

27 Tips & Tricks For Playing Piano

A Collection of
Articles

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Introduction

My Story

I never thought I was really, *really* good at piano. After all, I can hardly ever play a song perfectly, I have a hard time with rhythm, I can't ever remember everything involved with technique, and I don't know the English meanings of Italian dynamic words like "marcato," "perdenendo," or "al niente."

These are a few of my flaws when it comes to learning music. If I focus too often on how much my flaws may be holding me back, I get discouraged. The fact of the matter is that I am very good at piano, and I may even be considered *advanced* in piano.

My name is Elise. I am 22 years old and I started taking piano lessons when I was 9 years old. I stopped taking lessons when I was 18. Throughout almost a decade of lessons, I have completed the grades 1 and 3 practical examination requirements with the Royal Conservatory of Music and grades 5 and 7 practical examinations requirements with Conservatory Canada. I regularly participated in the York Region Lion's Music & Dance Festival and won 2nd place in one competition. In June of every year, I performed a couple pieces for a piano recital that my piano teacher held for all of her students and their families. I was the most advanced of all students studying with my teacher.



Now, I'm used to being criticized when it comes to playing piano. I'm used to my piano teacher telling me to perfect everything that I play, I'm used to the feedback I get after every competition, and I'm used to being graded after every practical examination. With such classical training, perfection *IS* important. Luckily, I am not here to show you how to train for a music exam or competition. I'm here to show you how literally *anyone* can learn to play the piano as a hobby, and who knows, perhaps you may eventually consider classical training.

If you'd like to hear more about my experiences and learn more about piano and music in general, please visit and subscribe to my blog, at: <http://www.elisemoreau.com/blog/>.

Book Summary

So, what is the secret to becoming an amazing piano player? Is it just a matter of practice, or are there specific key elements essential for piano playing?

Well, regular practice is necessary of course, as it is for learning to play any instrument. Unfortunately, you could practice and practice and practice until your hands cramp up without understanding what you're actually doing at the piano. Even though you may be able to strategically play a given piece, understanding how music works in terms of form and content is the fundamental key to productive practice.

Instead of merely following what the sheet music shows you to do, you can actually get inside the music and eventually let it flow out of yourself, through your brain, your heart, and your hands.

I have put together this book of articles describing the essential elements that are needed to understand music, and actually improve your sheet music playing abilities. Instead of feeling tied down to the written music, you'll be able to comprehend the music, and even begin writing music for yourself. Anyone can do it! I don't care how old you are or how long you've been learning music. As long as you stay dedicated and learn to work with your imperfections, you can learn to master the music you've always dreamed of.

Self-taught Pianist/Composer Andrew Gilpin Followed the Example of Jimi Hendrix, Joni Mitchell, J.S. Bach

Completely self-taught and home-schooled, pianist/composer Andrew Gilpin now shares the concert stage with a Juilliard graduate, performing in concert halls across North America.

When self-taught pianist and composer Andrew Gilpin steps onto the concert stage, as he regularly does with his duo "Ebony & Ivory", he doesn't have the weight of a well-known music school or teacher behind him.

Following in the footsteps of such musicians as J.S. Bach, Joni Mitchell and Jimi Hendrix, Andrew has forged a successful career in music built solely on his own talent and determination.

Armed with nothing more than a love of music and two supportive parents, Andrew spent his formative years teaching himself to play the piano and write music. "My father attempted to give me a piano lesson when I was 7," recalls Andrew, "but I just hated it. It turned me off the piano for about 6 months. I came back to it, though, because I really wanted to be able to play Scott Joplin rags. After that, I just had to put in the time - minus the music lessons."

Andrew, who was also entirely home-schooled, had a lot of time to pursue his musical interests. "I used to get some strange looks when I told people about my background. They'd always ask who my teacher was. As I got older, though, it mattered less and less."

For the past 3 years, Andrew has been performing with clarinet/sax player Fred Jacobowitz, a two-time graduate of the prestigious Juilliard School. Known to concert audiences as "Ebony & Ivory", Andrew and Fred have toured North America, performing in concert halls, schools, and theatres. They have also recorded with such jazz notables as Dave Weckl and Victor Wooten.

Andrew's self-guided, independent nature has been a blessing rather than a curse, especially in today's competitive music market. "A lot of musicians today are outside the mainstream," says Andrew. "The whole idea of getting a major record deal or playing at Carnegie Hall in order to be successful -- that's really kind of outdated. Learning how to get my music out there is kind of the same as learning to play the piano -- you feel your way along, finding out what works and what doesn't."

With several solo piano albums in the works, and hundreds of concerts and compositions under his belt, Andrew seems to have found out what works.

For more information on Andrew, Fred, and Ebony & Ivory, please visit their website at <http://www.ebonyandivory.ca>.

Part One:

Hand and Body Position

Piano Posture - Don't Try to Play Without It

By [Cynthia VanLandingham](#)

Many aspects of playing the piano such as note reading and ear training are intuitive. They just make sense. There are, however, important aspects of piano which are not intuitive. In fact they are counter-intuitive to most of us. That's why a good piano teacher is so important.

Students imagine playing in a way that makes sense to them and "feels" comfortable. You can call this your "default" setting, what you do naturally out of habit. Ever try to change a habit? It's difficult. It takes conscious effort over time, because the mind-body connection is un-conscious and powerful. If you're a piano student who wants to improve your playing, the best way to do this is to change your habits so that they reflect your goals. In this way you'll be playing with self awareness, rather than out of habit. And that's a good thing!

Here are some simple steps to begin developing a powerful good piano habit that will go a long way toward helping you reach your goals.

