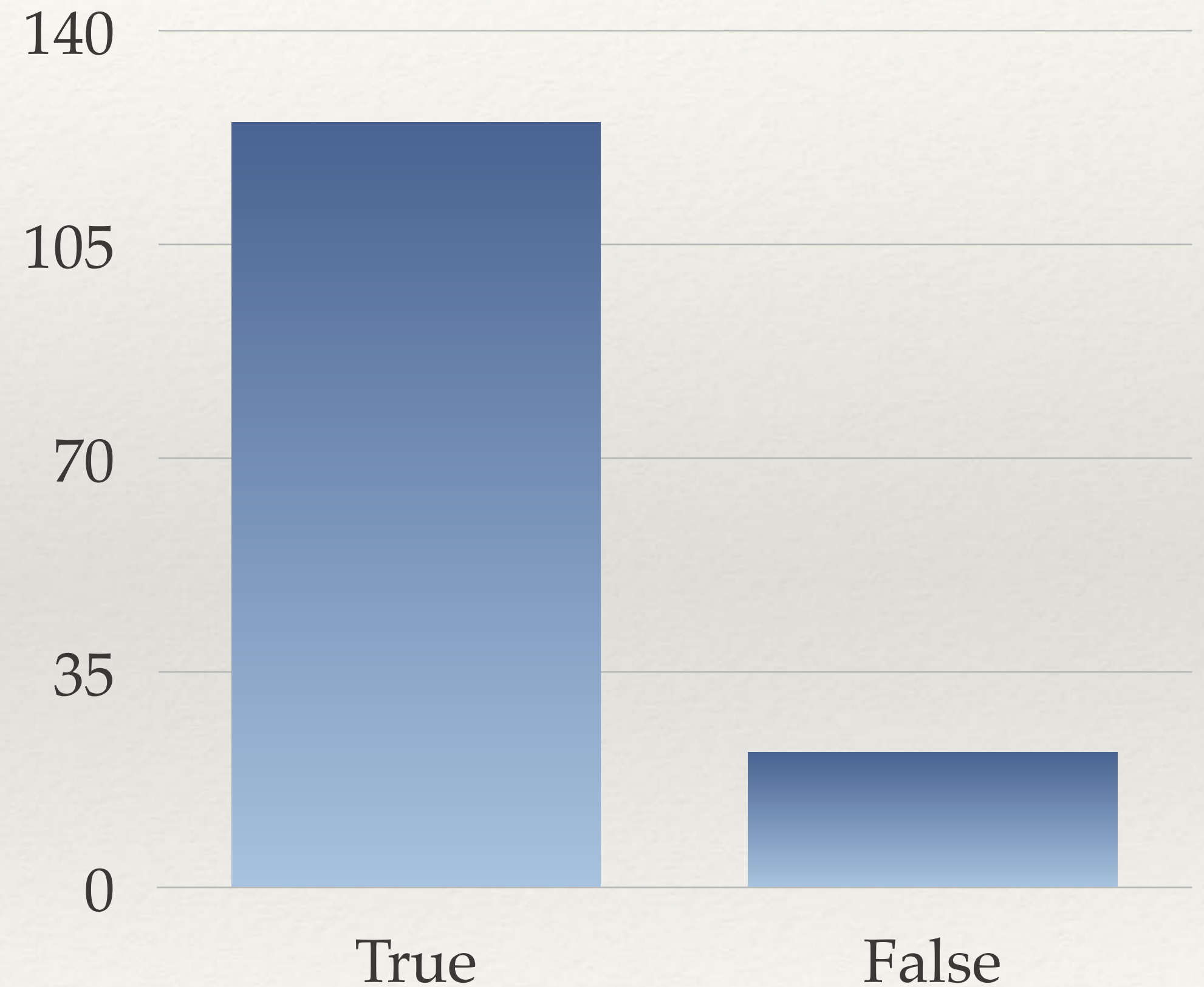


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# Student Practice Habits Survey

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❖ I'm able to maintain mental focus as I practice.

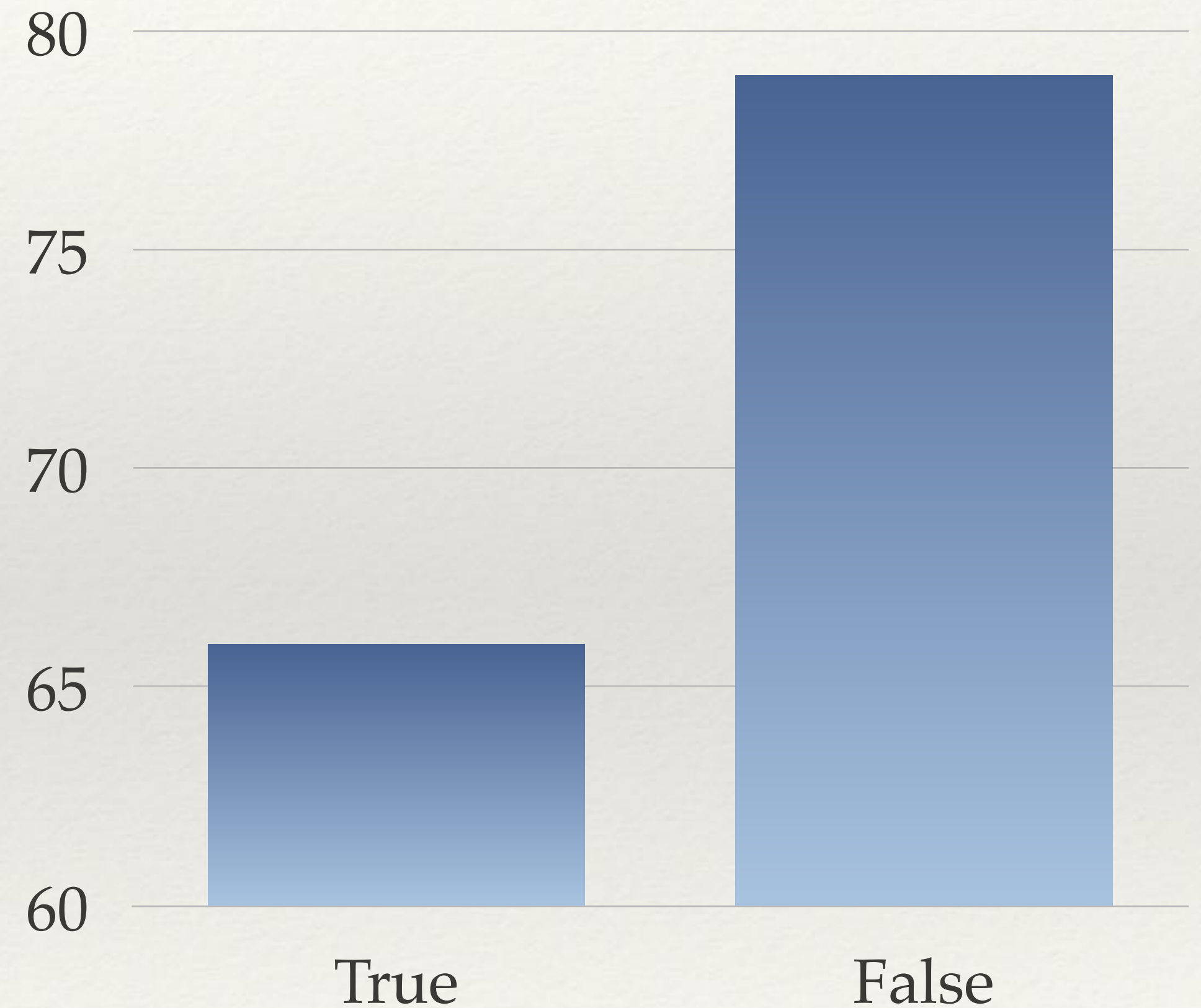


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# Student Practice Habits Survey

