



Beyond the Basics

The Art and Science of Playing the Lute

How to Change a Habit

How to change your playing

This is the only method of changing habits that has ever really worked for me..

You can't change all of your habits at once. If you try to work on too many things at once, you'll dilute your concentration and end up going nowhere, despite your good intentions.

Choose one thing you want to change about your playing, and think about *it all the time* whenever the lute is in your hands. From personal experience, I have found that it is not very effective to practice technical exercises, only to forget about them as soon as you begin to play music. The point of technical exercises must be carried through into the music, into your sight-reading, and any time you are playing the lute.

A famous saying goes:

*If you fall in love, you are always thinking of your beloved
If you have a toothache, a part of you is always thinking about that blasted tooth!*

So must it be, to effectively replace a bad habit with a good one.

This method - *thinking about it all the time* - may seem a little extreme to some. Or it might seem like drudgery, to always be "working" on your playing, and never get to cut loose and just have some fun with the lute.

To this, I can only say that this is the only way I have been able to *really* change my playing. If you want to just enjoy the lute for yourself, and you don't want to undergo the rigors of refining your lute playing - I have no problem with that. But I have found that getting better **is** fun. It's exciting to feel your playing getting better, bit by bit. And I have often made a game of working on my "one habit," enjoying my secret focus on that one aspect of playing, every time I practice, rehearse, perform or just play for fun.

Stick with your focus on that "one habit" until it truly becomes a part of your playing. That is, until it becomes a good habit that you automatically do every time, even if you're not thinking about it.

Then its time to choose the next habit to work on...