Step 1

To see how you can improve your playing, sit up straight on the edge of the piano bench, with an arch in your lower back, (move the bench way back from the piano for now.) Put the palms of your hands together in front of you. Now separate your hands so that your forearms are parallel, but your palms are still facing each other. Now lift your forearms and then drop them, like they are asleep, from the elbow with your palms still facing. If your arms are completely relaxed, they should have fallen so that the tips of your fingers are pointing to the floor and your arms are completely extended, because there is no way to catch the weight of your arms with your elbows when you drop them.

Step 2

To improve your posture, try this again. Only instead of allowing your palms to face each other, turn them flat so your palms are horizontal, facing the floor. Bend your arms a little so that the tips of your elbows are pointing more toward the "walls," and not toward the floor. Now lift your forearms toward the ceiling and then drop them from the elbows again. This time the weight of your forearms should catch in your elbows. Move your piano bench closer to the piano, but not too close (your elbows should be in front of your

tummy.) Practice lifting and dropping your arms, catching the weight in your elbows, as you play one note, repeatedly. Lift and drop; lift and drop.

Step 3

Now practice this technique while playing octaves. Do this hands separately. With finger three, bounce from one key to the next, between octaves, lifting and catching the weight of your forearms from the elbows. Bounce and land; bounce and land, lifting your hand high over the keyboard. Now keep practicing this until it feels comfortable. Keep this posture as you play your pieces and remember to hold your hands "flat" with elbows out-turned to add buoyancy, spring and flexibility to your playing.

Now you know a powerful piano habit to dramatically improve your playing and help you your musical dreams - So keep doing it. Soon it will feel so natural you'll wonder why you didn't think of it!

To learn the best way to share the gift of music with children visit Amazon.com for my [Piano Bears Musical Stories for Children](#) The exciting Piano Bears Musical Stories for children ages 5 to 11 feature the loveable characters, Mrs. Treble Beary and her new piano student, Albeart Littlebud. Children love following along with Albeart to Mrs. Treble Beary's piano studio in Musical Acres Forest. Here they learn what piano lessons are all about in a fun way that kids readily understand and appreciate! Piano students laugh and giggle while reading "Little Bear's Musical Garden" and "Little Bear's Piano Goals."

For a wealth of free information and piano music online visit [Piano Bears Music Education Resources](#) Don't Wait to Share the Gift of Music!

Article Source: http://EzineArticles.com/?expert=Cynthia_VanLandingham

Piano Students, Spring Into Piano - Add Flexibility and Bounce to Your Playing!

By [Cynthia VanLandingham](#)

Muscle Flexibility is important to playing an instrument such as the piano. This allows a student to play easily, with finger spring, wrist flexibility and control. But surprisingly this important element of playing doesn't begin with the fingertips. It starts in the large muscles of the back, shoulder and upper arms.

Think back to your science or anatomy class. Remember that skeleton guy standing next to your teacher's desk, waiting to be used as an example? Well it's time to pay attention in class, because this boney guy has some valuable tips for piano students. All of the parts that make up your collar bone, shoulder blade, upper arm, forearm, wrist, hand and fingers are connected and operate as one skeletal and muscular system. You remember how that tune goes: "The head bone's connected to the neck bone, the neck bones' connected to the collar bone..." Well it's true. So use this important lesson from your science class to get some bounce your piano step. Begin by using your large muscles at the top of this system so your fingers can do the walking with a spring in their step!

Follow the steps below to begin using your muscles correctly for piano.

Step 1 - Sit up tall on the piano bench and imagine that your neck is stretching up to the ceiling from the top of your head. You should feel a sense of buoyancy in your posture. Arch your lower back.

Step 2 - Swing your upper arms out from your sides until your hands are flat (kind of like a birdie getting ready to flap its wings.)

Step 3 - With your forearms above the keyboard, reach out to the piano until you can feel stretch in your muscles all the way back from your shoulder blade.

Step 4 - Keeping your hands in a rounded position, stretching each finger tip down to the keys. Play G, F, E, D, C. Shifting the weight from one finger to the next with a little "spring in your step."

Step 5 - To get from one hand position to another or from one octave to another, bounce and land. Allow your finger to jump out of the first position by lifting at the elbow to bounce and land in the new position.

Step 6 - When playing a scale or run of notes, play the first note lightly, then spring out of the second note into the next one. This transfers energy and weight from one key to the next easily.

Keep following these simple steps and you'll soon see how easy it is to get around the keyboard with a spring in your step. Then you'll get an A in science - and piano!

To learn the best way to share the gift of music with children visit Amazon.com for my [Piano Bears Musical Stories for Children](#) The exciting Piano Bears Musical Stories for children ages 5 to 11 feature the loveable characters, Mrs. Treble Beary and her new piano student, Albeart Littlebud. Children love following along with Albeart to Mrs. Treble Beary's piano studio in Musical Acres Forest. Here they learn what piano lessons are all about in a fun way that kids readily understand and appreciate! Piano students laugh and giggle while reading "Little Bear's Musical Garden" and "Little Bear's Piano Goals."

For a wealth of free information and piano music online visit [Piano Bears Music Education Resources](#) Don't Wait to Share the Gift of Music!

Article Source: http://EzineArticles.com/?expert=Cynthia_VanLandingham

Piano Fingering - Was the Piano Created to Fit Our Hands or the Hands Have to Fit the Piano?

By [Alana LaGrange](#)

Idea 1: fingering written on your music is only suggested fingering, it can be changed. Yes, you can experiment with the fingering and you will find there are several options, sometimes better solutions to fingering.

Idea 2: take a look at your hand and fingers. We have 3 long fingers, fingers 2, 3 and 4. Now look at the piano, there are sets of 2 black keys and sets of 3 black keys. See how easy it is, which fingers do you think go on the black keys?

The piano was made for the hand.

Long fingers reach easily on the black keys, and the thumb and 5 fingers on the white keys.

Idea 3: The thumb is short and stubby, but can move very easily. The thumb is a pivotal finger and when used as a pivotal finger repositions the hand to move up or down.