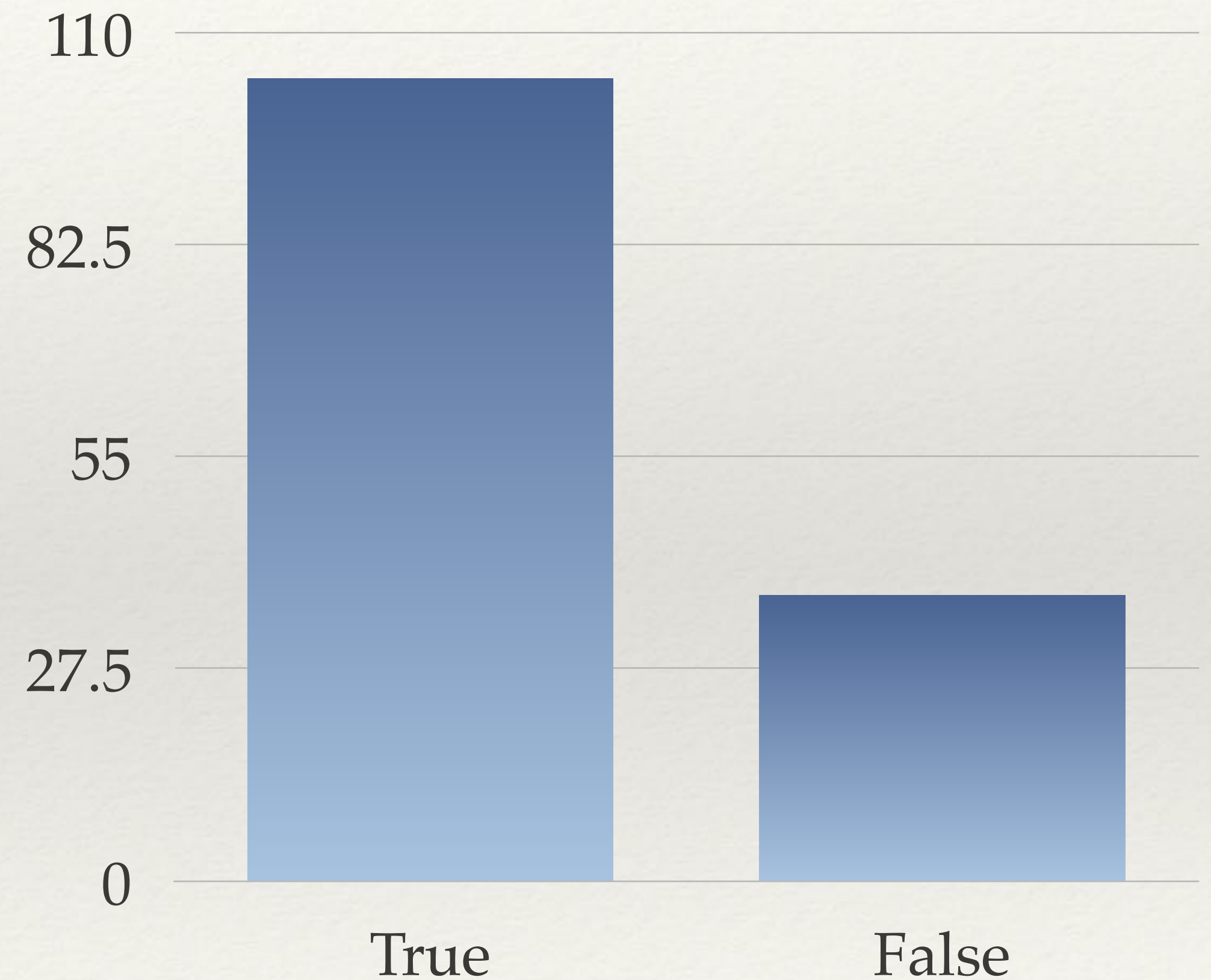
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- ❖ I commonly record portions of my practice, and then I appraise my recordings.



# Student Practice Habits Survey

❖ I use a metronome in practice.



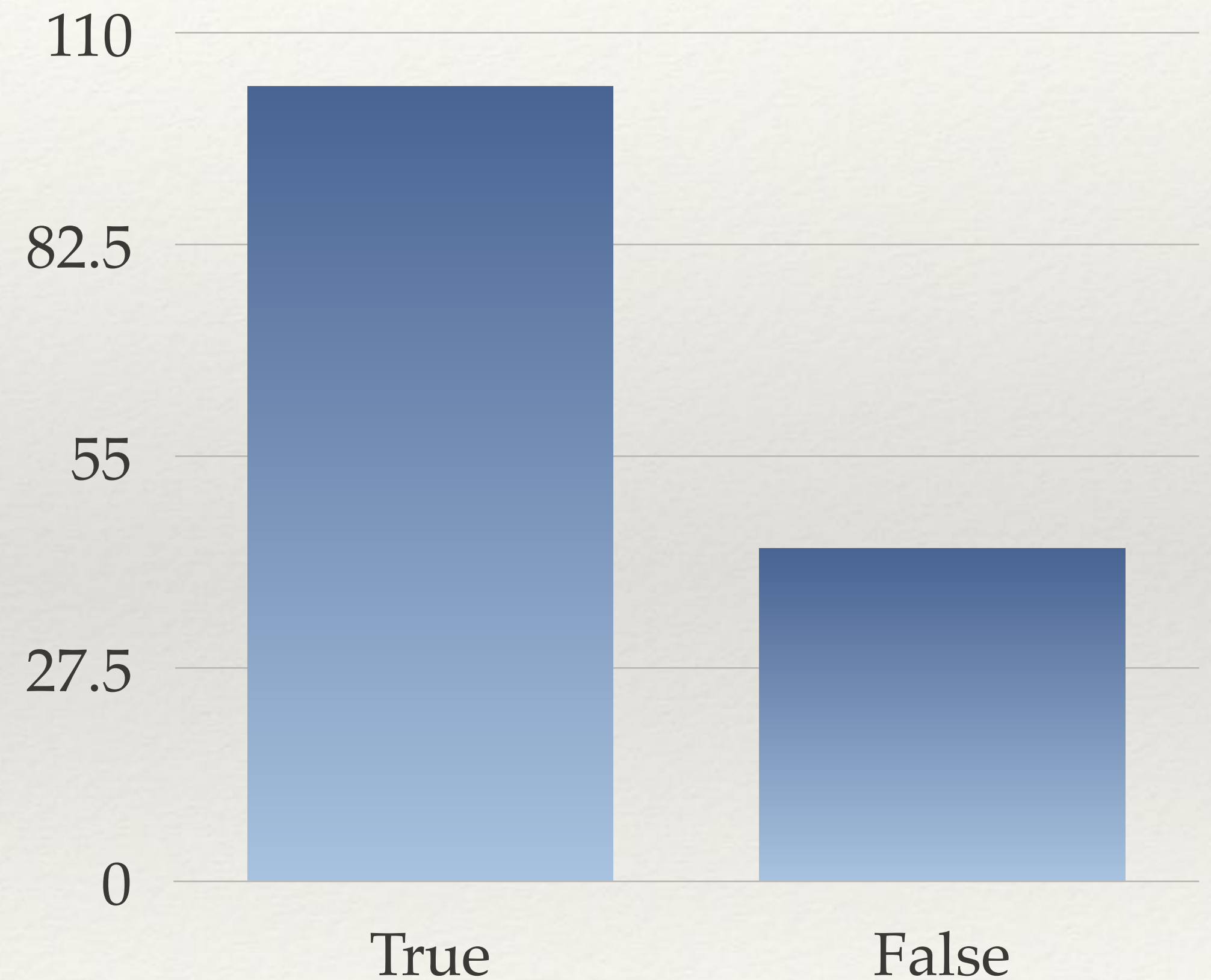
**Most students who marked FALSE claimed they didn't have a metronome.**

