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Presents:

12 Easy Steps to Play Piano in the Next 30 Days



30-Year Piano Veteran Reveals Secrets To Playing Piano in Less Time Than You Ever Thought Possible!

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Introduction

I am glad you recently made the conscious decision to learn to play piano. Why? Because until very recently, lessons were unnecessarily time consuming, uninteresting, inflexible and even confusing – and hopefully you haven't wasted your time with anything of that nature. This course promises to be the opposite.

This brand new eBook seeks to simplify and accelerate the process of learning piano in plain English, in proper detail and in a way that keeps the process exciting. I've really combed the internet for lessons like this one. Yes, there are some that come close. But if you compare similar introductory courses, you will find that this one blows away the other freely available compilations in terms of organization, completeness, flexibility, and musical theory.

No matter how you prefer to be taught – by reading sheet music or by ear – you will learn not just the essential information, I am betting you will enjoy and fully comprehend it as well. I firmly believe a student needs to understand everything about a topic and needs to reach this understanding in a compelling way.

So sit down in front of your piano or electronic keyboard, take a deep cleansing breath, and get ready to kick your musical education into high gear. We're about to dive in to the world of piano playing.

Glad to have you along for the ride!

I. Learn To Play the Piano Today ... Choose Your Way!

You should be proud of yourself ... you've gone from wanting to learn to play the piano to researching how to go about it.

Depending on your musical abilities, your attention span, and your personality, one learning method will work better than all others for you. Let's look at some of the many ways you can learn piano.

A. Traditionally

The traditional method guides a student by using the most basic fundamentals as a foundation, then slowly introduces increasingly complex lessons. The benefit of a traditional learning experience is that the student gains a greater understanding of the keyboard, music theory, the relationship between notes in the scales, and so many other details that make sense out of an unfamiliar skill. And when it comes to performing, you will eventually gain the proficiency necessary to play your desired

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piece of music as the original artist or composer intended. The drawback to this method of learning is that it takes a significant time commitment and great patience to get up and running.

We will show you how to review some of the online courses to find the ones that can train you traditionally as quickly as possible.

B. By Ear (Aurally)

Do you "have an ear" for music? Can you translate what you hear into notes and chords on an instrument? If so, you have a talent that significantly streamlines the learning process. Learning by ear eliminates the task of learning to read music. But to be effective at playing by ear, you still ought to learn how to place your fingers in the appropriate patterns, learn the names of the notes, etc.

1. Which is better? By ear or notation?

Learning to play piano by ear has always been a controversy probably since the piano was invented. Proponents of this approach claim that it's easier and it reinforces key listening skills while critics claim that it doesn't teach people how to play - it teaches people how to mimic instead.

We're a bit on the fence of this issue ourselves because it has its advantages and its disadvantages. That's why we recommend this approach in conjunction with traditional methods.

2. Playing By Ear Explained

Also known as the Suzuki method in violin music, playing the piano by ear is a process where the pianist learns to reproduce a song by listening to it and attempting to copy what was heard. This pattern of "listen-and-play" is of course repeated until the pianist faithfully reproduces the song from memory.

The pianist is said to have relative pitch if he can detect the pattern of the notes by ear but not necessarily the key that the music is played in. He is said to have absolute or perfect pitch if can detect the key a song is played in but not necessarily the pattern. Developing both is ideal.

3. Common Complaints on Both Sides of the Coin

In the traditional method, pianists play music from notation or sheet music. A common complaint among many traditionally trained pianists is that they cannot play music unless they're seated in front of some kind of sheet music. Of course, those who were trained by ear complain that they can't read sheet music! What we need here, it seems, is a nice balance of these two talents so that a pianist trained in both approaches can play music in any situation.

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4. Can't They Both Just Get Along?

While you may not get sheet music readers and those who learn by ear to agree which is the better method, the fact is, both learning methods can be learned. Some people can seemingly sit down and play any song that they've heard before. Some can read any piece of music that's put in front of them. With the right amount of practice, anyone can learn to do one or the other – or both!

5. The Value of Listening

Listening is the most important thing in playing by ear and although it seems pretty obvious, skilled pianists of this approach have trained themselves to listen for specific things. One of these things is chords. By listening for specific chords in a song, a "play-by-ear" pianist will know where to start when it's his or her turn to reproduce that song.

So for example, if a pianist hears a song that's pretty heavy on major chords, he'll know where most of the notes are situated on the keyboard. If he listens to some music and discovers that the song barely moves out of the F scale, he'll know the range of keys to use. You can do the same too by carefully listening to the music that you hear and by trying to find patterns that you're familiar with.

Once you can identify and reproduce those patterns, the rest of the song should come fairly naturally since melodies are, for the most part, extensions of chords and scales. Of course, the better listener you become, the better you'll play the piano. And that's true whether you choose to play piano by ear or traditionally with sheet music.

C. Chord-Based

If you're the type of person who's looking to play as soon as possible (is today soon enough?), then the chord method is for you. Each chord is a basic note combination that provides enough audible information to sing along to. Even though the actual song you are "covering" may contain a complex series of notes, chords represent enough of the music to get the party started and have some fun. The great thing about this method is that learning chords takes relatively little time. That said, chords tend to oversimplify music. A song's distinctive melody, or a signature run of notes that lend to a song's popularity, cannot be expressed in a chord. Put another way, you could mix together bits of steak, potato, green beans and a dinner roll; compress them into bar form; and eat the conglomeration for dinner. You would get most of the nutrition of the ingredients, but wouldn't enjoy the bar nearly as much as you'd enjoy all the elements of the entrée separately on a plate.

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D. Pattern-Based

This learning method teaches you shortcuts that supposedly mimic most popular music. I say supposedly because some argue the pattern-based method disregards the actual nuances in a song that differentiate it from other songs. Yet, it is another popular way to reach your piano playing goal more quickly than more traditional methods because you can learn a few key playing patterns and then proceed to sound like a professional with little other training. It's more complex than the chord method, so it enables you to sound more like the original artist. However, like the chord method, it tends to oversimplify the music, and a trained ear in your audience will pick that up.

E. Actions:

As you probably discovered, if you want to learn to play the piano, you can take your time or you can be up and running by dinner time. **Think about the kind of player you want to be, choose your method, and then proceed to get to the next steps in becoming a great musician!**

F. Further Resources:

Here are some further resources that you may want to explore depending on the method of piano training you choose:

- **Traditional:**
- **By ear:** *Hear and Play* (<http://www.piano-lessons-central.com/play-by-hear>) is probably the most thorough course designed specifically to help you learn to play by ear.
- **Chord-based:** Many of our readers have found *Power Piano Chords* (<http://www.piano-lessons-central.com/power-piano-chords>) to be a "comprehensive, clear, and simple guide to playing piano chords."
- **Pattern-based:** If you want to go this route, *Piano by Pattern* (<http://www.piano-lessons-central.com/piano-by-pattern>) is the most popular pattern-based piano course that we know of.

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II. The Instrument

A. Acoustic Pianos

Brief History

The piano is considered the invention of Bartolomeo Cristofori of Padua, Italy. A contractor for the powerful Medici family, the first recorded pianoforte (the original name for the instrument) in inventory was in the year 1700. In fact, the first Cristofori pianos built in the year 1720 survive today.

There have been many masters of this instrument but the first four composers of the classical age were also considered the "**founding fathers**" of the medium. Beethoven, Mozart, and Haydn lived and composed between the 1700s and 1800s. There were differences between the pre-1820s pianoforte and what is considered the "modern" piano built in the mid-1800s.

The Instrument Today

Today, there are two types to choose from. These two types are the **grand style of piano** and the **upright piano**. Most people have an upright in their homes because of the smaller footprint and the more moderate price tag.

Grands are the instruments that concert pianists play exclusively. Think of them as the "**Rolls Royce**" of musical instruments.

This style has the frame and the strings placed horizontally. The strings stretch away from the keyboard. This setup is what gives "the grand" its large size and makes it a better fit in larger rooms.

There are different sizes of grand pianos, the measurements are given in length:

- Parlor: 4'5" to 5'5"
- Baby: 5'0" to 6'5"
- Medium: 5'6" to 6'5"
- Professional: 6'6" to 8'0"
- Concert: 8'9" to 10'2"

As we mentioned, uprights are the most common in the home. Sometimes called "vertical" pianos, uprights are more compact. The frame and strings are stretched vertically, spanning from the keyboard in both directions. When the hammers hit the

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strings on an upright they depend on springs to return them into position.

The different sizes of upright pianos are measured in height; these are:

- Spinet: 35" to 39"
- Console: 40" to 44"
- Studio: 45" to 47"
- Full Size: 48" to 52"

B. Electronic Keyboards

Digital pianos and synthesizers have become increasingly popular for some pretty sound reasons. If you haven't given them a serious look, look again. You may be in for a pleasant surprise.

Electronic keyboards differ from the classical stringed piano in that they use technology to emulate acoustic sounds stored on memory chips.

They are normally played in bands rather than in orchestras, and the versatility of the sounds that they can produce allows musicians to imitate the music of other instruments (organs, flutes, violins, etc.). Some of the more advanced electronic keyboards can record new sounds or even record an entire performance for playback at another time.

Advantages

At first sight, these instruments may seem like a toy to the musician who has studied and played classical piano for numerous years, and many such musicians refuse to appreciate them as serious instruments. But there are some distinct advantages to playing one that shouldn't be ignored.

One of those advantages is their relevance to today's technologically obsessed society. For example, today's musician can easily connect one of these keyboards to a computer and create MIDI sound files.

Electronic keyboards never need tuning, they're lightweight and portable, and they typically feature several sound libraries to imitate stringed instruments, wind instruments, percussion, and even sound effects. In fact, many have built-in rhythm sections that you can play along to.

Feel

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You may not think about the way keyboards feel under your fingers, but there can be a significant difference between the action of an acoustic piano and that of an electronic keyboard. A piano key feels heavy when you hit it, because it is activating a small hammer inside the instrument. The hammers that hit the high notes feel light to the touch and grow heavier as you make your way left, to the low notes on the keyboard.

In the old days, all electronic keyboards featured springy, plastic keys that felt cheap and light compared to an acoustic piano's keys. Eventually, manufacturers discovered various ways to add weight to the keys to simulate the action of a piano. Today, high-end synthesizers and electric pianos have sophisticated weight systems that create a graded hammer effect. In other words, the keys get heavier as you move down the keyboard, just like an acoustic piano. If you plan to eventually play acoustic pianos exclusively, but you are learning on an electronic keyboard, the transition will be much smoother (and the lessons will be much more realistic) if you learn on a keyboard with graded hammer effect.

Sounds

Many digital pianos and synthesizers can emulate the sounds of almost every kind of classical piano known (upright, grand, tack, etc.). Today's instruments feature piano voices that are so realistic, they can fool even the most discriminating ear. And because most manufacturers include additional voices, such as orchestral sounds, these pianos can layer the sounds of several different instruments at once to create the effect of a small ensemble.

Of course, one of the most frequently asked questions about this instrument is, "How did they get the sounds in there?"