Example using the right hand: Play C, D, E, F, using fingers 1-2-3-4. Next, lift your thumb off the key of C, and "pivot" it under your hand and play the key G. Notice your hand position, you now have all of your fingers available to play new keys.

Idea 4: The 5 finger is only used when you finish playing the highest note in the right hand or the lowest note in the left hand. Why? Once you play the 5 finger, the hand is in a difficult position to pivot to a new position.

How to add your own fingering to a song. First, find the black keys and start experimenting with the long fingers. You will use a 2-3- or 4 finger on the black keys.

Next, add your 5 finger on the highest point in your music for the right hand, or the lowest point in the left hand.

Next, add the thumb. Place the thumb in the music at the point you will need to pivot the hand so you can reach notes higher or lower. The 2 finger will fall into place at this point.

If your song has all white notes, place your thumb on the keys needed to pivot the hand up or down.

Yes, this is a thinking process but you can do it. When your hand is comfortable on the keyboard, you will know you have the correct fingering.

Alana LaGrange is the founder of [Music and You](http://www.musicandyou.com) - A online piano lesson website teaching beginning piano through jazz piano. It's fun to try the free piano lessons and play the free piano sheet music available. She has published piano lesson books, and is also an arranger and recording artist. <http://www.musicandyou.com>

Article Source: http://EzineArticles.com/?expert=Alana_LaGrange

Part 2:

Productive Practice

Piano Practice - Is it Normal to Hate to Practice?

By [Duane Shinn](#)

Is it normal for a student to hate to practice? Anybody else feel this way? Most people love music, but hate to practice.

It's very common for musicians to say they hate to practice. One undesirable aspect of practicing is the simple fact that the musician must practice passages and techniques that are difficult for them to play. This creates frustration on the part of the musician and can make them question their abilities.

Some practice materials are designed specifically to develop technique and playing such materials can be quite tedious. For example, a violinist may spend most of a one-hour practice session concentrating on the proper way to hold the bow and draw it across the strings. In a case like this, no real music may be played for the entire hour. Progress can be slow, adding to the musician's disdain for practicing.

Lack of motivation can cause the musician to avoid practicing altogether. For most, it takes years (and a great deal of patience and dedication) to become an accomplished musician. The ones that succeed are good at delaying gratification and developing the patience needed to succeed. It's very common for a musician to reach a number of plateaus where they don't feel any progress is being made. The patient ones eventually work through the plates and move on to a higher level of musicianship. Others may give up their instrument entirely.

Having practice sessions at the same time on the same day (although important to getting good results) may be too regimented for some musicians. Music, by its nature, is a very creative endeavor, often requiring the freedom to experiment and explore new sounds and styles. Being "stuck to a schedule" doesn't work for some musicians.

The musician's attitude toward practice can have a lot to do with their current teacher or instructor. Some teachers go to great lengths to give their students interesting and enjoyable practice assignments as they realize musicians who enjoy practice, practice longer. An experienced teacher who knows their student well, is very adept at choosing music that develops the musician's skills while giving them something to look forward to playing. Unfortunately, many musicians who need a teacher to keep them focused and practicing may not be able to afford private or group lessons.

Until recent years, methods books for virtually any instrument were quite boring and dry and focused on repetition as being the key element for learning. Method books today

often include a number of popular songs, and more interesting and musical materials. Some include an accompanying CD for the student to use for hearing how a piece should be played. You can also find CDs that contain a "backing" band for the student, allowing them to build their musicianship by playing along with others.

Whatever you do, use spaced repetition instead of doing all your practice in one session! If you practice 1 hour per day, break it up into 3 sessions of 20 minutes each. Remember that the mind can only retain what the seat can tolerate. Plus you will keep your concentration better if you only practice 20 minutes in one sitting as opposed to one hour.

Finally, the quality of the instrument being played can have a great effect on the musician's attitude toward practicing. A poorly-made or dull sounding instrument is just not a pleasure to play. Many students find their playing and attitude toward practicing improves when they purchase a better instrument.

Duane Shinn is the author of a free newsletter on piano chords & chord progressions available at ["Piano Practice"](#)

Article Source: http://EzineArticles.com/?expert=Duane_Shinn

Success Requires a Positive Attitude

By [Herman Steenkamp](#)

Be Positive

You are what you think, for what you think you will speak, and what you speak will manifest. If you tell yourself "I can't swim" or "I can't play an instrument" or "I can't make a million". It will be so. You would be absolutely right. Luckily the opposite is also true. If you think you can do something, and you can believe it, you can achieve it. So if you think you can learn to play the piano, and you believe you can, you'll make a plan to be taught. How great a pianist you'll become depends of course on the amount of time and effort you're willing to put in, given you're able bodied. Do you think Tiger Woods ever tells himself that he sucks at golf? Of course not.

Being positive about your venture is critical. You absolutely need to have a can-do attitude. You'll run into resistance around every corner. People, and with people I mean family and friends, will break your spirit.

Not because they're mean, but because they don't understand your passion. Some will think you're just wasting time that you could have spent with them, while others will think its just a waste of time, period. You'll also find resistance from whichever industry your trying to break into. Whether you're a musician or pharmacist. The moment you're trying to change any mold, you'll hear about it. If you are really passionate about what you're doing, you'll continue regardless of what anyone says.

Keep your focus and work through it. Of course there will be times when you'll get discouraged and even lose faith in your own ability to see your project through. We all know that it is inevitable, so if you're ready to give up, take some time to reset your goals. Maybe you just need to make a little adjustment, instead of quitting. Take some time off and forget about it for a few days. You'll enjoy the break and get back to your project with even better ideas fueled by enthusiasm.

Visit <http://www.livelifeguide.com> to read more about achieving success.
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Playing Piano is More Than Playing Music

By [Lisa Steeple](#)

We take piano lessons for many different reasons. Many of us wish we can play piano for many different reasons, or started lessons as a child and quit.