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# Student Practice Habits Survey

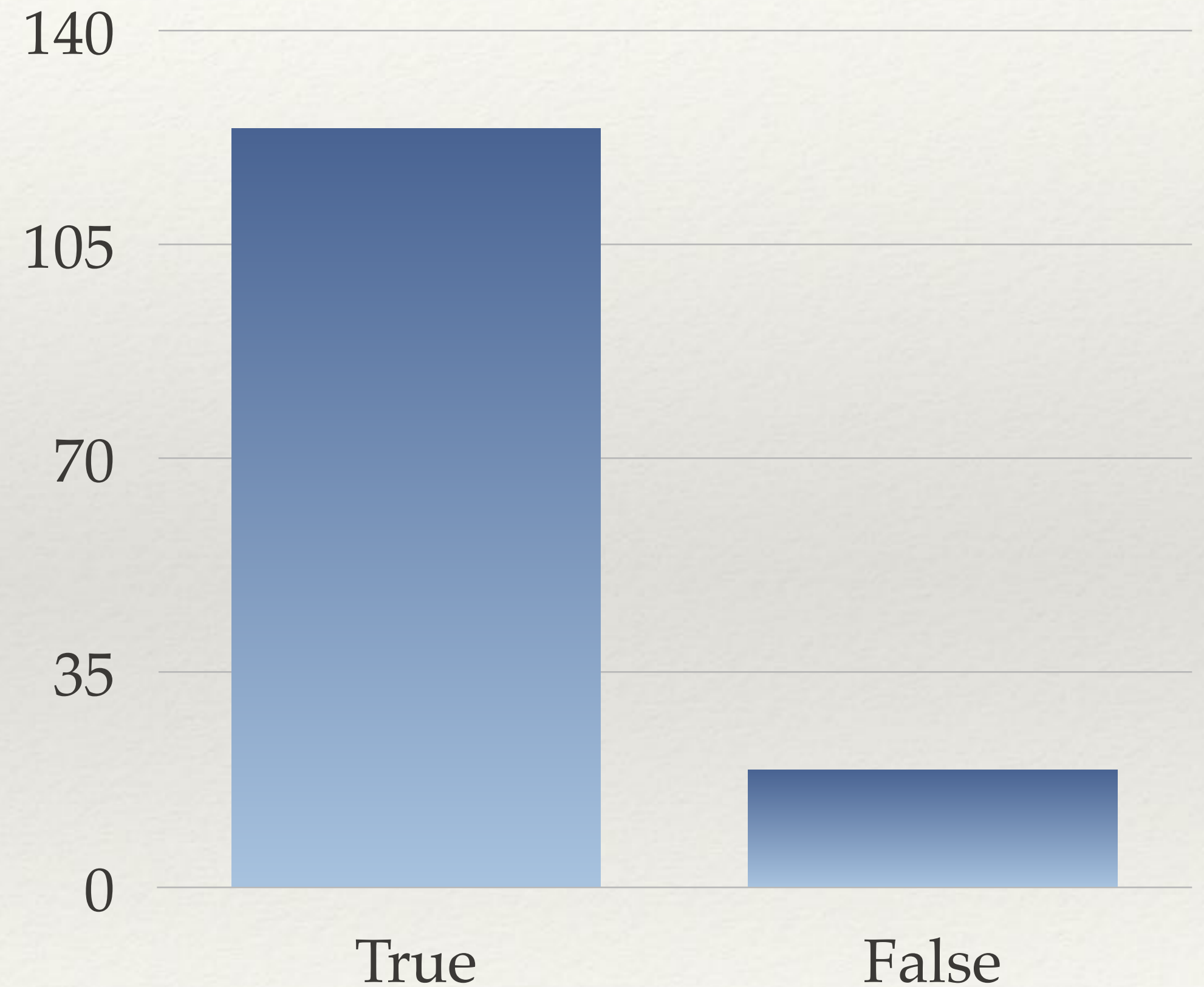
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❖ I consistently warm up before practicing.



# Student Practice Habits Survey

- ❖ I can learn my music securely and efficiently.



**Most students who marked FALSE said they like to hear the music first.**

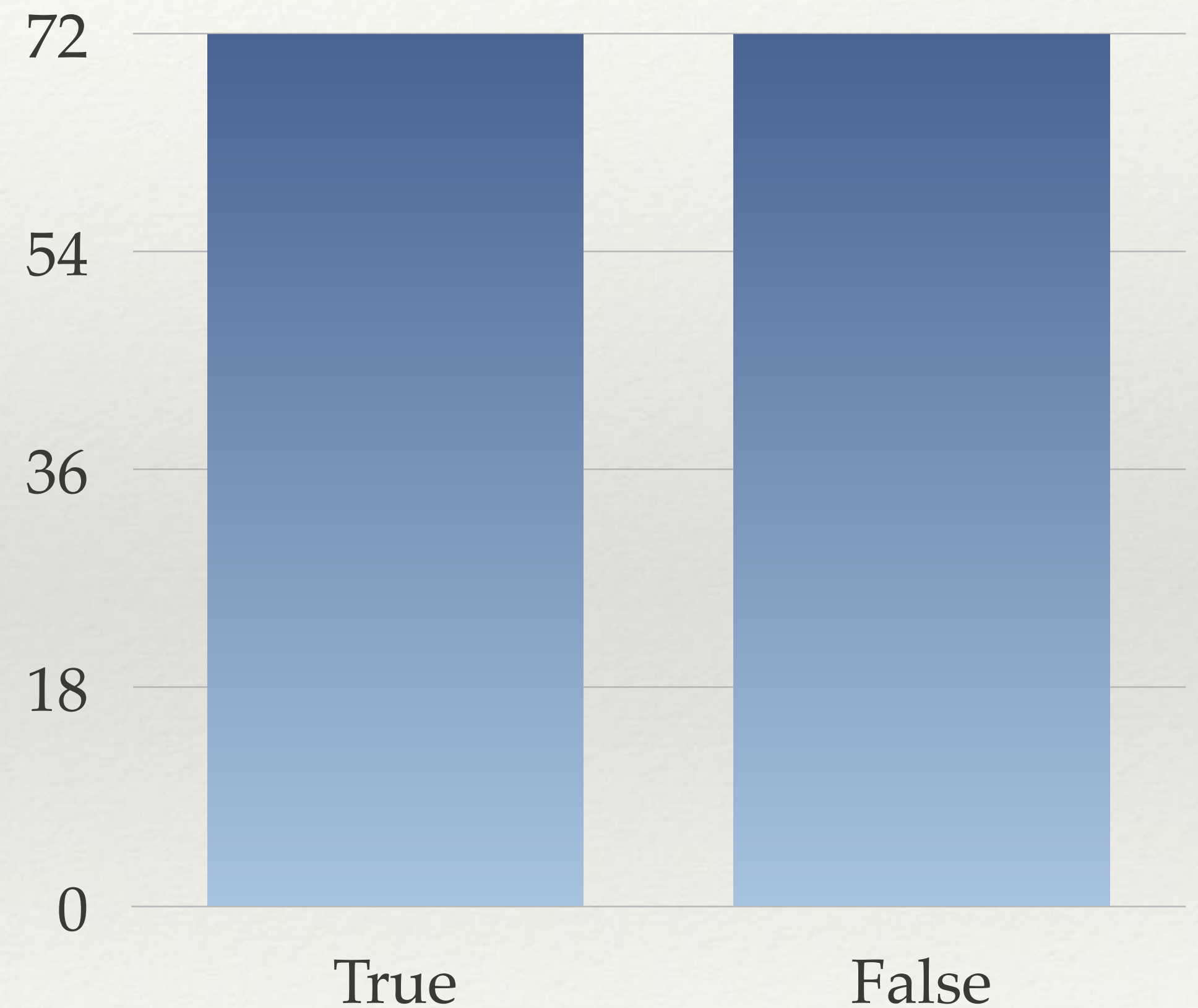


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# Student Practice Habits Survey