Essentially, the sounds that you hear were recorded from actual (non-digital) instruments. The higher quality pianos will produce sounds that are more faithful to their natural counterparts.

Brands

If you're interested in playing this kind of keyboard, you may enjoy knowing that some of the world's best technologists are digital piano manufactures. They include world-class Yamaha, Roland, Suzuki, Casio, and more. You may have seen these brand names on other products around the home.

The Interface

The learning curve required to play one of these keyboards is relatively short, depending on your goal. Musicians experienced with playing piano and using a

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computer can get started with one rather quickly. This is because its interface combines the interactivity of a software menu with the traditional piano keyboard.

Not all of the keyboard's functions are software based. Many functions are adjustable with rotating knobs and sliders. Spending some quality time learning how to change the available options without losing your place in a song is what turns a beginning digital piano player into a pro.

C. Time to Buy

Now that you have some background knowledge about this great instrument, it's time to think about **shopping strategies**. Most people will go to their local music shop, and this is a great way to get started. Make sure that, if you go this route, you talk with the technician on site.

Don't get pressured by a salesman and don't settle for a tuner. A technician will know the stock on hand and can tell you where they are made. Any good music shop will have a technician available; if they don't, go somewhere else.

Know that this is an investment. The quality will be directly connected to the cost of the instrument. Consider how long you want to keep it and how much use you're going to get out of it before you decide to buy.

You may not need the most expensive instrument there is, but you should not waste the money on a "cheap" one that will constantly be in need of service or not have the features you will want in the future. Electronic keyboards rarely if ever require maintenance unless they are dropped or abused. In the case of an acoustic piano, think of it as a car that will need regular maintenance. This will help you decide on an acceptable price point.

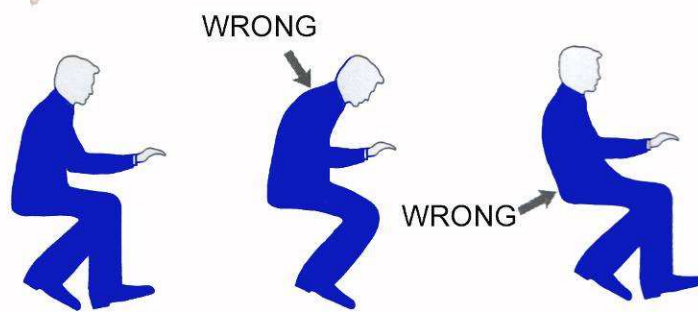
Proper Sitting Position & Hand Posture

Sitting in front of your new piano is extremely exciting for the first time. However, how do you start? It is important to have a proper sitting position and hand posture to minimize potential injuries.

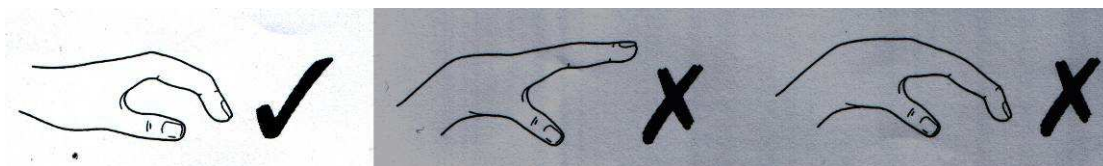
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1. Sit comfortably. Before playing your piano, adjust your seat if it is too high or too low, too far away from or too close to the piano.
2. Don't hunch your shoulders. Your shoulders and arms should be loose and relaxed. Swing your arms up and down and side to side before practicing your piano.
3. Your arms should be parallel with the height of the keyboard. If you place them wrong, your arms will ache and the sounds will be stilted.
4. Practice "lift on – lift off" movement like a concert pianist everyday. This movement could help you to get your arms lightly balanced, so your fingers can move freely from top to bottom of the keyboard.



5. Pay attention to your fingers. Keep your hand soft, as if you are holding an egg.

D. Actions

Visit a local music, piano, or electronic store. You can also visit an online music store to find an instrument that meets your needs and budget. Remember that you will also need a bench and maybe a music stand.

Once you get your chosen instrument, set everything up and position yourself properly. Once you find a position that's comfortable, remember it.

III. All You Need To Know About Your

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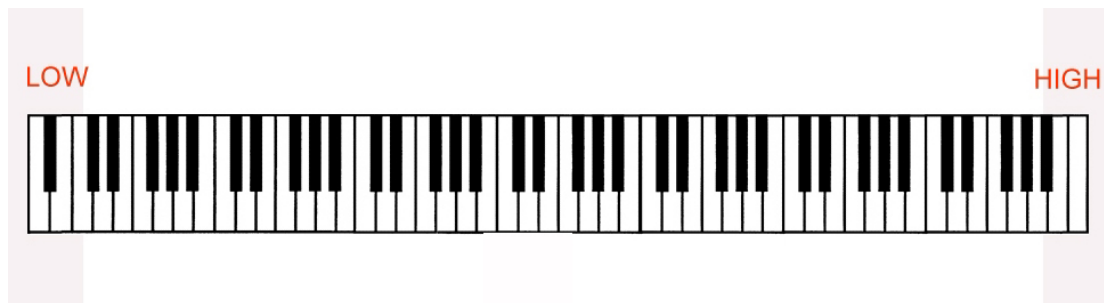
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Piano/Electronic Keyboard

A. Introduction to the piano/keyboard

A standard piano has 88 keys: 52 white keys and 36 black keys. Some electronic keyboards have less than that. If you are serious about learning to play piano, be sure to practice on a keyboard that has 88 keys.

You may be asking yourself: How could I remember all the keys on the piano? Don't worry; learning piano is not that difficult. You will be able to remember all the keys and patterns after completing this chapter!



Play both white and black keys from left to right. You will hear the notes become gradually higher. You'll notice in the graphic above, the left of the keyboard is designated as "low," referring to the sound of the notes relative to the "high" side of the keyboard. The low side is also referred to as the **bottom** of the keyboard and the right is referred to as the **top**.



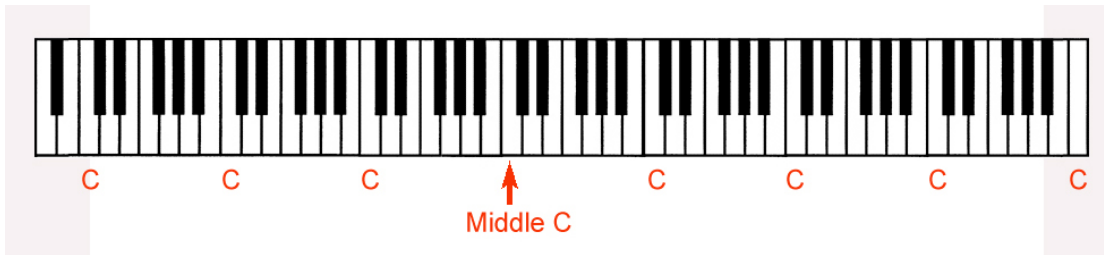
As you look at the piano above, you will see a group (7 white keys with 1 set of 2 black keys and 1 set of 3 black keys). C is always found on the left side of each set

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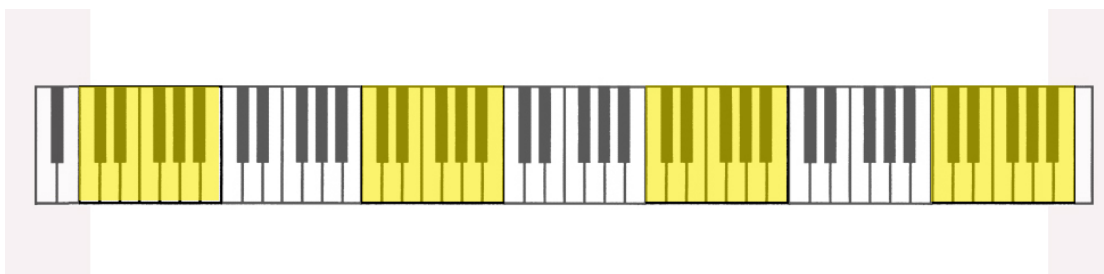
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of 2 black keys. Every octave starts from C (do), is followed by D (re), E (mi), F (fa), G (so), A (la), B (ti), and then return to C (do).



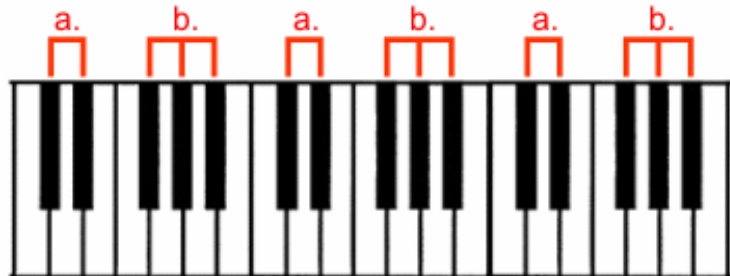
Look at your piano and play all the C notes. The distance from one C to the next is called an octave because there are eight tones ("oct" meaning 8) in the scale from C to C. Find the one that is the nearest to the middle of piano. This C is called, easily enough, MIDDLE C.



Notice how the highlighted sections above match one another and match the non-highlighted sections, too. If you count the notes in each section, you'll see that there are 12 of them. This pattern repeats seven times on a full 88-note keyboard.

Look at your piano and find the black keys. You will discover that the black keys are grouped in twos and in threes.

See the picture below: **a.** Black grouped in 2 **b.** Black grouped in 3



There are 7 groups of 2 black keys on a full size piano.

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After you recognize the concept of grouping, you can play some black keys grouped in 2, and play some black keys grouped in 3. Can you hear the difference and similarity among the groups? They sound similar but they have different pitch. Try it!

B. Actions

In addition to playing all of the C's, do the same for the E, G, A and B keys.

Randomly press any white key and then correctly identify it as you play.

IV. How to Read Music - Definitions to Help You Learn

Learning how to read music is like learning another language. Music has its own letters, syntax and grammar. Whether you are learning to play the piano through the classic method or the chord method, you'll have to be familiar with how to read music.

A page of music has a lot of symbols and notations that are easily interpreted when you know a few basics. By the time you finish reading this section, you will understand everything from this excerpt of Ludwig van Beethoven's *Für Elise*:

Poco Moto Ludwig van Beethoven

The image shows a musical score for the beginning of 'Für Elise' by Ludwig van Beethoven. The score is in 3/4 time and features a treble and bass clef. It includes fingering numbers (1-5), dynamics (pp), and articulation marks like slurs and accents. The first system shows the right hand starting with a quarter note G4 (finger 5), followed by eighth notes A4 (finger 2), B4 (finger 4), and A4 (finger 2). The left hand starts with a quarter note G3 (finger 5), followed by eighth notes F3 (finger 2) and E3 (finger 1). The second system continues the right hand melody with a quarter note G4 (finger 5), followed by eighth notes A4 (finger 2), B4 (finger 4), and A4 (finger 2). The left hand continues with a quarter note G3 (finger 5), followed by eighth notes F3 (finger 2) and E3 (finger 1). The third system shows the right hand starting with a quarter note G4 (finger 5), followed by eighth notes A4 (finger 2), B4 (finger 4), and A4 (finger 2). The left hand continues with a quarter note G3 (finger 5), followed by eighth notes F3 (finger 2) and E3 (finger 1). The fourth system shows the right hand starting with a quarter note G4 (finger 5), followed by eighth notes A4 (finger 2), B4 (finger 4), and A4 (finger 2). The left hand continues with a quarter note G3 (finger 5), followed by eighth notes F3 (finger 2) and E3 (finger 1).