Whatever the original reason, it's clear that piano lessons are about more than playing music. Whether you're a child or an adult, the learning that takes place at the piano keyboard will reach into practically every corner of your life. Here are three life lessons that are cultivated at the piano.

Piano Life Lesson #1: Setting and Reaching Goals

How many goals have you set and never reached? From making better food choices, to completing an ever-ending project, to learning a new skill, many times we fall short of achieving our well meaning goals.

When playing the piano, every new song is literally a new goal. When we can see (or hear) the end result it's easy to be clear about what you want to accomplish. Every time you complete a song, whether it be a beginner's song, intermediate or advanced, the goal reaching process is being internalized. Your brain does not know how small or big the goal was, it just knows that the goal was reached, therefore, the habit of setting and reaching goals becomes a natural part of who you become in all other areas of your life.

Piano Life Lesson #2: Paying Attention to Details

You need to coordinate hundreds of small details when you play the piano - things like finger placements, rhythms and the combination of notes on the page. Attention to these details is crucial for success at the piano. You will soon learn that if you leave out a single note, or play the rhythm incorrectly, the song doesn't sound like it's supposed to sound. Paying attention to details are just as important in the rest of your life whether you're planning a presentation for work, working on a project for school, or preparing a meal for the family! I can think of a million things that we all need to pay attention to detail to like cleaning the house, driving a car, or just listening to a friend. I can't tell you enough how important paying attention to details is to your life. It includes thinking ahead, being thorough, being thoughtful, choosing your friends, developing good communication skills, following directions, and the list can go on forever. Playing piano offers highly intense detail training, without even knowing you are doing it!

Piano Life Lesson #3: Learning from Mistakes

We all make mistakes, and that's OK! The problem is we are too hard on ourselves and we as human beings think it's not ok. Anyone who plays piano can tell you that there are a lot of mistakes on the road to completing a song! The more mistakes you make, the more you will come to realize that you can recover from them. The fear of making a mistake does not have to stop you from trying. Making your own mistakes also helps you

feel more in tune with others around you, whether that's at a recital, at work, school, or at home! None of us have to be perfect!

Piano lessons teach us more than just music. Goal-setting, perseverance, attention to detail, expressing our talents and accepting mistakes are just a few of the endless life lessons that can be found on a keyboard.

Lisa has been a piano teacher for over 25 years with special recognition from Disney in 2003. For more information about learning piano and applying piano skills to life skills, please visit the following link: [Piano Lessons with Lisa](#)

Article Source: http://EzineArticles.com/?expert=Lisa_Steeple

Part 3:

Music History & Piano Theory

A Brief History Of The Piano

By [Kevin Sinclair](#)

The piano, that common instrument of school music programs, appears to be the ultimate expression of the stringed musical instrument, which date back to the lyre and the harp. Pianos (a shortening of the compound term "piano-forte") work by striking wires with felted (or leather headed) hammers, with a redaction mechanism that pulls the hammerhead away from the wire before it can dampen out the sound. Because the force of the hammer strike is generally proportional to the stroke on the key, this allows a piano to play a note softly (piano) or loudly (forte), leading to its name.

The immediate predecessors of the pianoforte were the clavichord and the harpsichord, both of which tried to combine the ease of play of a traditional organ keyboard with the expressive range (and general portability) of a large concert harp. Of the two predecessor instruments, the harpsichord was the more common, and used a mechanism that plucked the strings (and later wires) of the instrument when a key was hit. This led to a distinctive "plinking" or "plucking" sound, more like a strung harp, but lacked the ability to adjust the volume of a given note, and had only limited ability to change the duration of a note.

While the harpsichord provided the mechanism for tying keys to striking particular strings that was used to make the first pianos, the clavichord (an earlier instrument, invented in the 15th century, was the first keyboard instrument to strike the strings by key stroke, hitting them from the side with a small (dull) blade called a tangent. Clavichords fell out of favor in the 17th century, and were virtually unheard of from roughly 1750 to 1890, when a number of musical instrument shops began making them again as a smaller complement to the piano.

Prior to the clavichord, the first real stringed instrument that used hammers was the dulcimer, with variations such as the cymbalon and the readis spreading through the Balkan regions. All of these instruments relied on the player to strike strings with small hammers, often times holding multiple hammers with different heads in the gaps between their fingers, to get different tonal ranges, including a felted head for dampening a string.

The first true pianoforte was built in 1700 by Bartolomeo Cristofori of Padua, Italy. His patrons, the Medicis, commissioned the first ones; there are three Cristofori pianofortes still in existence, dating back to the 1720s.

Cristofori's original pianos had several differences from the modern pianos we've come to expect - for one, they only covered four octaves, rather than the modern piano's seven-and-a-half octaves. Second, because of the materials used at the time, it was considerably softer in sound than the modern instrument. Third, it had no damper pedals for lifting the dampers from the string. The damper pedals were an invention of Gottfried Silbermann, who made near direct copies of the Cristofori piano otherwise, and tried to get Johann Sebastian Bach interested in the instrument for compositions and concert performances.

Bach was notably unimpressed with Silbermann's early pianos, claiming that the upper range would be too quiet to make an effective concert hall instrument. While this brooked a fair bit of animosity between the instrument maker and the reknowned composer and concert artist, in the end, Bach was right. It wasn't until 40 years later that Bach actually endorsed the creation of a piano, mostly after Silbermann's apprentices worked on variations of the design.

Nearly from its inception, the main driving force in the evolution of the piano was to make it louder and brighter in the high notes. Several innovations have been incorporated into the design to do this. Among them include more precise mechanisms for swinging the hammers, high tensile steel replacing the catgut strings, and changes to the surfaces of the hammers and their materials, plus innovations in resonator and fretboard spaces to give the instruments a greater range, such as the double key escarpment, which allowed a note to be repeated even if the hammer hadn't risen back to its full resting position.