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- ❖ When learning a new piece, I expressively vocalize rhythm

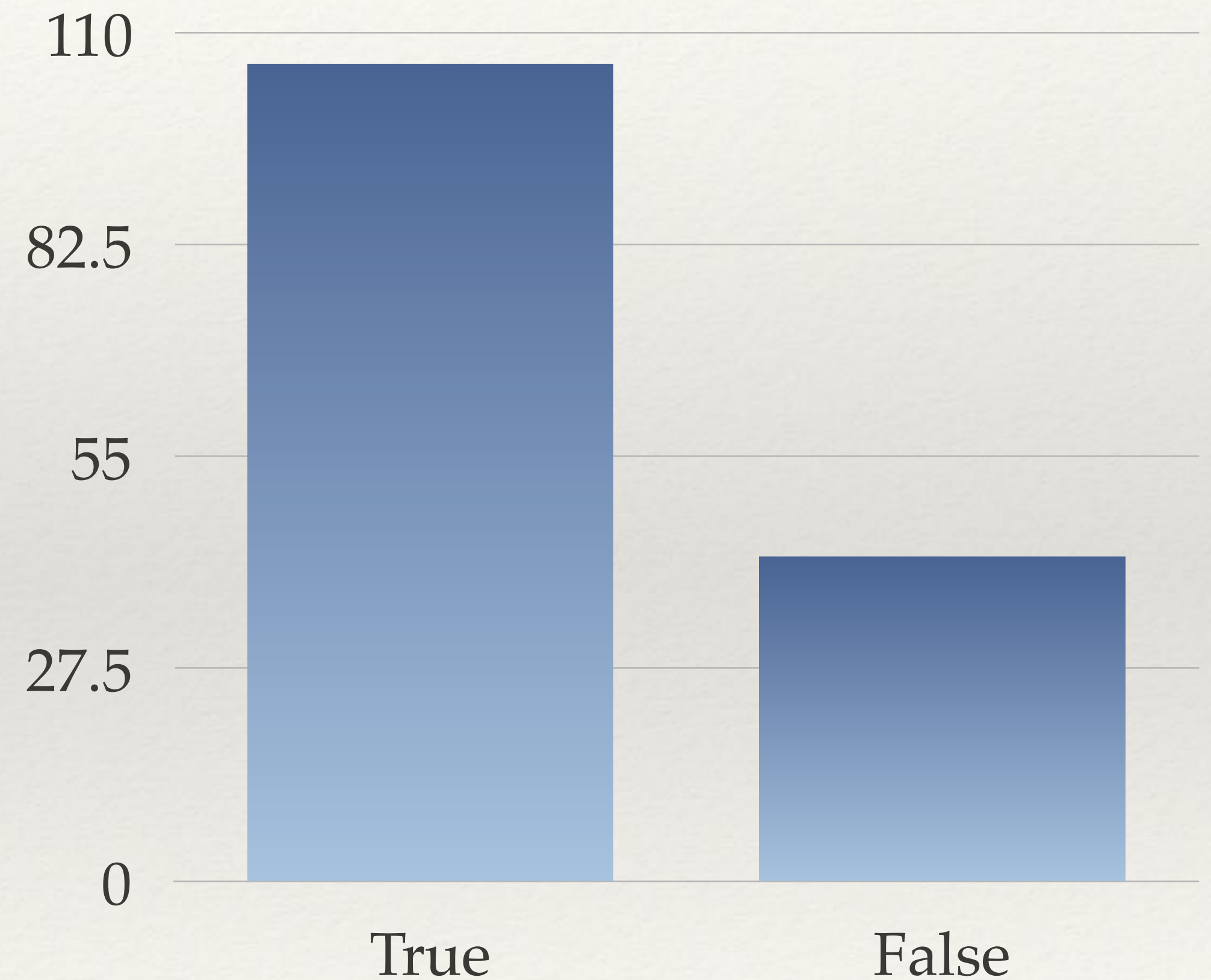


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# Student Practice Habits Survey

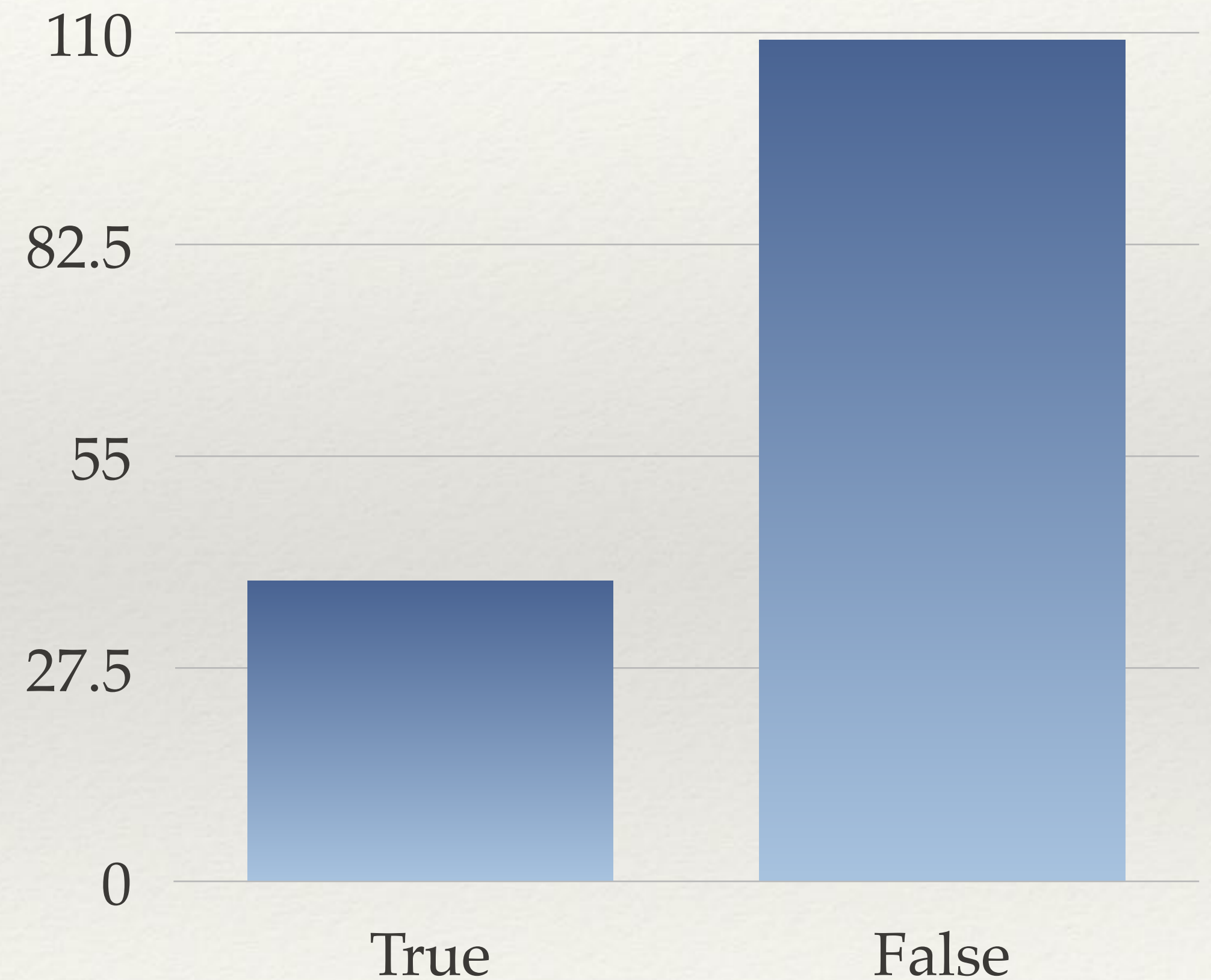
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❖ I use specific strategies to solve musical and technical problems.