Here are some of the basic terms in learning how to read music:

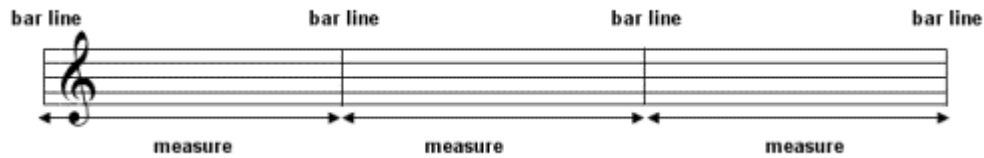
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A. The Staff:

Staff - The 5 lines (and 4 spaces between the lines) that indicate the pitch of the notes and carry most of the musical elements on a page.



The Staff with the Treble Clef combined with the Bass Clef (more on clefs in a moment) make what's called the *Grand Staff*. (This is typically how sheet music is displayed for piano music.)



Treble Clef – This is the symbol that appears on the upper staff of piano music before the first bar line. It signifies that these notes will be played with the right hand.



Bass Clef – This is the symbol that appears on the lower staff before the first bar line. It indicates that the following notes should be played with the left hand.



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Bar Line - The vertical line that separates notes into groups.

Thin double bar line (two thin lines) - used to mark sections within a piece of music. Sometimes, when the double bar line is used to mark the beginning of a new section in the score, a letter or number may be placed above it.

Double bar line (a thin line followed by a thick line) - used to mark the very end of a piece of music or of a particular movement within it.

In music scored for keyboard instruments, where the music lies across two staves (plural for staff), the upper indicating the notes to be played by the right hand, the lower indicating the notes to be played by the left hand, bar lines are commonly drawn from the top of the upper line on the upper staff to the bottom line on the lower staff. This is illustrated above.

Measure - The distance between two bar lines. Normally 3 to 4 beats long

Sometimes at the end of the staff, there is a thick vertical bar with two dots preceding it on the treble and bass staves. This is called a repeat sign. A repeat sign is used to indicate a measure that is to be played again and may be placed at the end of a music piece indicating that it should be played again from the beginning. It can also be placed in the middle of a music piece indicating that the measures before the repeat sign should be played again.

Section Repeat Signs



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B. The Pitch or Tone:

Pitch - The pitch or tone is denoted by the position of the note on the staff lines and spaces:

On Treble Staff:

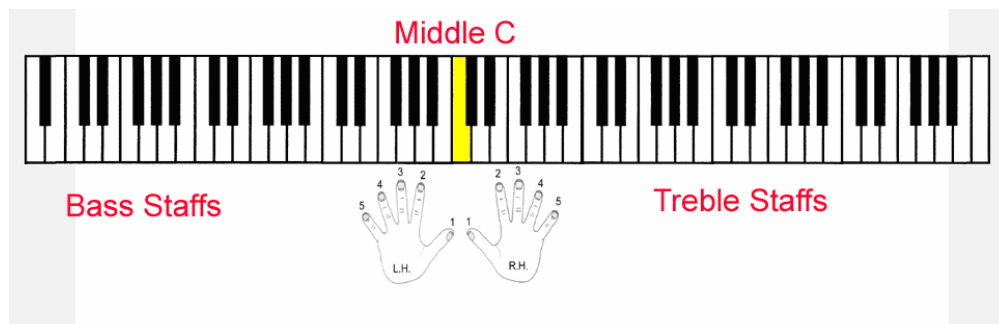


We normally use the right hand (R.H.) to play notes on the treble staff.

On Bass Staff:



We normally use the left hand (L.H.) to play notes on the bass staff.

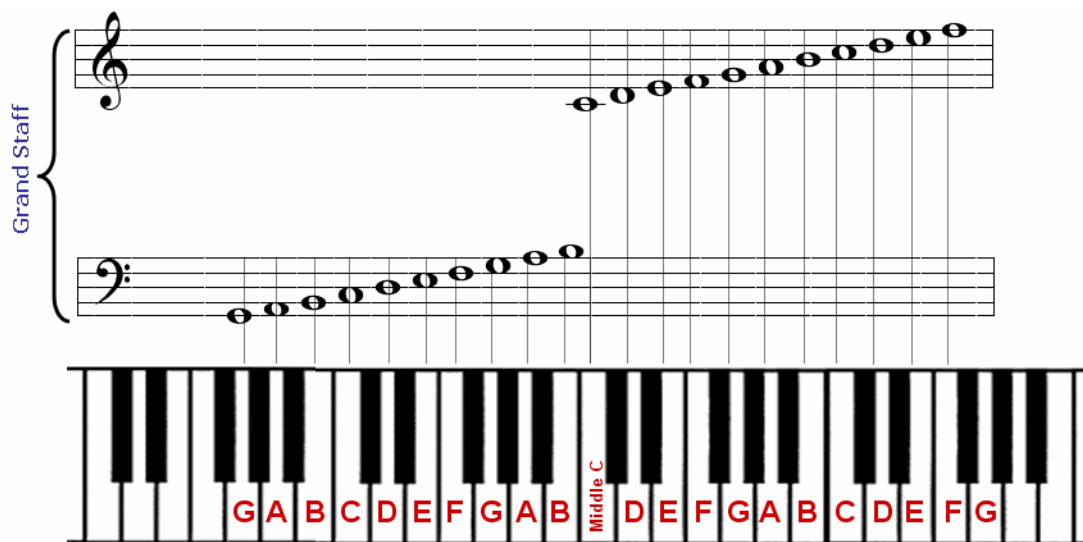


Each of these pitches corresponds to a key on the piano:

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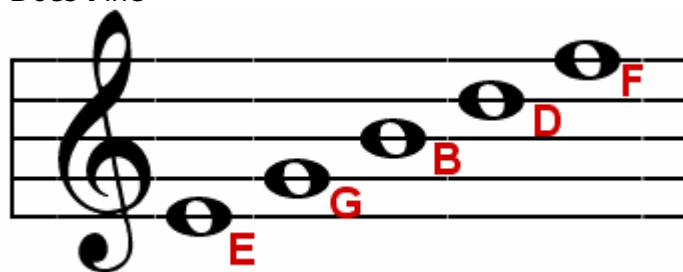
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Not sure if you can remember the notes on the staves? There are phrases, also known as mnemonic devices, to help you to memorize the five notes corresponding to the five lines of the staff. For example:

For the notes **on the lines** of the **treble clef** staff (from bottom to top):
Every Good Boy Does Fine

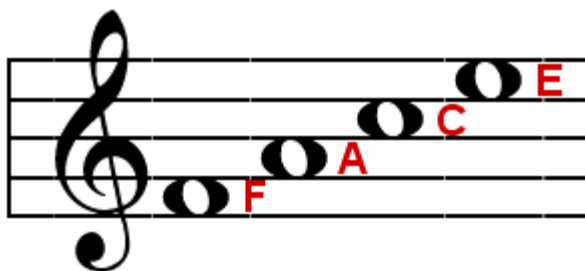


And For the notes **in the spaces** of the **treble clef** staff (from bottom to top):
 The Notes spell the word **F-A-C-E**

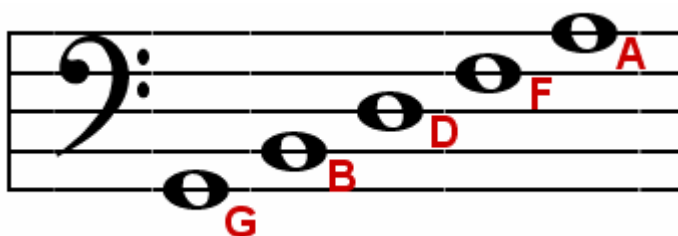
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For the notes **on the lines** of the **bass clef** staff (from bottom to top):
Good Boys Do Fine Always



For the notes **in the spaces** of the **bass clef** staff (from bottom to top):
All Cows Eat Grass



C. Piano Fingering and Hand Position:

Look at our sheet music sample below. Have you noticed the numbers above some of the notes?

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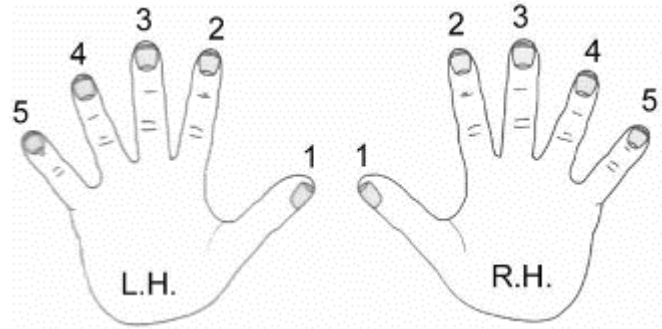
Ludwig van Beethoven

Poco Moto

Numbering for Right-Hand

Numbering for Left-Hand

Well, that's the recommended hand position that the song should be played. The numbers correspond to the fingers of the left hands (LH) and right hands (RH).



The numbers above the notes on the treble staff are meant for the right hand and numbers above notes on the bass staff are for the left hand.

D. The Rhythm:

When you learn how to read music, you also need to know the rhythm in which a piece should be played. This is represented in sheet music in three ways:

1. Notes
2. Rest
3. Time Signatures

1. Notes and Rests






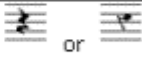


- **Whole note** – This symbol looks like a circle on the staff. It gets four counts of sound.
- **Whole rest** – This is a solid half block that hangs off the second line on the staff.
- **Half note** – This is a music note with a hollow circle and stem. It gets two counts of sound.

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- **Half rest** – A solid half block symbol that sits on the third line of the staff. It gets two counts of silence. Want a way to remember how to identify half rests vs. whole rests? Some people see the half rest as a “hat,” which sounds like half.
- **Quarter Note** – This is a music note with a solid circle and a stem. It gets one count of sound.
- **Quarter rest** – This is a musical symbol that looks like a sideways W. It gets one count of silence.
- **Eighth Note** – This is a music note with a solid circle, a stem, and a flag. It gets 1/2 count of sound.
- **Eight rest** – This is a musical symbol that looks like a number seven. It gets 1/2 count of silence.

Notes	Rest	Counts (time value)
 whole note	 whole rest	=4 counts
 half note	 half rest	=2 counts
 quarter note	 quarter rest	=1 counts
 eighth note	 eighth rest	=1/2 counts

2. Beam

Music beams are lines that connect a series of various notes. Since they're thick and horizontal (as opposed to thin and vertical), they're more noticeable and intimidating to beginners. Rest assured that beams are nothing to fear -- even when sheet music is plastered with them. Music beams actually make notation easier to read and play because they group similar notes. Notes of the same beat for example are grouped with a beam, and identifying these groups simplifies the process of reading and playing music notation.