The high point of piano evolution happened in the 19th century, with the development of felted hammers (allowing higher string tension), better quality steel for the wire, iron frames on the sounding board, and several other innovations of note; it was in the late 19th century that the upright piano was perfected, allowing the piano to move from the concert hall to the parlors of the middle class, where the ability to play the piano was a sign of culture and refinement, a place that it still holds today, albeit to a much reduced extent.

Kevin Sinclair is the publisher and editor of MusicianHome.com a site that provides information and articles for musicians at all stages of their development.

Article Source: http://EzineArticles.com/?expert=Kevin_Sinclair

How to Read Musical Road Signs - Dynamics and Tempo

By [Duane Shinn](#)

In order for a piece to be played accurately and with expression and dynamics, written music includes a number of signs and symbols to guide the musician. Some of these include words that tell the musician how loudly or softly to play a note or passage. The following is a list of dynamics often used:

Pianissimo: very soft.

Piano: soft.

Mezzo piano: half as soft as piano.

Mezzo forte: half as loud as forte.

Forte: loud.

Fortissimo: very loud.

Sforzando: forced, abrupt, fierce

Crescendo: a gradual increase in volume.

Diminuendo (or decrescendo) a gradual decrease in volume.

One piece of music can contain many symbols for dynamics, everything from very soft passages (pianissimo) to loud passages (forte) to passages that increase or decrease in volume (crescendo or decrescendo). In some cases, the conductor (or leader) of a group will request changes in dynamics that do not appear in the music (leaving to their discretion the interpretation of the music).

Tempo is measured in beats per minute (bpm). A tempo of 60 bpm would match the ticking of a clock with a beat every second. Quite often, you'll see the tempo (in bpm) displayed at the beginning of the piece. For a piano or other music student, a metronome is sometimes used as a training device. The metronome can be set for a wide variety of beats per minute and helps the student develop consistency of tempo in their playing. When you see a drummer in a rock band click his drum sticks four times, or call out the numbers 1, 2, 3, 4, he is setting the tempo for the rest of the band. Tempo has a great effect on the feel and effectiveness of the music played and it is critical when musicians are playing for dancers. Dances such as the waltz and two-step require a particular tempo.

Bar lines (vertical lines on the staff) are used to separate a song into measures. Measures divide the music into regular groupings of beats be it three, four, or six beats per measure. Except in rare cases, each measure contains the same number of beats throughout a song. Measures are often numbered so that there is a "road map" for the musician when playing as part of a group. For example, a conductor may ask the orchestra to "begin with measure 31."

A repeat (sign) is used quite often in music. If a particular music passage is to be repeated, a double bar line, preceded by two dots is used. This tells the musician to return to the beginning of the passage and play it again. Other markings such as the coda, and da capo (dc) are used to guide the musician to the proper place in the music such as playing

the passage again from the beginning (passages are repeated quite often) or jumping ahead to a particular measure or point in the music.

A fermata (sometimes called a "birds eye" because of its appearance) tells the musician that a particular note is to be played longer than its normal duration. How long the note is to be held is usually up to the musician or conductor. A fermata is usually displayed above the note it affects.

Some music contains breath marks that show the musician when to take a breath (if singing or playing a wind instrument) or when to lift the bow for string players. These are a few of the basic road signs every musician should know.

Author Duane Shinn offers a free email newsletter on exciting piano chords and chord progressions at [Musical Dynamics](#)

Article Source: http://EzineArticles.com/?expert=Duane_Shinn

Music Theory & Harmony - Boring? No! It's An Exciting X-Ray Into How Music Works!

By [Duane Shinn](#)

It's a sad fact that most people, including piano players, regard music theory and harmony as some abstract concept that has very little to do with the songs they play on their pianos. Nothing could be further from the truth. Knowing music theory and harmony is the key to opening a whole new world of exciting insights into the songs we play, and enable us to do things on the piano we never dreamed we could do, to say nothing of enjoying the process a hundred times more.

What is music theory, and how can I benefit?

Here are just a few of the wonderful skills and insights a person benefits from by learning music theory:

How notation works -- a huge advantage in sight-reading.

The hierarchy of rhythm -- solving rhythm problems before they begin.

All kinds of scales -- the "ladders of notes" every song is composed of. Major scales, 3 types of minor scales, chromatic scales, whole tone scales, modal scales.

How transposition and modulation works -- playing songs in different keys, and getting from one key to another smoothly.

Complex time signatures, and what they tell you.

Perfect, major & minor intervals -- helps ear training greatly.

Two-part and four-part harmony.

Figured bass such as IV, V7, ii6, I6/4, etc. and how it relates to chord symbols such as Fm7, F6, Dmaj7, etc.

Harmonizing melodies with all these chords.

Open & close voicing, inversions, secondary chords, form, cadences, non-harmonic tones, arranging for voices, arranging for brass, arranging for strings, transposing instruments, key relationships and many other exciting insights into the inner workings of music!

But what is harmony?

Harmony is a sub-set of music theory. It is a series of notes in combination, played simultaneously. Listen to your favorite songs, and pay close attention to the back-up vocals when they're being sung along with the lead. Can you hear how the two vocal

melodies differ in pitch? That's harmony, and it's highly possible that those back-up vocalists were chosen because of their strong ability to harmonize.

Singing a harmony, or rather picking one out on your own without written sheet music, is an almost inherent musical skill that many singers would die to possess. But harmony isn't just the province of singers; it's found in every single area of music. Any time a sound is layered on top of another sound and those sounds match each other in rhythm and melody (but not pitch), a harmony is created.