# Student Practice Habits Survey

❖ I routinely practice sight-reading.

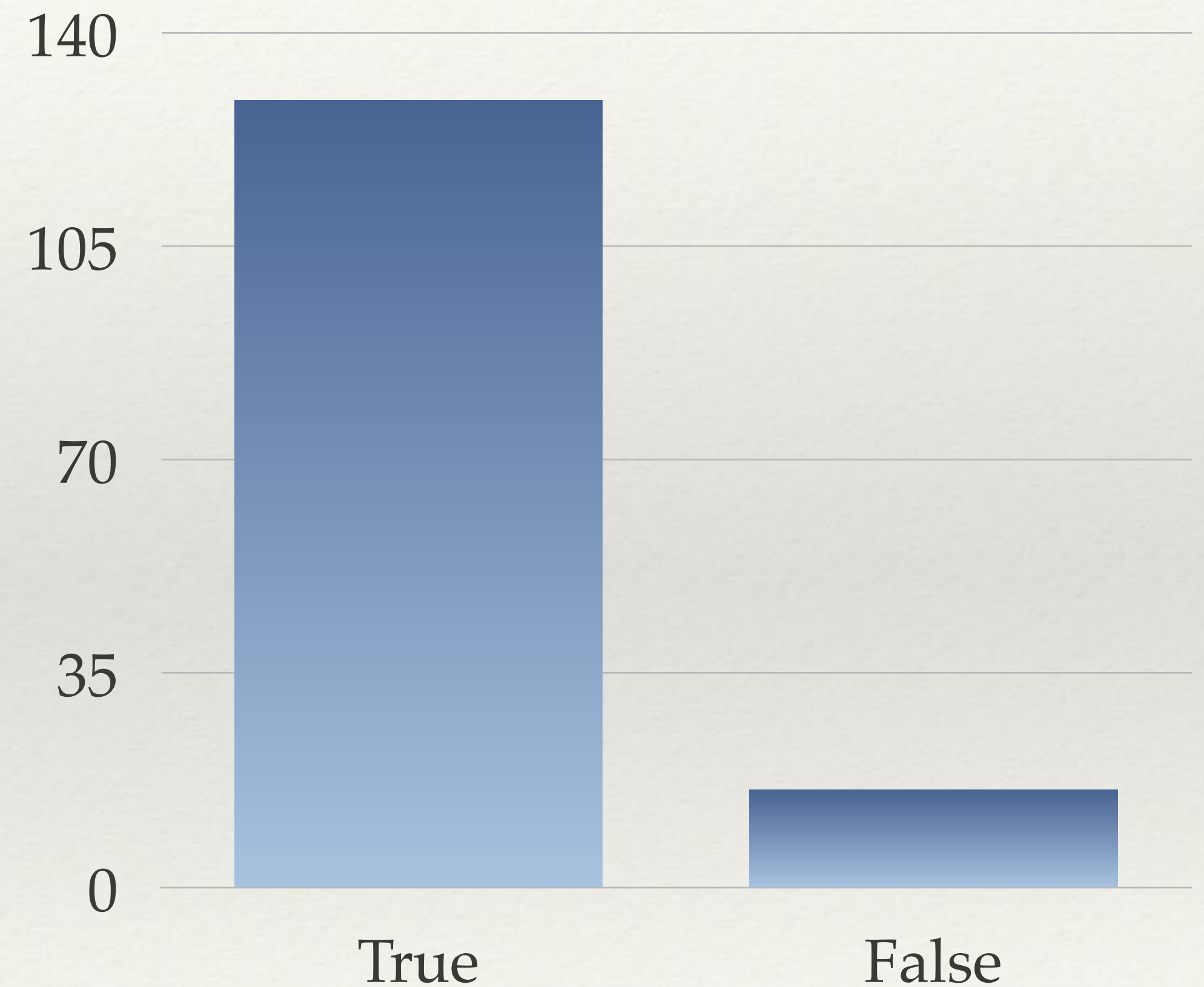


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# Student Practice Habits Survey

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- ❖ I feel like I understand how to practice so that I can perform confidently.



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# Essential Items Every Student Needs

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- ❖ Adequate space
- ❖ Privacy
- ❖ Adequate lighting
- ❖ An uninterrupted, quiet environment
- ❖ Chair
- ❖ Music Stand
- ❖ Pencil
- ❖ Tuner & Metronome (free apps!)

## Highly encouraged:

- Instrument stand or wall mount
- Mirror

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# Why do we need to think about HOW to practice?

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- ❖ Students are usually only concerned with the outcome, not the process
- ❖ Students don't naturally know how to practice.

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# What do students do? (Bad habits)

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- ❖ Start a new piece near the performance tempo
- ❖ Slop through getting half of the notes correct
- ❖ Go back to the hard spots, slowing only a little
- ❖ Repeat mistakes in the hard spots, developing bad habits. The brain “learns” mistakes and the psyche allows mistakes to happen.

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# Klickstein's Five Practice "Zones"

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- ❖ New Material
- ❖ Developing Material
- ❖ Performance Material
- ❖ Technique
- ❖ Musicianship

From *The Musician's Way: A Guide to Practice, Performance, and Wellness* by Gerald Klickstein



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# Planning Practice

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- ❖ New Material
- ❖ Divide into sections
- ❖ Establish a plan
- ❖ Slow Down!

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# Developing Material

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- ❖ Refine interpretation
- ❖ Increase tempo
- ❖ Memorize, if possible

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# Performance material

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- ❖ Practice “performing”
- ❖ Maintenance of learned material
- ❖ Renew and innovate

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# Technique

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- ❖ Scales
- ❖ Arpeggios
- ❖ Vibrato