The most commonly "beamed" notes are groups of eighth notes, sixteenth notes, or smaller note values -- all the way down to sixty-fourth notes. If you look at the eighth note in the chart above, imagine how it would look with four flags instead of just one. Having to read a lot of sixty-fourth notes in a row becomes difficult when they don't sit under a beam -- especially since their flags can clutter up measures or entire sections of music.

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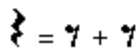
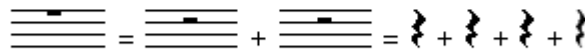
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Beams connecting both eighth and sixteenth notes.

3. Note/Rest Equivalent:



4. Dotted Notes

Dotted notes are the exact opposite of flagged notes. The small flag that follows a note decreases that note's duration by half, whereas a small dot that follows a note increases that note's duration by half. A dotted half note would therefore become three quarter notes (one half note equals two quarter notes). A dotted quarter note would therefore become three eighth notes (one quarter note equals two eighth notes), and so on and so forth. Since it isn't easy to see a dot on a line, dots are placed within the spaces of a staff.

Just like flagged notes however, dotted notes vary music. By itself, music can be quite static if it isn't spiced up a bit with a few pauses, longer durations, or shortened stints. Flags and dots are just two tools we use to make music come alive with personality. We also have staccato notes to play with.

5. Staccato Notes

Staccato notes are indicated with a dot placed at their very tops or bottoms. When you run across a staccato note, you must play it with a short and crisp

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emphasis. Since the space between each is short and silent, staccato notes sound as though they're spontaneous additives and they'll liven up a song while filling the audience with anticipation.

They really lend variety to a song when played within a section that leads up to a legato section. Legato notes are played as though they're connected. There are no distinguishable breaks between each pitch. But when played right after or right before a staccato section, the end result is an exciting combination that comes together in a pleasing way.

The diagram illustrates musical note values and their corresponding counts. At the top, a single dotted note is shown with the text "Dotted note" below it. Below this, two musical examples are presented as equations. The first example shows two quarter notes beamed together, with a "2" under the first and a "1" under the second, followed by an equals sign and a dotted quarter note with a "3" underneath. Below this is the text "COUNTS + COUNT = COUNTS". The second example shows a quarter note with a "1" underneath, followed by an equals sign, a dotted eighth note with a "1/2" underneath, followed by another equals sign and a dotted quarter note with a "1 1/2" underneath. Below this is the text "COUNT + COUNT = COUNTS".

6. Time Signatures - Fractions in Music? Oh No!

Time signatures in music indicate a song's rhythm. Sometimes called a meter, the time signature tells musicians the number of beats in each measure of music and what kind of note counts as one beat. Written as music, they look like fractions - but fortunately the only math that you need to do upon encountering one of these things is counting!

The **top number** in a time signature tells musicians the number of beats in each measure of music and the **bottom number** tells them the kind of note that counts as one beat. The bottom number can be pretty confusing to understand without an illustration, so we'll use the time signature "3/4" as an example.

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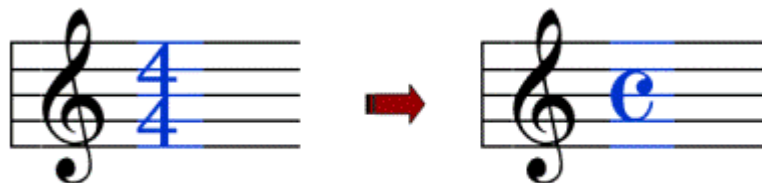


The 3/4 meter tells us that there are three beats per measure. It also tells us that the quarter note counts as one beat. A full measure would therefore contain three quarter notes or any combination of notes that when counted together, create three beats. Depending on how advanced your notation is (and how far you are in your music lessons), you'll notice that there are some rather unique ways to shorten beats or lengthen them past their original count using ties.

A 4/4 time signature tells us that there are four beats per measure and that the quarter note counts as one beat. A full measure in this meter could contain four quarter notes, a whole note, or two half notes.

Understanding Time Signatures - Common Types

Although time signatures can get pretty complicated as your experience with piano music gets more extensive, the most common are 2/4 (popular in polkas or marches), 3/4 (popular in waltzes, minuets, and country/western ballads), and 4/4 (popular in classical and popular music). By the way, the 4/4 time signature can also be denoted with a "C"-like symbol:



Duple time meters indicate two beats per measure, and triple time meters indicate three beats per measure. The more intricate your piano music gets, the more complicated its can meter get.

For example, marches, orchestra music, and theater music often employ the 2/2 time signature. Some of Brahms' pieces are played to a 4/2 meter, while jigs and some rock music play to a 6/8 meter. The 12/8 meter supports the blues and doo-wop styles. Songs that have no time signature at all have what's called free time.

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Unusual but Creative Meters

Things can really get complicated when musicians switch meters in the middle of a song! But that only makes things interesting. Most songs maintain a regular meter throughout their entirety, but it isn't uncommon for a small section to switch from a 4/4 meter to a 3/4 meter (and then back again).

You can find the meter of the music that you play in the beginning of the song. It should be located right after the song's key signature or clef. Just remember that when you play, the first beat of a measure's meter -- that is, the first beat of a series of beats -- is the one that's stressed as a way to help the audience identify a steady rhythm.

E. Connecting the Music:

Ties and slurs connect two or more notes together. Ties connect notes of the same pitch, forming essentially one longer note. Slurs smoothly connect notes of different pitch. This means to play the notes without breaks. The first set of notes below exhibit a tie. The second shows a slur.



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F. Key Signatures

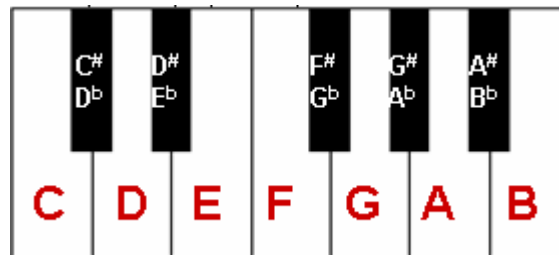
1. What Determines the Quality and Quantity of a Song's Notes

When watching musicians play piano, you may see them refer to a piece of music in the key of "A" or "C." These letters refer to the key that the music is played in or its key signature. Key signatures are what determine the quality and quantity of a song's sharps and flats, and if you've spent any time playing scales, then you have a pretty good idea of what we're talking about.

When you're asked to play a "C sharp" chord or "G flat" chord for example, you're being asked to play a group of notes in a particular key. The root key is what determines the remaining keys in a chord and so it is with music. The key signature of a piece of music may be "C sharp" or "G flat" (or any other pitch) and that signature determines the remaining pitches throughout the entire song.

Flats and Sharps:

The black notes take their names from the white keys on either side on them. We have enlarged a portion of the keyboard, starting from 'middle C', to make this clearer. A black key immediately to the right of a white key is said to be 'sharp' while a black key immediately to the left of a white key is said to be 'flat'. Because every black key has a white key on either side of it, it bears two names. These are both shown on the diagram below. C sharp and D flat are the same key and will produce the same note when played on a keyboard.



A sharp (#) is a sign which is written in front of a note and raises the pitch of that note by one half step. A half step on a piano is simply the distance between two adjacent keys, such as C to C# or E to F. A flat (b) is a sign which lowers the pitch of a note by one half-step. That particular note **remains sharp or flat for the entire measure**. To cancel a flat or sharp, a natural (n) is placed on the staff before the note it is to affect or when a new measure begins. If the same note is always going to be sharp or flat, music writers use **key signatures** to indicate this (more on that in a moment).

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The flat, sharp and natural symbols are referred to as **accidentals** and only affect the note in the same octave in which it has been written. They do not affect the same note in other octaves unless they have been labeled with an accidental. This is why a natural is needed, just in case you happen to need the same note again in the same octave but without any variation in tone.

2. All Key Signatures Contain Sharps and Flats (Well, Almost)

Except for the C Major key, all key signatures contain sharps and flats. Since printed musical notation can be rather intricate and confusing -- especially in difficult pieces -- you won't see the sharp or flat indicator next to each individual note that is sharp or flat. This would make sheet music difficult to write and read. Instead, writers use the key signature to indicate the sharps or flats of a note and it's up to the pianist to remember those sharps and flats.

Those with Sharps:

- The sharp in a **G key signature** is F#.
- The sharps in a **D key signature** are F# and C#.
- In an **A key signature**, they're F#, C#, and G#.
- In the **key of E**, they're F#, C#, G#, and D#.
- F#, C#, G#, D#, A#, and E# are played in an **F# key signature**
- In the **key of B**, they are F#, C#, G#, D#, A#
- The entire group of F#, C#, G#, D#, A#, E#, and B# are played in a **C# key signature**.



C# Key Signature *example on the treble staff ... apply to the same notes on the bass staff*

Those with Flats:

- The flat in an **F key signature** is Bb.
- The flats in a **Bb key signature** are Bb and Eb.
- In an **Eb key signature**, they're Bb, Eb, and Ab.
- In the **key of Ab**, they're Bb, Eb, Ab, and Db.
- Bb, Eb, Ab, Db, and Gb are played in a **Db key signature**

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- The entire group of Bb, Eb, Ab, Db, Gb, and Cb are played in a **Gb key signature**.
- Can you tell what notes the **Cb key signature** indicates? Pat yourself on the back if you said Bb, Eb, Ab, Db, Gb, Cb, and Fb.



Cb Key Signature example on the treble staff... apply to the same notes on the bass staff

3. Circle of fifths - A Visual way to remember the number of sharps/flats in a given key signature?

The circle of fifths, introduced by Johann David Heinichen in 1728, is a visual arrangement of related keys. Although its name gives the impression that it's a difficult concept to grasp, it's really just an easy way to remember the number of sharps and flats in a key signature and the major and minor key relationships.

Sharps and Flats

If you can imagine a clock for a moment, where each hour represents a particular key, you can identify that key's sharps and flats. Let's say that:

- 12:00 or "**0:00**" represents the C Major key (or the A Minor key)...
- 1:00 represents the G Major key (or the E Minor key)...
- 2:00 represents the D Major key (or the B Minor key)...
- 3:00 represents the A Major key (or the F# Minor key)...
- 4:00 represents the E Major key (or the C# Minor key)...
- 5:00 represents the B Major key (or the G# Minor key)...
- 6:00 represents the F# Major key (or the Eb Minor key)...
- 7:00 represents the Db Major key (or the Bb Minor key)...
- 8:00 represents the Ab Major key (or the F Minor key)...
- 9:00 represents the Eb Major key (or the C Minor key)...
- 10:00 represents the Bb Major key (or the G Minor key), and
- 11:00 represents the F Major key (or the D Minor key).