Harmony is made of intervals, and as such, it can be considered dissonant (scratchy, uncomfortable, like playing an E and an F at the same time) or consonant (pleasing or smooth). What makes a harmony pleasing or unpleasing, however, is extremely relative. In medieval times, only octaves and perfect fifths were considered harmonious, and any harmony that deviated from that was generally frowned upon. In modern western music, though, nearly everything is considered to be harmonious by someone. Fifths are still very popular in modern harmony but are now used in the most unlikely of places; heavy metal music, for example, frequently uses perfect fifths in the vocal harmony to create an eerie effect when layered on top of the more dissonant instrumentation.

Harmony, in addition to being consonant or dissonant, can also be subordinate or coordinate. Subordinate harmony, the tonal harmony used most frequently today, is a series of harmonies that are based on each other. The harmony moves in such a way that a resolution is somewhat predictable; you can hear this type of harmony in modern pop music, musical parts that flow very easily into each other and don't leave the listener baffled as to the turn the song has taken. On the other hand, coordinate harmony is a series of harmonies that operate independently of each other. They do have some common relation, of course, but don't typically move toward a goal, or predictable resolution. Renaissance musicians often used this type of harmony, and it's capable of producing rich and moving textures within a piece of music.

Learning music theory and harmony is not just an option you can take or leave: it is part and parcel of the "stuff of music". No surgeon would ever say "I don't want to learn all that stuff about the nervous system & the skeletal system and blood vessels and how the lungs and heart works and all that stuff -- I just want to operate".

And yet the majority of piano players ignore the very thing that would take them to the next level in their playing and knowledge -- music theory & harmony.

For more info on music theory & harmony please go to ["Music Theory & Harmony: Boring? No! It's An Exciting X-Ray Into How Music Works!"](#) In addition, a series of 101 free email lessons on music theory & piano chords is available at ["Music Theory & Piano Chords & Sizzling Chord Progressions!"](#)

Article Source: http://EzineArticles.com/?expert=Duane_Shinn

Part 4:

Technique

Piano Lesson Technique - Rotate Wrists to Add Power & Control to Playing, Even for Beginners

By [Cynthia VanLandingham](#)

The principles of piano technique are not difficult or mysterious. In fact they make perfect sense, but not in an intuitive way that would make students think of trying them first. Instead students do what feels "natural" to them not realizing that good technique has to be developed and that it isn't supposed to "feel natural" until they have practiced them enough for them to become natural. Piano is like any other art that involves the body. When a ballerina leaps across the stage it looks effortless because of his or her training. Unfortunately the basic principles of piano technique are often misunderstood and poorly taught. When they are and students practice them their playing begins to take on this effortless-like quality. Here is an important way for students to improve their playing technique right away that makes sense and give students more power and control.

Use the Arm and the Wrist to Help the Fingers. Generally new students don't know how to use their arms and wrists to play. They pull the fingers down into the keys with the wrists below the keyboard. But effortless playing involves leveraging the arms and the wrists to aid the fingers. The large muscles of the arm and the flexibility of the wrist give added power and control to the small muscles of the fingers. Focus on the following two technique principles to dramatically improve students' playing ability and comfort. Remember that these two elements of technique must to work together and not against each other for either to be effective.

1. Finger Flexion - Gently stretching the fingertips down to the keys from a rounded hand position above the keyboard (finger flexion) allows students to use their arms and wrists to give the fingers more power and playing. In conjunction with finger flexion, moving the wrist up and down to bend the arm forward and back uses the movement of the arm to let the key go down with less effort. This arm motion adds leverage that is necessary to help the smaller muscles in the fingers. Since the arms are much stronger, this yields much more playing power and control.

2. Wrist Rotation - In addition rotating the wrists, as when turning a key, creates power and spring that transfers energy from one finger to the next. This flexibility in the wrist applies the winding strength in the arm muscles to help the fingers play difficult passages of music with ease.

Any piano student can do this. It is not difficult. Even very young students can learn to play with ease. When the natural levers of the fingers, hand, and arms work together to create effective leverage, playing is much easier and more beautiful.

To learn the best way to share the gift of music with children visit Amazon.com for my [Piano Bears Musical Stories for Children](#) The exciting Piano Bears Musical Stories for children ages 5 to 11 feature the loveable characters, Mrs. Treble Beary and her new piano student, Albeart Littlebud. Children love following along with Albeart to Mrs. Treble Beary's piano studio in Musical Acres Forest. Here they learn what piano lessons are all about in a fun way that kids readily understand and appreciate! Piano students laugh and giggle while reading "Little Bear's Musical Garden" and "Little Bear's Piano Goals."

For a wealth of free information and piano music online visit [Piano Bears Music Education Resources](#) Don't Wait to Share the Gift of Music!

Article Source: http://EzineArticles.com/?expert=Cynthia_VanLandingham

Beginner Secrets for Blues Piano

By [D Swain](#)

Blues music has inspired various styles of music such as, jazz, rock and roll, and country. Learning blues piano will help you learn these other styles of music very easily. This article will teach you everything you need to know to play blues piano.

The 12-bar blues is the most common progression for blues piano. Most musicians use seventh chords when playing this form of blues. The song is broken up into three sets, with each set consisting of four bars. We will play the song in the key of C. The roman numeral I will illustrate the first tone (C) in the key of C. IV will mark the fourth tone (F), and V will mark the fifth tone (G).

To play the first set of blues piano, you simply play a I-I-I-I. The second set is IV-IV-I-I. Finally, the third set is V-IV-I-I. These chords should be played with the right hand. Remember to play seventh chords to give it that blues piano sound.

When playing blues piano on the left hand, you follow a simple pattern of eighth notes. This pattern is I-III-V-VI-VIIIb-VI-V-III. If you are playing a C chord in the right hand, you would play the notes C-E-G-A-Bb-A-G-E. When playing the F chord, you would play F-A-C-D-Eb-D-C-A. Finally, when playing the G chord, you play G-B-D-E-F-E-D-B.