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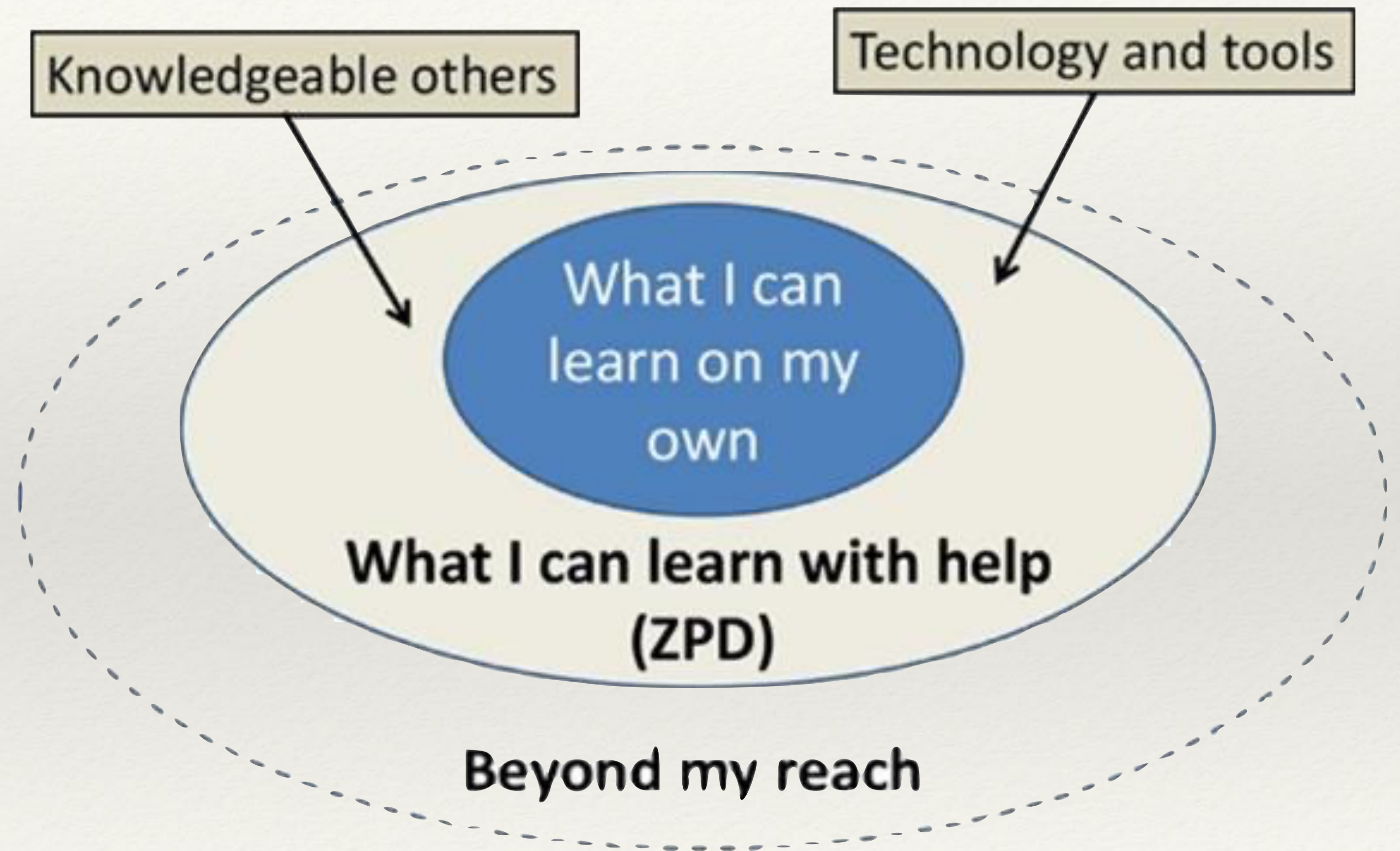
# Musicianship

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- ❖ Listening - create YouTube playlists for each class
- ❖ Sight-reading
- ❖ Theory
- ❖ Ear Training
- ❖ Improvisation

# Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD)

- ❖ Is your music too difficult? If so your students may feel as if the end goal is unattainable.
- ❖ We must provide students with experience that will be positive. Attainable goals are very important. We want to have our student reach, but there is a limit.



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# Time is the enemy; progress is the goal

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- ❖ Students are crunched for time more than ever.
- ❖ Students need to be able to make good use of their time. Most of the time, this must be TAUGHT.
- ❖ “If you are practicing and sound really good, you are practicing the wrong parts”
- ❖ “Are you SPENDING TIME with your instrument or PRACTICING your instrument?”

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# Playing vs Practice

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- ❖ Attitude is important.
- ❖ Playing is great, but that's not practicing.
- ❖ Turn a portion of a rehearsal into a mini-practice session (for everyone).



# Practice Logs/Assignments

- ❖ Logging of minutes doesn't promote healthy practice
- ❖ Forcing "minutes" can have many negative effects

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday

Week of: \_\_\_\_\_ Parent Signature \_\_\_\_\_

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# Building good habits

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- ❖ Building good takes time and breaking bad takes time.
- ❖ The Power of Habit: 1. Cue, 2. Routine, 3. Reward
- ❖ Cue starts the habit, Reward motivates to continue
- ❖ One study states that building a good habit of everyday behaviors took an average of 66 days.
- ❖ Practicing must be scheduled. Are you a morning person? Night owl?

Practice Strategies...

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# “Slower is Faster” strategy

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- ❖ We all play too fast!
- ❖ Start with a tempo that will allow near perfection on the **first** try.
- ❖ The first play through can be compared to the first sled run on freshly fallen snow. On subsequent runs, you will follow that original path.
- ❖ Going slower is actually the faster way to learn!!

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# Identify

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- ❖ Identify problem areas prior to practicing.
- ❖ Write in music, bracket problem areas.
- ❖ Loop learned problem areas.
- ❖ Brain and muscles need consistency and repetition for success

# Backwards practice

- ❖ This strategy is perfect for descending passages, generally harder to grasp technically and hearing descending intervallic relationships.



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# Find repetitive sections

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- ❖ Save time!
- ❖ Identify repetitive areas and don't re-practice them
- ❖ Can help students understand certain forms.
  - ❖ Sonata-Allegro Form - Exposition, Development, Recapitulation
  - ❖ Rondo Form - A, B, A, C, A, D, A, E, etc.

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# Eyes Close & Play Softer

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- ❖ Close your eyes. Play small passage with sheet music in view, then play it without it.
- ❖ Repeat
- ❖ Also, playing softer can help students relax and shift focus more to memorizing and internalizing.



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# Audio Recording

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- ❖ Self assessment
- ❖ Address: tone, intonation, rhythm, articulations, adherence to set tempo, phrasing
- ❖ Listening to recordings helps students better understand how they really sound.

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# Record Video

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- ❖ Check posture, bowing technique (bow hold, bow angles, etc.), left-hand technique (position, shifting, vibrato, etc.)
- ❖ Video can be slowed down and analyzed.
- ❖ Check out “Coach’s Eye” app

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# Write it down!

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- ❖ Pencil on stand at start of each rehearsal or practice session.
- ❖ Students should mark:
  - ❖ Tempo markings for practice and performance
  - ❖ Key signature changes / mistakes
  - ❖ Fingerings / shifts, etc.
  - ❖ Phrasing (length, climaxes, etc.)
- ❖ Stop and mark music immediately. Don't wait!
- ❖ Mark music BEFORE practicing (phrasing, etc.)

# Rhythmic Variation

- ❖ Change rhythms to create short “bursts of speed” and place the “faster” parts between different notes

From *Practicing with Purpose*  
by David Kish

The image displays three musical staves, each showing a different rhythmic variation of a single melodic line in bass clef, 4/4 time. The original melody consists of a quarter note G2, a quarter note F2, a quarter note E2, a quarter note D2, a quarter note C2, a quarter note B1, a quarter note A1, and a quarter note G1. The first variation, labeled "Rhythmic Variation #1", replaces the first four notes with eighth notes and the last four with quarter notes. The second variation, labeled "Rhythmic Variation #2", replaces the first four notes with sixteenth notes and the last four with quarter notes. The third variation, labeled "Rhythmic Variation #3", replaces the first four notes with thirty-second notes and the last four with quarter notes. Each staff includes a fermata over the final G1 note.

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# Use your voice

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- ❖ You don't have to have a good voice!
- ❖ Internalize pitch, rhythm
- ❖ Inflection / Phrasing
- ❖ Articulations
- ❖ If you start kids singing early, they won't think it is a big deal.