Perfect Fifths

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If you'll notice, each hour (or key) is separated by a perfect fifth. A perfect fifth is an interval made up of three whole steps and one half step. For example, A perfect fifth above C is G, and a perfect fifth above E is B. This is where the pattern gets its name from. It follows a unique pattern on our imaginary clock where:

- ... the perfect fifth of the C Major key is G.
- ... the perfect fifth of the G Major key is D.
- ... the perfect fifth of the D Major key is A.
- ... the perfect fifth of the A Major key is E.
- ... the perfect fifth of the E Major key is B.
- ... the perfect fifth of the B Major key is F#.
- ... the perfect fifth of the F# Major key is C#.
- ... the perfect fifth of the C# Major key is G#.
- ... the perfect fifth of the G# Major key is D#.
- ... the perfect fifth of the D# Major key is A#.
- ... the perfect fifth of the A# Major key is F.
- ... the perfect fifth of the F Major key is C.

This pattern helps us determine the sharps and flats of a signature because they're always a perfect fifth away. Just remember that sharps increase in the clockwise direction while flats increase in the counter-clockwise direction.

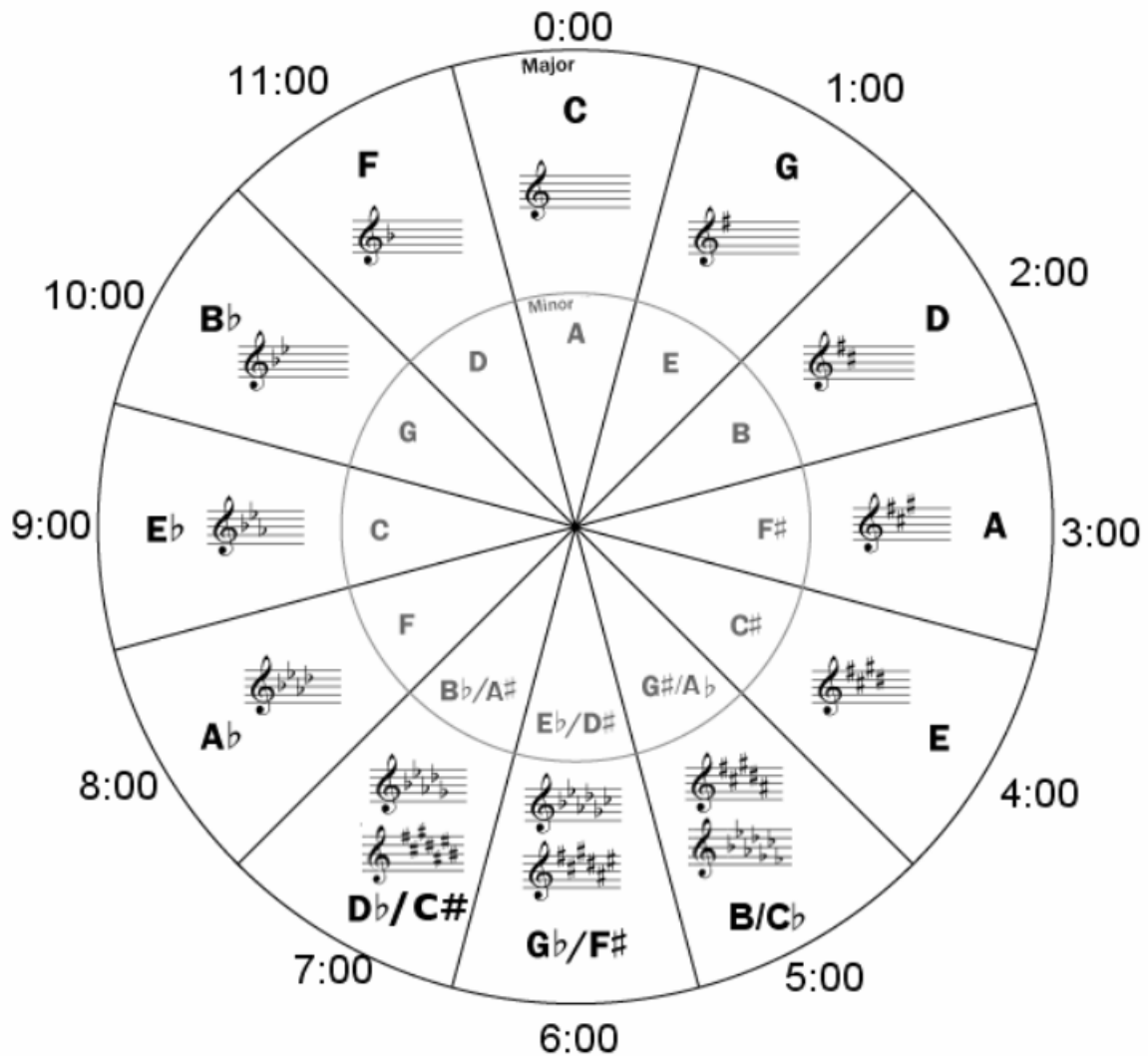
Related Keys

As an example, the C Major and A Minor keys are related because they both lack sharps and flats. Based on the circle of fifths, we discover that a single flat relates the F major key to the D minor key while a single sharp relates the G major key to the E minor key. Two flats relate the Bb major key to the G minor key while two sharps relate the D major key to the B minor key. Three flats relate the Eb major key to the C minor key while three sharps relate the A major key to the F# minor key. Starting to see a pattern? The concept is of course easier to understand with a visual.

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The Enharmonic Notes

The 5:00, 6:00, and 7:00 hours are unique in that they help you identify similar or equal notes.

- **"5:00"** can either be B Major (G# Minor) with five sharps (from the clockwise perspective) or Cb Major (Ab Minor) with seven flats (from the counter-clockwise perspective).

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- "6:00" can either be F# Major (D# Minor) with six sharps (from the clockwise perspective) or Gb Major (Eb Minor) with six flats (from the counter-clockwise perspective).
- Lastly, "7:00" can either be C# Major (A# Minor) with seven sharps (from the clockwise perspective) or Db Major (Bb Minor) with five flats (from the counter-clockwise perspective).
-

G. Dynamic Signs

Dynamic signs refer to the **softness or the loudness** that the notes should be played. They are signs and marks that set or change the dynamic level during a piece of music. In some cases, the dynamic level is related to the mood; in other cases the mark is much more direct. They are generally at the beginning of a measure (and at the beginning of the music) and usually located in the space between the treble and bass staves. Once set, it's in effect for the entire piece or until another dynamic symbol is displayed.

Here are some of the common dynamic symbols:

Symbol	Meaning
<i>ff</i>	fortissimo : very loud
<i>f</i>	forte; loud
<i>mf</i>	mezzo forte: moderately loud
<i>mp</i>	mezzo piano: moderately soft
<i>p</i>	piano: soft
<i>pp</i>	pianissimo : very soft
	crescendo: increasingly louder
	diminuendo or decrescendo: increasingly softer

H. Determining the Speed of the Piece:

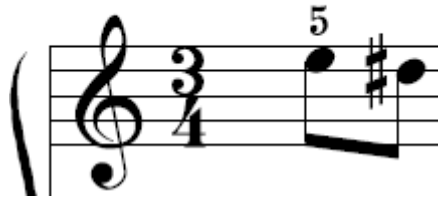
Typically, the composer will suggest the speed or feeling for the piece. The notation is usually right above the treble clef at the beginning of the piece. In our example, it's "Poco Moto" (*little motion*).

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Poco Moto



As you can see, the speed notation is **the composer's attempt to convey the feel at which the piece should be played.**

Piano playing can express emotion and feeling through the music; so many times the composer uses emotional words and leaves it up to the musician to translate that into an appropriate tempo. For example, you'd know that a piece that's played *with excitement* will be played faster than a piece that's played *with sadness*, etc...There's no exact science to it. **Remember, music is expressive!**

Here are some common traditional words used to denote tempos found mostly in classical music:

Tempo Name	Beats per Minute (BPM) Range
Largo	40 - 59
Largetto	60 - 65
Adagio	66 - 75
Andante	76 - 107
Moderato	108 - 119
Allegro	120 - 167
Presto	168 - 180

These terms will help you become familiar with the symbols on the musical page. Looking at a page of music and understanding it will be easy once you know these definitions. From there, you can continue learning how to read music and playing whatever kind of music that you want.

Now, you have everything you need to play almost **any piece of sheet music!** Congrats!

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I. Actions

We promised at the beginning of this section that you would learn how to play Ludwig van Beethoven's Für Elise. Go back to the beginning of the section now and see if you've met the challenge!

J. Further Resources:

Want to learn how to **read music 80% faster** than by normal methods and have fun? We found a **[FREE music reading software program](http://www.piano-lessons-central.com/how-to-read-music-game)**. You still have to translate the notes that you read to the piano keys but it makes note recognition a lot easier. Oh ... the URL is: **<http://www.piano-lessons-central.com/how-to-read-music-game>**

V. Piano Scales - Essential Building Blocks of Music

Piano scales are essential building blocks in music. You will devote a good deal of your time and effort to learning and playing them.

On following pages, I will show you a useful overview, describe the major scales, and provide some important beginner exercises.

Students of all levels endlessly complain about piano scales. And I agree, playing a scale is not the most exciting part of mastering your instrument.

But one thing is certain: the scales will progress right along with your skills, but you will always play them if for no other reason than an excellent warm up or workout for your fingers.

In case you belong to the category of those who have hardly touched a piano or never had a teacher, you should know some **theory**. Don't worry; I won't make it more complicated than necessary!

Let's first answer the most important of all questions:

What is a scale?

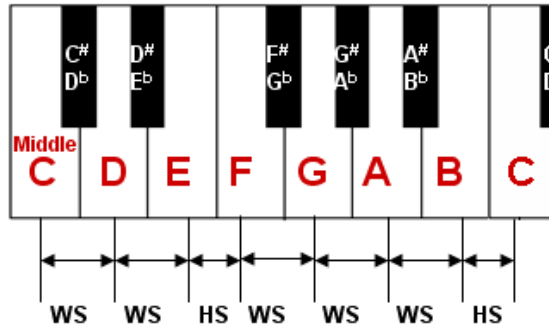
A scale is a pattern of notes, or tones, that are related to the first note in the series. The relationship is defined by the distance between each successive note in the series. If you look at the image below, you will see **whole tones or whole-steps (WS)** and **semitones or half-steps (HS)**. A half step is the distance from a white

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key to its neighboring black key, or the distance from E to F, or the distance from B to C. A whole step simply skips every other half step.



There are many different types of piano scales, some with five notes (**pentatonic** scale - popular in blues music), six notes (whole tone) and twelve notes (**chromatic** - widely used in modern jazz).

The most commonly used in Western music are diatonic scales.

A diatonic scale has seven notes: five whole-tone and two half-tone (or *semi-tone*) steps. The pattern repeats at the octave, which was explained in Section 3.

The keyboard of a piano (as well as an organ, electronic keyboard etc.) is diatonic, with black keys grouped in twos and threes.