Learning to play blues piano is not very difficult. Once you have mastered the 12-bar blues in the key of C, you should work on learning to play it in other keys. Mastering the blues piano is a great foundation to learn other styles of music.

If you would like to receive six [free piano lessons](#), make sure you stop by <http://www.supreme-piano.com> today.

Article Source: http://EzineArticles.com/?expert=D_Swain

What Chords Do I Absolutely, Positively Have To Know?

Free piano lessons online weekly from PlayPiano.com. This week's lesson is about the primary chords -- the chords that everyone needs to know, no matter what the instrument or what the song.

There are thousands and thousands of different chords – everything from basic major chords to minor 7ths to 13ths to suspensions to poly-chords. Someday, you might want to learn all those chords if you don't already know them.

But meanwhile, there are 3 chords -- just 3 -- that you absolutely, positively have to know. If you don't know these three, there's hardly a song in the whole world that you could play. But by knowing just 3 chords, you can play hundreds, if not thousands of songs!

Really? Really.

In every key there are 3 chords -- just 3 chords -- which are known as "primary chords" -- chords that occur way more than other chords. They are like family members of that particular key. They are groups of notes built on the 1st note of the scale, the 4th note of that scale, and the 5th note of that scale. (Those are 3-note chords called "triads" -- later we will get into 4 and 5 note chords.)

So, in any given key you can play in, there are Primary Chords -- chords that occur way more than other chords. They are like family members of that particular key.

At your house, let's say you have 3 people in your family -- your spouse, your child, and you. On the same block, but down the street a few houses, lives your cousin and her family. At any given moment, who are the most likely people to be in your house? The Terminator? Barry Bonds? Yasser? No sir. I don't think so.

It's possible, of course, but not too likely. If I had to guess, I would say it would be either you, your spouse, or your child. It might be your cousin down the street -- there's a much better chance of that than, say, David Letterman or Prince Charles -- but my best odds would be to guess that the family members would be there.

It's the same way with chords. In any given key, there are 3 "family members" that are residents of that key – the I chord, the IV chord, and the V chord. They are far and away the most likely chords to occur in any given key.

For example, if I am playing in the Key of C, and the first chord is the C chord and I have to guess what the next chord is, I would guess that it would be either the F chord or the G chord. Why? Because those are the other "family members". So we have narrowed the odds a great deal just by knowing who the members of the family are.

Does that mean that there are always just 3 chords in a song? No, but there are literally hundreds of songs that are made of just 3 chords.

The Primary Piano Chords ("the fam") Of All the Major Keys

But what you Must know is the 3 chords in whatever key you want to play in! That means that the stark beginner can learn 3 chords in just a few minutes, and be able to play along with thousands of tunes, because most folk songs, hymns, country songs, and many rock songs just use the 3 basic chords. That's why people who know zilch about music can pick up a guitar, learn 3 chords, and strum along while singing everything from "On Top Of Old Smoky" to "Amazing Grace" to "My Country 'Tis Of Thee" to "Auld Lang Syne" to "Silent Night" to...well, you get the idea. And not only a guitar, but a piano, keyboard, or whatever.

For a "sight and sound" version of this newsletter, please go to:

<http://www.playpiano.com/Tips/WhatChords.htm>

Can You Harmonize The Melody?

By [Diana Rogers](#)

The melody is a group of notes, played one after the other. The melody is the main tune, like "Here Comes The Bride". You'll know it because it's easy to remember. Plus, you hum it a lot! When you add harmony, the mood or tone of the song changes!

What is Harmony?

Harmony is a group of notes that support the melody. The melody gives the music texture! So, to harmonize a melody, means to create a chord accompaniment for it. The results produced will sound full, like many voices singing! Yes, like a choir! This is definitely a technique that everyone needs to learn! Harmonizing the melody (Level I) makes "happy" sounds!

- The I IV V chords contain all the notes of the major scale. Many melodies in a major key can be harmonized with just these three chords.

- The 7 basic chords one can use in the Key of C:

C major = C-E-G

D minor = D-F-A

E minor = E-G-B

F major = F-A-C

G major = G-B-D

A minor = A-C-E

B diminished= B-D-F

- Determine chords to be used and analyze the melody notes. Follow chart to see which chord is used with each melody note of a major scale. Play these notes all at the same time: (melody note is on top)

C E %2B G %2B C

D F %2B A %2B D

E G %2B C %2B E

F A %2B C %2B F

G C %2B E %2B G

A C %2B F %2B A

B D %2B G %2B B

C E %2B G %2B C

Mary Had A Little Lamb

G%2BC%2BE (Ma)

F%2BA%2BD (ry)

E%2BG%2BC (had)

F%2BA%2BD (a)

G%2BC%2BE (lit)

G%2BC%2BE (tle)

G%2BC%2BE (lamb)

- Formula For Harmonizing The Melody:

A. Determine a melody to any song

B. Replace the melody notes with harmonizing chords making sure to keep the melody note as the highest tone of each chord

C. Add the bass/ left hand notes

- I have found that harmonizing the melody to all childrens songs, Christmas songs and hymns is fun and easy! I learned to play the "Harmonization Scale". This is the same "scale" that Jermaine Griggs teaches in his Dvd and Course Book. I've been playing the keyboard on worship teams for over 30 years and teaching students for over 10 years. This is a technique that really works.

You're on your way to harmonizing the melody. Have fun!

Diana Rogers

<http://www.LadyDpiano.com>

Article Source: http://EzineArticles.com/?expert=Diana_Rogers



Part 5:

Ear Training & Melodic Sense

Learn Piano by Ear - The Fastest Way

By [Sophia Perz](#)

If you're interested in learning how to play piano by ear, then this article will be of great interest to you. Specifically, we will talk about how this is a very advanced skill, how to train yourself with special pitch training software, and why this skill is going to take a lot of practice - but you will see results within a few weeks if you stick at it. By the time you have finished reading this article, you should have a better idea of how to play piano by ear.