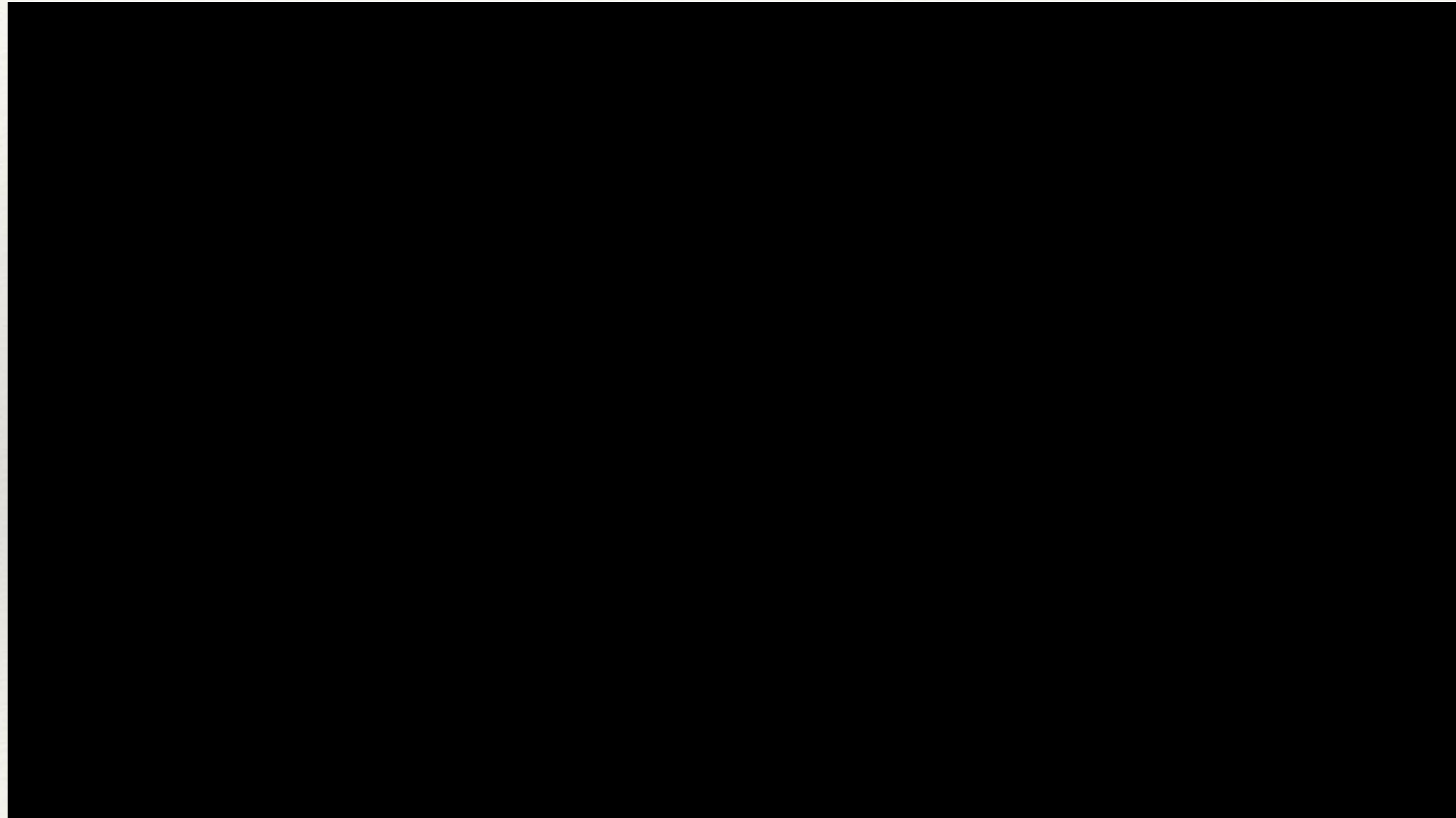


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# Shadow Bow / Air Bow

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- ❖ Isolate skills
- ❖ Eliminate left hand
- ❖ Sing through while bowing



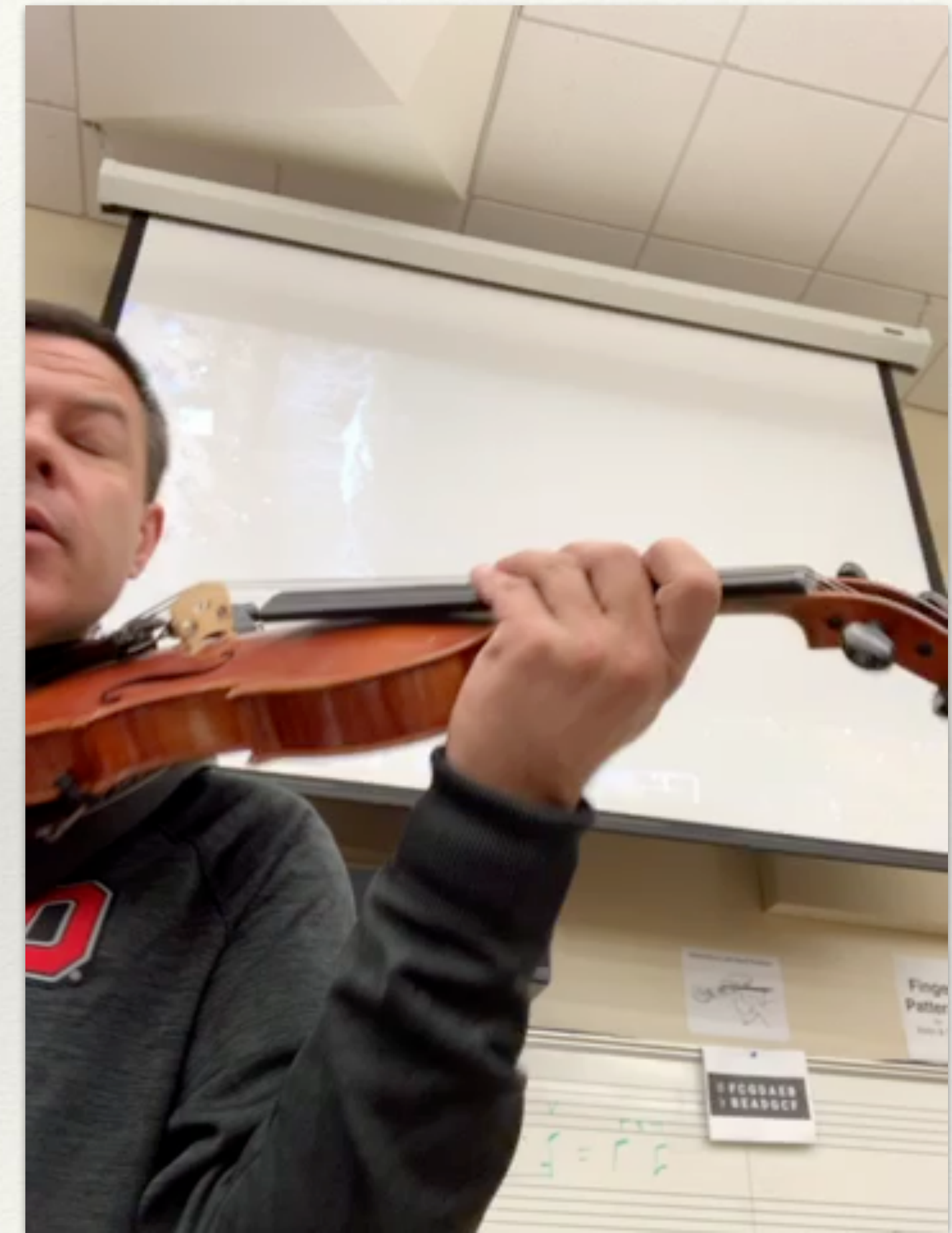
# Find a Model

- ❖ Have students search and find a great model to follow.
- ❖ Find on social media, YouTube, etc.
- ❖ Become obsessed with that person and their music-making
- ❖ Or compare two or more models and have students determine what they like better in terms of sound, vibrato, etc.



# Model for your students

- ❖ Teacher provides a live model for students
- ❖ Teacher record video of excerpts and post for students to use during home practice
- ❖ Post to YouTube or Google Classroom
- ❖ Handy when students are absent



**Demonstration of finger patterns for violin/viola**



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# Back to basics

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- ❖ Remove all markings from music and play, then slowly add back in
  - ❖ Slurs
  - ❖ Ties
  - ❖ Articulations

# “Pizzi-arco”

- ❖ Have students play difficult arco sections as pizzicato and vice versa
- ❖ Have students isolate bowings, string crossings, whatever is problematic with RH
- ❖ Can help with rhythm, ensemble timing / attacks.