A **major scale** is also diatonic. The steps in a major scale are:

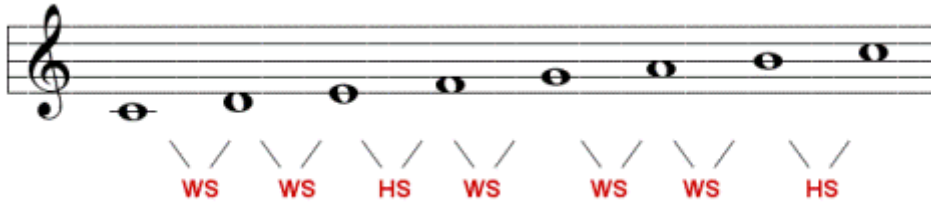
- whole-step
- whole-step
- half-step
- whole-step
- whole-step
- whole-step
- whole-step
- half-step

Use this formula and the notes of the C major scale are:

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Natural **minor scales** are also commonly used. Here the steps are:

- whole-step
- half-step
- whole-step
- whole-step
- half-step
- whole-step
- whole-step

Use this and the notes of a C natural minor are:
C-D-Eb-F-G-Ab-Bb-C.

Other important piano scales every beginner should master are **melodic minor** and **harmonic minor** scales. No doubt you will get acquainted one day!

Let's stop here for now. You will get a better understanding when you're playing and hear the difference. However, not only your ears count. **Proper fingering of piano scales is equally important** if you want to develop your skills and improve as a pianist.

A. Actions

Using the step formula from above name the notes and all 12 **major** scales below:

C D E F G A B C

C# _____

D _____

Eb _____

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E _____

F _____

F# _____

G _____

Ab _____

A _____

Bb _____

B _____

Using the step formula from above name the notes and all 12 **minor** scales below:

C D Eb F G Ab Bb C

C# _____

D _____

Eb _____

E _____

F _____

F# _____

G _____

Ab _____

A _____

Bb _____

B _____

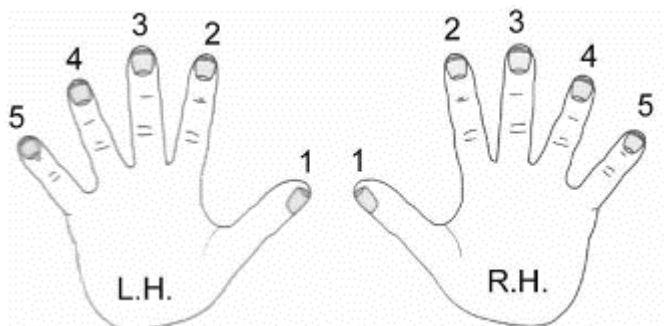
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VI. Basic Piano Fingerings for the 12 Major Scales

Here are the piano fingerings for [all twelve major scales](#), in [circle of fifths](#) order. The numbers correspond to the fingers of the left hands (LH) and right hands (RH):



The numbers above the notes on the treble staff are typically for the right hand and numbers above the notes on the bass staff relate to the left hand.

You will notice that fingering for the right hand begins with the thumb when the first note is a white key and with the second finger when the first note is a black key. If you look at your hand, you'll notice the thumb has a much shorter reach than your other fingers. With the black keys being further to reach than the white keys, it is less awkward to play them with your longer fingers.

No matter what finger you begin the scale on, you will cross your thumb under your third finger to play the fourth note if it is on a white key. If the fourth note is a black key, play it with your fourth finger and cross your thumb under your fourth finger to play the next note.

C Major (0 sharps/flats)

Scale Notes	C	D	E	F	G	A	B	C
RH	1	2	3	1	2	3	4	5
LH	5	4	3	2	1	3	2	1

G Major (1 Sharp: F)

Scale Notes	G	A	B	C	D	E	F#	G
RH	1	2	3	1	2	3	4	5
LH	5	4	3	2	1	3	2	1

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D Major (2 Sharps: F, C)

Scale Notes	D	E	F#	G	A	B	C#	D
RH	1	2	3	1	2	3	4	5
LH	5	4	3	2	1	3	2	1

A Major (3 Sharps: F, C, G)

Scale Notes	A	B	C#	D	E	F#	G#	A
RH	1	2	3	1	2	3	4	5
LH	5	4	3	2	1	3	2	1

E Major (4 Sharps: F, C, G, D)

Scale Notes	E	F#	G#	A	B	C#	D#	E
RH	1	2	3	1	2	3	4	5
LH	5	4	3	2	1	3	2	1

B Major (5 Sharps: F, C, G, D, A)

Scale Notes	B	C#	D#	E	F#	G#	A#	B
RH	1	2	3	1	2	3	4	5
LH	4	3	2	1	4	3	2	1

We're now at "6:00" on the circle of fifths and will start going *flat*

Gb Major (6 flats: B, E, A, D, G, C)

Scale Notes	Gb	Ab	Bb	Cb	Db	Eb	F	Gb
RH	2	3	4	1	2	3	1	2
LH	4	3	2	1	3	2	1	2

Db Major (5 flats: B, E, A, D, G)

Scale Notes	Db	Eb	F	Gb	Ab	Bb	C	Db
RH	2	3	1	2	3	4	1	2
LH	3	2	1	4	3	2	1	2

Ab Major (4 flats: B, E, A, D)

Scale Notes	Ab	Bb	C	Db	Eb	F	G	Ab
-------------	----	----	---	----	----	---	---	----

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RH	2	3	1	2	3	1	2	3
LH	3	2	1	4	3	2	1	2

Eb Major (3 flats: B, E, A)

Scale Notes	Eb	F	G	Ab	Bb	C	D	Eb
RH	2	1	2	3	4	1	2	3
LH	3	2	1	4	3	2	1	2

Bb Major (2 flats: B, E)

Scale Notes	Bb	C	D	Eb	F	G	A	Bb
RH	2	1	2	3	1	2	3	4
LH	3	2	1	4	3	2	1	2

F Major (1 flats: B)

Scale Notes	F	G	A	Bb	C	D	E	F
RH	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4
LH	5	4	3	2	1	3	2	1

A. Actions

Playing scales makes for a great exercise, not just physically, but musically. Many experts still regularly practice scales as a way of reinforcing their fingering techniques. Practice playing each of the above scales **as fast as you can**, using the **correct** fingering, for 30 seconds per scale. Do this for both the right hand and the left hand.

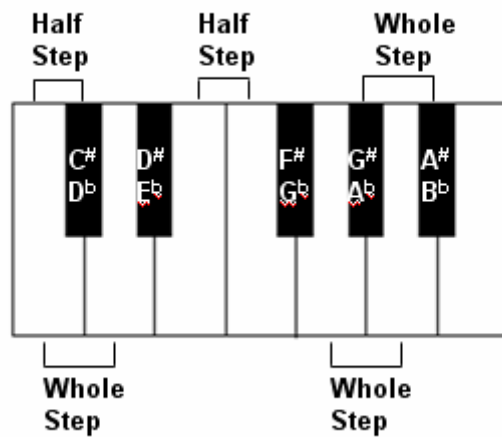
VII. Intervals

Piano intervals are differences in pitch. If you think of the C major scale, each one of its keys is an interval between its lowest note and its highest. That includes whole notes and half notes, mind you. The smallest interval is obviously the half-step (called a minor 2nd) and the largest interval is an entire octave (called an eighth). There are a total of 88 intervals from the left side of the keyboard all the way to the right. Played one-by-one, these notes are called a melodic interval (ascending or descending -- either way). But when notes are played together, they're called a harmonic interval. Of particular interest is the manner in which intervals build major, minor, and other type of chords.

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A. Types of Intervals

Once you've learned the pattern of identifying intervals, playing them is easy. The major third interval for instance, is the distance between any three notes of the C Major scale. If you were to play the C key and the E key simultaneously, the C, D, and E keys form the trio in the "third" interval even though the D key is silent. If you were to play the C and D key only, you would form a major 2nd interval because the distance between both notes is just two. If you were to play the C key and the E-flat key, you would form a minor third. C to F is a 4th interval while C to G is a fifth. Playing one C and the next C above it is playing an octave. But things start to get a little tricky when you introduce sharps and flats.

For example, playing D to G creates a perfect 4th. When we're working with intervals, we have to be careful about what we call a flat and what we call a sharp. With our perfect 4th, a G-sharp becomes an augmented 4th -- not an A-Flat. An A-flat in this case is called a diminished 5th. But that's getting a little ahead of ourselves.

B. Why Learn Intervals

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Learning intervals makes maneuvering around the keyboard easier. It also makes playing the piano easier too! That's because many of the songs we hear every day are played with only three chords. By studying intervals and understanding how they build basic chords, you can quickly learn to play the songs that you enjoy listening to. Chords, after all, are built with the intervals we're talking about! Minor chords for example, are built with minor intervals and major chords are built from major intervals.

Here's a short list of some songs we're familiar with. As you think about these songs, think about the intervals that they use and then try them out on your own:

Frere Jacques: Major 2nd
Happy Birthday: Major 2nd
Beverly Hills Cop: Minor 3rd
Kum Ba Ya (Chorus): Major 3rd
Here Comes the Bride: Perfect 4th
Amazing Grace: Perfect 4th
Star Wars: Perfect 5th
Twinkle Twinkle Little Star: Perfect 5th
My Bonnie Lies Over the Ocean: Minor 6th
Somewhere Over the Rainbow: Entire Octave

C. Actions

Name the following intervals:

1. C-D
2. C-C
3. D-A
4. Ab-Db
5. G-E
6. F-A
7. B-B
8. C-B

VIII. Piano Chords – More Than Just a Group of Notes

At their most basic, piano chords are formed by playing three or more notes simultaneously. The combinations that result set the mood of a musical piece – happy, sad, powerful, soulful, etc.

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Historically, major chords have always evoked positive emotions while minor chords evoke the opposite. That's a fairly simplistic observation, but it gives you an idea of one of the most primary effects chords have on music.

It's a good idea to understand the various chord types. Each has a formula that creates a specific musical effect no matter which key you are playing in. Here are some examples and, bear in mind, these explanations only cover the most basic of each chord type:

- **Triad** – three notes consisting of the root (the key you are playing in), the third and the fifth.
- **Sixth** – a fourth note added one full step above a triad's fifth position.
- **Seventh** – a fourth note is added to a triad at the seventh position above the root note.
- **Extended** – a note is added to a triad chord above the seventh position, such as a ninth, for example. Since a scale has only seven notes, it doesn't seem to make sense that you could have a ninth. However, a second and a ninth are the same note.
- **Added Tone** – a chord that includes an added note, such as a sixth, but doesn't include the basic triad's third.
- **Suspended** – a chord that substitutes the third with either a second or fourth note from the scale. This is an interesting chord type since, when it is heard, the listener generally anticipates the next chord being the standard triad containing the root, third and fifth.

Chords are said to "color" music from various genres. For example, country music tends to utilize sevenths, and jazz/blues tend to incorporate ninths or thirteenth. Rock, especially hard rock, favors "power chords" that are made up of the root note and the fifth, often with the octave serving as a third note at the top of the chord.

Most chords are further distinguished by what's often referred to as their **quality**.

- A **major chord**, which tends to evoke pleasant emotions, features a major third in the triad. In a C chord, this would be C, E, and G.
- A **minor chord**, which most often appears in somber music, has a minor third in the triad. In a C chord, the notes would be C, E flat, and G.
- An **augmented chord** raises the fifth position one-half step, common in blues, country and jazz. You might be interested to know how different augmented chords are related; for example, the augmented chords for C, E, and G sharp all contain the same notes.
- A **diminished chord** features a minor third and a "diminished" fifth. More specifically, you lower the third and fifth of a major triad by one-half step. These are common in classical, jazz and gospel.