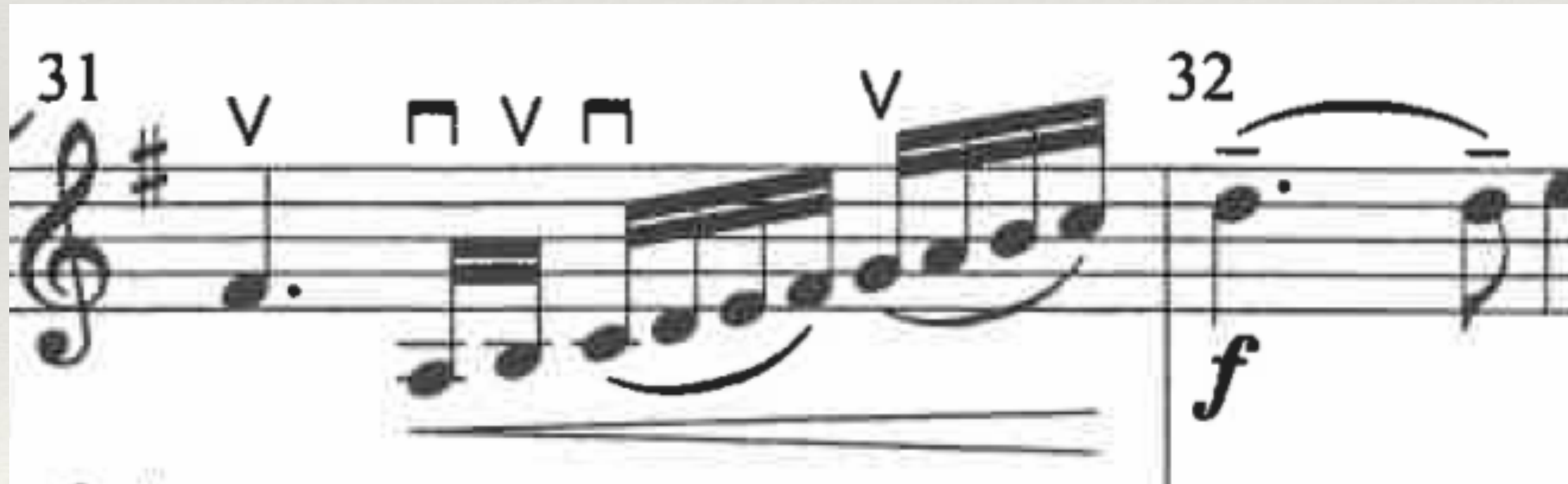
# “Target Notes”

❖ Help student organize confusing passages by hitting “target notes” at certain points within it.



# “Add A Note”

- ❖ Show students how learn a difficult passage by building and get timing out a difficult passage.



Richard Meyer: “Spring Breezes”, Violin I



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# Favorite Practice Tools/Apps

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- ❖ **Tempo** - Metronome with LOTS of features and subdivisions
- ❖ **Tonal Energy Tuner** - Tuner / Audio Analysis, will play with pure intonation
- ❖ **Coach's Eye** - Video recorder and video analysis, feedback
- ❖ **Anytune Pro+** - Slows down audio for analysis, exports slowed down audio

# Practice Journal Examples:

Practice Journal	
Date: _____	
<b>Goals for practice session</b>	<b>Performance Material</b> <i>list material and practice method</i>
<b>Fundamentals and Technique Development</b>	<b>Ensemble Material</b> <i>list material and practice method</i>
<b>New and Developing Material</b> <i>list material and practice method</i>	<b>Reflection</b> <i>list "todo" items for next session</i>

- ❖ Goals
- ❖ Performance Material
- ❖ Fundamentals & Technique
- ❖ Ensemble Material
- ❖ New & Developing Material
- ❖ Reflection

From *Practicing with Purpose* by David Kish

# Practice Journal Examples:

- ❖ Goals
- ❖ Performance Material
- ❖ Fundamentals & Technique
- ❖ Ensemble Material
- ❖ New & Developing Material
- ❖ Reflection

From *Practicing with Purpose* by David Kish

Practice Journal	
Date: Tuesday, September 12	
<b>Goals for practice session</b> <i>list material and practice method</i> <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Increase tempo of major scales</li><li>2. Learn new etude for lesson next week</li><li>3. Work on solo</li><li>4. Get ready for rehearsals today</li></ol>	<b>Performance Material</b> <i>list material and practice method</i> <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Work on last mvt of solo; "Phrase it"</li><li>2. Begin to memorize Solo, "Blindfold" on first two lines</li></ol>
<b>Fundamentals and Technique Development</b> <i>list material and practice method</i> <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Warmup Routine</li><li>2. All Major Scales, "Stair-Stepper" begin at quarter=88</li></ol>	<b>Ensemble Material</b> <i>list material and practice method</i> <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Work m. 36-48 in Symphony No. 1, "TSP"</li><li>2. Work m. 92-112 in Divertimntao, "3x Perfect"</li></ol>
<b>New and Developing Material</b> <i>list material and practice method</i> <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Read through Etude No. 23, "Slower is Faster"</li><li>2. Etude No. 23, "Chunk It" and "Loop the Chunk" as needed</li></ol>	<b>Reflection</b> <i>list "todo" items for next session</i> <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Scales improved, begin at 90 tomorrow</li><li>2. Etude was good, revisit "chunks" and try "Drone"</li><li>3. More work on solo memorization, maybe "Power Practice"</li></ol>

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# Make Practice Meaningful

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1. Schedule times / days to practice
2. Develop a practice plan integrating specific practice strategies
3. Practice
4. Reflect



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# What to do...

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- ❖ Don't require students to practice for a specified amount of time
- ❖ Use class time to discuss practice techniques and strategies. Students won't just figure it out.
  - ❖ Allow them to learn the material on their own after you guide them on some ways to learn it.
- ❖ Provide students with sample practice plans

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# What to do...

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- ❖ Demonstrate practice strategies during class time in rehearsal. Ask students to use it in home practice.
- ❖ Assign students to complete a journal or log and use that as the basis for grades (instead of practice minutes)
- ❖ Assign students the task of creating their own weekly practice plan on their own and use that for a grade (instead of practice minutes)

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# References - Books

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- ❖ *Practicing with Purpose* by David Kish (Meridith Music, distributed by Hal Leonard)
- ❖ *The Musician's Way: A Guide to Practice, Performance, and Wellness* by Gerald Klickstein (Oxford University Press)
  - ❖ Also see companion website at: <https://www.musiciansway.com>
- ❖ *Perfect Practice* by Dan Heath

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# References - Articles

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- ❖ *Duke, R. A., Simmons, A. L., & Cash, C. D. (2009). It's Not How Much; It's How: Characteristics of Practice Behavior and Retention of Performance Skills. Journal of Research in Music Education, 56(4), 310–321. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0022429408328851>*
- ❖ *Henley, P. T. (2001). Effects of Modeling and Tempo Patterns as Practice Techniques on the Performance of High School Instrumentalists. Journal of Research in Music Education, 49(2), 169–180. <https://doi.org/10.2307/3345868>*
- ❖ *Miksza, P. (2005). The Effect of Mental Practice on the Performance Achievement of High School Trombonists. Contributions to Music Education, 32(1), 75-93. Retrieved January 23, 2020, from [www.jstor.org/stable/24127237](http://www.jstor.org/stable/24127237)*

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# References - Website

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- ❖ <https://www.npr.org/sections/deceptivecadence/2013/09/03/216906386/10-easy-ways-to-optimize-your-music-practice>
- ❖ <https://bulletproofmusician.com/research-tested-practice-strategies-that-will-help-you-learn-new-pieces-faster/>

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# Special Thanks

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# Contact Me!



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Slides and more available at:

[www.OrchestraTeacher.net](http://www.OrchestraTeacher.net)