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Chords are further designated by their **scale degree**, and the two most essential examples are the **tonic** and **dominant** chords.

Appropriately, a tonic chord begins with the tonic note, which is the first note of the scale in which you are playing. If the song you are playing is in the key of C, your tonic chord has a C as its bass note and it is, naturally, a C chord.

The dominant chord is a chord in the key of your scale's fifth note. In our example, the dominant chord is the G chord and begins with G as the bass note. A subdominant chord is a chord in the key of your scale's fourth note; in this case, F.

The final element of chords we will learn about here is an **inversion**. The number of inversions available to a chord is the number of notes in a chord minus one. A triad has two inversions; start with the tonic chord, also called the **root** when discussing inversions, which is *not* an inversion. Then there is a first inversion, which is the same chord but it begins on the third note in the scale. You may have already guessed this next one; the second inversion is the same chord, only it begins on the fifth note in the scale.

We've covered a lot of ground in this discussion on chords. If you already have a basic playing ability, you will no doubt begin to vary your chord construction to add personality, effect and emotion to your performances.

A. Actions

Play the two inversions for a C chord. Now play the two inversions for an F chord. Pretty easy, huh? Now play the two inversions for a Bb chord. Still pretty easy? Do the same for A, C# and F#. Did you figure them out? If so, congrats, you've mastered inversions. If not, reread this section and try again!

IX. Chord Progressions – The Basic DNA of Music

Many things in life have a pattern. In music, we refer to those patterns as chord progressions. They are simply a **sequence of chords that tends to repeat throughout the song**.

Have you ever noticed how easy it can be to learn a new song you hear on the radio? Sometimes it only takes hearing it a couple of times. Do you find yourself singing the lyrics right away, or do you hum along with the melody? It's the melody, of course.

When you break down the essential "formula" of a song's construction, you will see

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the chord pattern or patterns emerge. The most **basic chord progression** happens to be the most popular. Musicians commonly refer to it to as the **1-4-5 progression**.

Whatever key you are in, that's the first chord. Let's choose the key of C for this example. As the 1-4-5 designation suggests, you start with your tonic chord, C; move to the subdominant chord, F; and then switch to the dominant chord, G. Also popular is the **1-5-4 progression**.

Both the chord progressions above are known as three-chord songs. Because of the simplicity of writing a three-chord song, they are the most common in practically every modern genre, notably rock, pop, blues and country. When playing freeform (you know, *jamming*), three-chord progressions are easy to improvise because they are so easy to play.

Needless to say, with so many notes and chord possibilities, it's not always easy to know which chord follows what. Beginners and pros alike sometimes use a **chord progression chart** – a reference guide that shows every tonic chord and then every chord in that scale. It also indicates each chord's number. How do you read such a complicated sounding thing?

Imagine you are on stage with a band for the first time. The lead guitarist turns to you and says, "We're playing a 1-5-4 in the key of G sharp." WHOA! That's not a key YOU play in very often. So you glance at the chord progression chart and look down the left column to find your tonic, G sharp. Then you look across the top to see what the 5 and 4 would be. Instantly you see they are C sharp and D sharp.

You're well on your way to understanding chord progressions and how they affect your music. Keep reading; *there's so much more to discover!*

A. Actions

Play a 1-4-5 progression in the key of G.
Play a 1-3-2-5 progression in the key of D.

X.How to Play Jazz Piano

If you've always wanted to know how to play jazz piano, you're about to get started. Jazz may be a complex musical genre, but you can play it if you master the basics first. Before you know it, you'll have developed the skills you need to emulate jazz greats or compose your own music.

Jazz's distinctive sound originated in the South. It's important to understand its roots

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to get a feeling for how jazz is played. Born out of the songs of African American laborers, notably in New Orleans, Jazz owes its popularity to its unconventional rhythms, trademark chords, and its soulful style.

While jazz music is recognizable, it is improvisational, which means changing certain aspects of a performance is encouraged. Depending on a musician's emotions, skill level, playing style, etc., one version of a song can vary greatly from another. This allows for a good deal of creativity on your part.

To get started, it's a good idea for you to understand the chords used to play jazz. These particular chords go beyond the basic three note chords most budding musicians learn. The following lessons will be set in the key of C since that is an easier key to learn in than the others.

Let's start with the **sixth** chord. You might see this chord represented as C6 or Cadd6 on a chord chart. To play a C6 chord, starting with your right thumb, play the notes C-E-G-A. The A is your 6th because it is one step above the 5th note, G. Notice that we are keeping the G in the chord. In a Cadd6 chord, you would *replace* the G with the A. Try playing them both and listen to their subtle differences.

The next logical step is a **seventh** chord. When you play a C7 chord, you play the three notes C-E-G and add the C scale's seventh note, lowered one half step. The seventh note is B, so you will add a B flat. Play the C-E-G-B flat combination and you will instantly recognize the sound.

A close relative of the seventh is the **major seventh**. This chord, indicated as Cmaj7 on a chord chart, has the seventh note of the scale added on to the end. In this case, it's B. Play the C-E-G-B combination as a chord and compare it to the C7 chord.

After you have practiced playing the different chords, put them together in a **progression**. A progression is a series of chords. A common chord progression in jazz music is the 1-4-2-5. The numbers represent the first note of each chord as they relate to the key you are in. In the key of C, the first note of the scale (number 1) is the C. The fourth note is F, the second note is D, and the fifth note is G. So this chord progression would have the following chords, in order: C, F, D, G.

It's not uncommon to play one or more of the chords in a minor key. For example, try playing the D as D minor, or a D minor 6th. Jazz is all about experimentation and expression, so have fun as you explore your chord options.

Now it's time to add the bass. While you naturally have a few options, a common bass style is known as a **walking bass**. To perform this style, you basically play one note per beat of the measure, each note being one note from your chord. You "walk

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up” on the first chord and “walk down” on the second chord. Here’s an example: If your first chord is a C7, your bass could be the notes C-E-G-B flat. On the second chord, F, your bass notes might be A-F-C-A. You don’t have to play every note from the scale. The fourth note, played on the fourth beat, could be a note that transitions well into the next chord. For instance, if your third chord is D minor, your fourth note could be a C sharp.

You’ve only scratched the surface on learning how to play jazz piano, but what you’ve learned so far is enough to sound like you know what you’re doing! Practice and learn to improvise what you’ve learned. Then look for more lessons to take your skills further!

A. Actions

Play a walking bass accompaniment to an F7 chord. With four beats per measure, keep the F7 chord for four measures; your walking bass should be F-A-C-Eb on the way up, and on the way down it should be F (one octave up from the previous F)-Eb-C-A. After four measures, change to a walking bass accompaniment to a Bb7 chord for two measures, then return to the F7 combination for two measures. Finally, play a C7 combination for two measures and return to the F7 combination for two measures.

B. Further Jazz Lessons Resources:

Many of our readers have had a lot of success with these courses for Jazz:

- **Rocket Piano** (<http://www.piano-lessons-central.com/rocket-piano>). This is probably the best value in courses. It's a 5-part multimedia eBook system with audio and video. We like it because it includes **five** courses in one: Beginner, Intermediate, Advanced, Introduction to Jazz and Gospel.
- **Hear and Play Jazz Course** (<http://www.piano-lessons-central.com/jazz101>). This is a great course if you want to **play your favorite Jazz pieces by ear!**
- Ron Worthy’s **Piano Tricks of the Trade** (<http://www.piano-lessons-central.com/piano-tricks-of-the-trade>) course. This course teaches you the basics and how to play rock, pop, blues, R&B, cocktail and “smooth jazz” on the piano.

XI. Basic Blues Piano Lessons

Could you use a crash-course in the blues? These **blues piano lessons** will get you headed in the right direction. We’ll begin with **blues chords**, string together a

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common **blues progression**, and combine it with a complementing **bass line**. Excited? Can't wait to jam? Let's get started!

Let's begin with the chords we'll use for this exercise. To make things easy, we'll play in the piano-friendly key of C. A **C chord** consists of the notes C, E and G. To add a blues "flavor" to the chord, make it a **seventh** by adding a fourth note – B flat – to the top of the chord. Do the same with an F chord and a G chord. These three chords represent the 1-4-5 pattern that is most common in modern music. The pattern is so-named because, C being your root chord or starting point, the F chord is 4 steps up and the G chord is 5 steps up.

Patterns are also known as **progressions**. Some "chord progressions" are quite familiar. The most popular blues chord progression is the 12-bar blues progression. A bar is also known as a measure. A measure contains a certain number of beats, often four, that determine the pace and rhythm of the music. A **phrase** consists of the 12 measures, a sort of beginning-to-end section within a song.

Here is how you will play your 12-bar blues tune. Each chord represents a full bar, with four beats per bar:

C | C | C | C7 | F7 | F7 | C | C | G7 | F7 | C | C

Here's another blues progression you can try. In the last two bars, the chords shown are played for two beats instead of four:

C | F7 | C | C7 | F | F7 | C | C7 | G7 | F7 | C, F | C, G

To add bass to the music, you can simply play the corresponding note; a C chord gets C for the bass, etc. Put it all together and you're playing the blues! You can play your songs very slowly for one type of mood, or you can pick up the pace for another.

Once you've mastered the key of C, work on playing the same progressions in other keys. If you ever join in on a blues jam, for instance, you may need to match the key that the other musicians are playing in. If you are uncertain what the other chords would be, you can find a **chord progression chart** online that will come in handy.

A. Actions

Since playing blues is similar to playing jazz, I encourage you to listen to a blues recording to hear the chords, the bass runs, and the style with which the musicians play. Even better, view some videos of blues performances at www.youtube.com

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B. Further Blues Lessons Resources:

Ron Worthy's **Piano Tricks of the Trade** (<http://www.piano-lessons-central.com/piano-tricks-of-the-trade>) course is a decent course for going further in learning blues piano.

XII. Basic Gospel Piano Lessons

Beginning gospel piano lessons can require a lot of commitment. If you don't have the time and would like to learn the basics, print this page, set it up between you and a piano or electric keyboard, and get ready to play gospel in a few short moments!

Gospel music certainly differs from popular forms of music. Knowing the basics will get you started, but if you want to back up your church minister, you will want to follow up this lesson with others that get deeper into gospel chord theory, progressions, timing, etc.

When learning a new skill, it's always considered a good idea to start as basically as possible. On piano, that means playing in the key of C. A **C chord** is made up of the notes C-E-G in ascending order. Now, chords are usually played with the right hand. Sometimes, chords are also played with the left hand, however, when learning the basics, I recommend using a single bass note for the left hand.

Gospel chords tend to be expressive to match the conviction and enthusiasm of church goers. Therefore, you will want to enhance the sound of your chords by playing sevenths and ninths. The seventh adds a "minor seventh" or flattened seventh to the basic chord. This is accomplished by counting up seven steps from the root note of a chord (or that chord's **scale**) and playing the note one half step down along with your chord. On a C chord, you would add a B flat.

A ninth chord will include the seventh as illustrated previously as well as the ninth note in a scale. The ninth note is the same note as the second note of a scale, only one **octave** up.

Here is a chord progression that you can use in a gospel setting. I've paired the chords with bass notes. Play the chord (the letter on the left of the slash) simultaneously with the bass (the letter on the right of the slash):

C/C E/C9 F/F7 C/C

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You can use this basic set of chords to play your first gospel melody. If you have the ability to improvise, feel free to experiment with inversions, other chord/bass combinations, etc. There's so much more to explore when learning gospel piano. You will definitely want to learn about **preacher chords**, for example. They are essential when backing up a preacher.

If you really like this genre of music, **taking online gospel piano lessons will be very rewarding** and get you to the next level as quickly as possible depending on how much time you devote to practicing what you learn.

A. Actions

Looking at the bass/chord example above, transpose to the key of E and play the four new chords in the same progression. Guitarists prefer the key of E and you may one day need to play with a guitar accompaniment. If you are playing on an electronic keyboard that has organ voices available, try playing these chords with that sound.

B. Further Gospel Lessons Resources:

Bar none, Hear and Play by Jemaine Grigg is probably the most successfully Gospel piano course at the time of this eBook. He teaches you how to play Gospel Music both **by ear and with sheet music**. Here are his signature courses:

- **GospelKeys 101** - *Basics and Fundamentals*
 - URL: <http://www.piano-lessons-central.com/hp-gospel101>
- **GospelKeys 202** - *Mastering Worship Chords*
 - URL: <http://www.piano-lessons-central.com/hp-gospel202>
- **GospelKeys 300** - *Exploring Praise Songs*
 - URL: <http://www.piano-lessons-central.com/hp-gospel300>
- **GospelKeys 500** - *Experiencing Up-Tempo Shouting Music*
 - URL: <http://www.piano-lessons-central.com/hp-gospel500>
- **GospelKeys Xtreme** - *Contemporary and Urban Worship*
 - URL: <http://www.piano-lessons-central.com/hp-urban-worship>
- **GospelKeys Urban Pro 600**
 - URL: <http://www.piano-lessons-central.com/hp-urban-worship>
- **GospelKeys Organ Series 350 & 450**
 - URL: <http://www.piano-lessons-central.com/hp-organ>

XIII. Your Roadmap from Beginner to

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Advanced

Whether you already play piano or want to learn, I'm glad you stumbled across this page. It means there's one more person out there looking for a better way to add music to his or her life, or perhaps to improve on an already established skill set.

Either way, welcome. The good news is, I've got helpful advice for any level you may be at. I invite you to discover your potential and take the necessary steps to reach your goals.

A. Beginners, Don't Be Shy

If your idea of a **scale** is something in your bathroom that seems to know you like donuts, you're definitely among the beginners. But seriously, if you know only a handful of basic chords, a song or two, or you have never touched a keyboard, you will want to learn the basics.

I recommend you take a course in introductory musical theory. You'll want to learn the names of the notes, practice the scales, begin to put together chords, and embrace the art of **repetition**. That's right, the key to picking up on the basics is to **imprint them into your psyche**, increase your dexterity, train your hands to make those stretches they're not used to making, and find the connection between mind and body that will enable you to play naturally.

At the beginner level, students should have the **patience** to put off learning actual songs or performance styles in favor of getting comfortable learning chords, fingering, etc. The good news is, with the right training, you can pass through the beginner level relatively quickly. Of course, the right training is, at best, half the equation. Your ability to master the above skills will depend on your determination to **practice every day**. Just like physical training, by going through the correct motions a little each day, you can accomplish much more than inconsistent practice every so often.

How you decide to learn is up to your preferred method of absorbing new information. Some people are visual learners, others are aural. What this means to you is, you might need to learn to play with the aid of sheet music (visual) or by listening to someone play a note or chord and you copy them (aural). The latter method is also known as playing by ear. Most websites that promote piano lessons offer a sample of their training style so you can try before you buy. It's a good idea to try both so you can get started in the right direction and not waste time learning in a way that's against your learning style.

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B. Intermediate Level

By this point in your piano education, you should know all the scales, the popular chord styles, and be able to perform with confidence. This isn't to say you should be a virtuoso. At the intermediate level, many musicians can find work playing out at various venues. But their skills are limited.

Now is a good time to think about the type or types of music you want to play. Will you study classical? Are you more into jazz or blues? Would you prefer to play rock? Or are you saving yourself for religious styles like gospel? With your intermediate skill level, you understand many of the chords and progressions you will use in your chosen genre. Now you need to focus on lessons that show you the fundamentals, the nuances, and the tricks behind playing a particular style.

Like the tip I gave for beginners, it applies here as well: Determine if you are a visual or auditory learner and pick the package you are most likely to understand, enjoy, and stick with.

And again, **practice!**

C. Advanced Performers

Congratulations, you've come a long way in your musical journey. But you're far from finished. With your advanced skills, you can sit in with another musician or ensemble and play along. You can listen to a song and learn it with relative ease, or perhaps you can open sheet music and read the notes as easily as you read printed text. And just maybe, you are ready to flex your creativity and explore new horizons.

Some performers don't know how to recognize when they surpassed the intermediate level. That's okay, it will be clear eventually. If you are already performing comfortably but you want to infuse your music with more complex chord structures, creative runs, or you want to add another genre to your repertoire (that's a lot of French!), you are most likely advanced and ready to take on a bigger challenge. It's been said many times, learning to perform music is not a destination but a journey.

Many professional artists play multiple instruments. They are skilled guitarists or drummers who also play a little piano. It is not uncommon to encounter a musician who is very good at any instrument he or she decides to learn. If you are just such a person, and piano is one of your secondary instruments, consider how you could benefit from actual lessons.

I've discovered some outstanding courses for advanced piano playing that can be purchased online. Take the time to evaluate the publishers' websites and read

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reviews if possible. Most lesson packages are moderately priced, so you shouldn't have trouble finding a good, affordable lesson system.

D. Actions

You have the desire to play piano, don't put it on a shelf! One of the biggest regrets I hear from people is that they always wished they learned to play an instrument. If you haven't yet begun the lessons I've provided, I URGE you to go back to the top and begin the process **today**. If you need more advanced lessons, take a look through the reviews I've supplied below.

E. Further Resources:

XIV. Online Piano Lesson Reviews - Finding the Right Program

The purpose of any good online piano lesson review is to help you **separate high quality piano training programs from downright scams**. Can piano training programs really teach you to play piano at home like a pro? Can anyone use them? The answer to both questions is yes!

You need to be aware of several things, however. Although the majority of courses and programs are quite legitimate, there are some scams out there. Also, while many programs are excellent, some promise you the world and don't come close to delivering it.

There are piano training programs available for every level of musical ability and every age. Never seen a piano before? There are many programs designed for total novices. Want to teach your child to play? There are plenty of programs designed just for children. Even if you are a professional pianist, there is something out there that will improve your playing.

A. What Is A Good Program?

Good piano training programs are made up of many facets, and may contain different things, depending on the skill and age level they're designed for and the training method they use. But, all quality programs will have some things in common.

A high quality training program should:

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- Let you learn at your own pace
- Show you how to **keep improving your skills**
- Include basic ear training
- Teach you **piano notation AND "play by ear"** techniques
- Provide tips for ensemble play and jamming
- Be clear and flow logically
- Keep you **interested**
- Offer a money back **guarantee**

There are many products out there that are not worth your time or money and some that are just plain ripping you off. Bad products also have similar qualities in common with each other.

A bad training program will:

- Try to make you rush through the material
- Only teach you novice material
- Promise that you will play like a pro overnight
- Only teach you to memorize songs
- Be unclear, confusing, or poorly produced
- Be boring

B. How to Find One - Do Your Own Piano Lesson Reviews

With all the programs out there, telling the good from the bad can be difficult. Sometimes bad products have great ads. So, how do you avoid being swindled?

The first and most important thing to do is **research**. Read piano lesson reviews of the training programs that you're interested in. There are many on the web. Find out what other customers thought about that product. Find out what professional reviewers thought, as well.

Does the product exhibit the signs of **high quality** training programs? Did it get good reviews? Were other customers happy with their purchase of it? If so, then chances are high that it is a good product. If not, find out why people didn't like it. Think about whether their reasons are likely to apply to you.

Research is the most important step in the buying process. That being said, if you're too impatient to begin researching now and just want some products to look at, the following piano learning programs have been highly recommended by independent reviewers and many satisfied customers.

C. Sample Online Piano Lesson Reviews:

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D. Further Resources:

Check out our independent reviews of piano lessons designed to support you in sounding great as a piano player with the least amount of hassle. Click on the link below: <http://www.piano-lessons-central.com/independent-piano-lesson-reviews>

Or Submit Your own Review here: <http://www.piano-lessons-central.com/share-your-piano-lessons-thoughts.html>

Take a look and see if you like any of them. If not, don't worry - there are many more out there to choose from.

Remember, no matter what your specific needs are, chances are good that there is a piano playing program out there for you. But don't just take our word on it - do your own research and create your own piano lesson reviews!

What works for someone else may not be right for you. When you find the right program, keep at it and pretty soon your piano playing skills will amaze you.

And in case you forgot already, PRACTICE! Just remember to keep the fun in the fundamentals. Learning to play piano can be a lot of work, but it's a form of entertainment and should never be a chore.



Answers to Sections With Questions/Challenges

Section V., Part A.:

Major scale answers:

C D E F G A B C

C# D E F G A B C#

D E F# G A B C# D

Eb F G Ab Bb C D Eb

E F# G# A B C# D# E

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F G A Bb C D E F

F# G A# B# C# D# E# F#

G A B C D E F# G

Ab Bb C Db Eb F G Ab

A B C# D E F# G# A

Bb C D Eb F G A Bb

B C# D# E F# G# A# B

Minor scale answers:

C D Eb F G Ab Bb C

C# D# E F# G# A B C#

D E F G A Bb C D

Eb F Gb Ab Bb Cb Db Eb

E F# G A B C D E

F G Ab Bb C Db Eb F

F# G# A B C# D E F#

G A Bb C D Eb F G

Ab B Cb Db E Fb Gb Ab

A B C D E F G A

Bb C Db Eb F G Ab Bb

B C# D E F# G A B

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Section VII., Part C:

- 1) 2
- 2) 1
- 3) 5
- 4) 4
- 5) 6
- 6) 3
- 7) 1
- 8) 7

Section VIII, Part A:

The C chord is played with the notes C-E-G. The first inversion is E-G-C; the second inversion is G-C-E.

The F chord is played F-A-C. The first inversion is A-C-F; the second inversion is C-F-A.

The Bb chord is played Bb-D-F. The first inversion is D-F-Bb; the second inversion is F-Bb-D.

By now you've learned the pattern and can figure out the progressions for A, C# and F#.

Section IX., Part A:

Play a 1-4-5 progression in the key of G: G, C and D

Play a 1-3-2-5 progression in the key of D: D, F#, E and A.

Section XII., Part A:

E/E G#/E9 A/A7 E/E

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XV. We Need Your Help?

Help us improve this eBook by submitting your feedback here:

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