Firstly, you need to realize before you even think about learning how to do this, that this is an advanced skill which can take many years to completely master. Also, this is something which is usually done by experienced musicians -- so don't fret if you find it difficult to get the hang of first. Usually professional musicians use this skill to create powerful and expressive music, so this is a great goal to aim for if you are hoping to become an accomplished musician.

The best way by far to learn this skill as quickly as possible, is to use special pitch training software. This software basically works like a memory game. The program will play a particular pitch, and you will match it with the correct note. The best pitch training software programs allow you to train your ear with individual notes, chords, scales and more.

Now that you know the most effective way to train your ear, what's the next step?

The only way to get good at this is good old-fashioned practice. Unfortunately, despite some of the claims made by marketing companies, it isn't possible to learn this kind of skill overnight. Not with a high degree of proficiency, anyway.

But that doesn't mean you have to resign yourself to years of practice with little results. You can feel the benefits within just a few weeks of practice - maybe even sooner. It's certainly worth the effort, too. Because learning to play piano by ear will open up a whole new world of musical possibilities for you.

In conclusion, we've covered why ear training is an advanced skill to learn, the best way to learn how to do it fast, and why it's well worth the effort - even if it takes a lot of practice. Now that you've read this article, you should be able to decide if ear training is something you want to pursue.

One of the best ways to master the piano within just a few months is with the [Rocket Piano multimedia course](#). To find out why this course comes so highly recommended, and to find the cheapest place to buy it from - [click here](#).

Article Source: http://EzineArticles.com/?expert=Sophia_Perz

Interval Ear Training

By [Johnny Moon](#)

Intervals: The Building Blocks Of Music

The relationship between two notes is called an "interval" and they are the most basic building block for what we call music. I firmly believe that a comprehensive understanding of intervals is a necessity to improving as a musician, songwriter, composer, and singer. It's also invaluable for improving upon one's appreciation for music.

What Are The Intervals?

Perfect Unison (ie the same note played with itself. An example would be on a guitar where you can play the same note many places on the fretboard.)

Minor Second (like C & C#)

Major Second (like C & D)

Minor Third (like C & D#)

Major Third (like C & E)

Perfect Fourth (like C & F)

Augmented Fourth or Diminished Fifth (like C & F#)

Perfect Fifth (like C & G)

Minor Sixth (like C & G#)

Major Sixth (like C & A)

Minor Seventh (like C & A#)

Major Seventh (like C & B)

Perfect Octave (like a C & another C one octave up.)

Learning Intervals

To improve one's musical ability, it's important to learn the sound of the intervals by heart. You should be able to hear a C and an A played on the piano and automatically know that it's a major sixth. You should also be able to hear a D and a B and know that is

also a major sixth. You see it's the relationship between the two notes that makes up an interval.

Relative pitch ear training is the method for learning intervals (and also learning what chords sound like, which is the next step you need to take after you master intervals).

[CLICK HERE: Interval Ear Training](#). Learn What All Intervals Sound Like With The #1 Ear Training Audio Course: Pure Pitch Method.

[Buy Pure Pitch Method](#).

Article Source: http://EzineArticles.com/?expert=Johnny_Moon

The Value Of Scales

By [Mike Hayes](#)

Musicians in all walks of life seem to give far too much, or far too little time and attention to the playing of musical scales.

Scales are NOT music, but a means for making music. They are predictable, orderly, and sequential, but do not contain the life force found in a strong melodic statement.

Playing scales helps an instrumentalist gain facility and become familiar with his or her instrument and, the tonal "territory" of the key they happen to be in at that moment.

For example, think about this harmonic pattern:

C E7 A7 D7

With a thorough knowledge of the scales that relate to these four chords, you could not only play a melody and some relevant variations but also move freely through the form and come to understand what the progression itself is all about; instead of "fishing" for random notes that *might* fit without clashing against the sound quality of each underlying harmony. While a deep familiarity with scales is desirable and commendable, it is still nothing more than a preparation for making music, and falls short of good melodic and rhythmic inventiveness.

To use an analogy, each musical note is like a letter of the alphabet. A scale is like a group of letters arranged alphabetically, and a brief melodic string of perhaps one or two measures is like a word or phrase. A melodic statement of perhaps four or eight measures is like a sentence, therefore an entire song of perhaps 32 measures is like a paragraph. An arrangement of the song with an introduction, interlude(s), and coda is like a short story or article. A full production of this song in which the length of performance is increased, with perhaps singing and/or dancing segments with a vocal chorus or elaborate choreography, is similar to a book that tells the whole story. A symphony based on the thematic material is like a large carefully thought of literary work. The purpose of this analogy is to show the true position scales occupy in this hierarchy of musical values - they are purely and simply - our tonal alphabet.

Overall, the use of scales in improvisation does not contribute much of musical value - except as an effect or coloration that may be desired at a particular moment. There is neither spontaneity nor creativity in playing a scale while improvising; there is no musical statement in a scale. Since it is a predetermined succession of sequentially-arranged tones it is, in a sense, no different than a "lick", or a "run", or an arpeggio, or any musical fragment or device built upon a formula. A scale is preset, void of the living, emotional, and dynamic elements which are produced through spontaneity, creativity, imagination, and instantaneous experimentation.

A scale is a musical treadmill - it keeps moving, but it does not necessarily go anywhere - a kind of music spackle that can be used to fill up the cracks in a composition or improvisation. Reducing a song down to its harmonic content and then further reducing it down to a set of scales based on that harmonic structure, can be a starting point for elementary improvisation - but it can never be the whole journey. Void of the rhythmic, melodic, and harmonic textures inherent in the thematic material, all songs become a series of scales. It is like looking at a person and seeing a numerical equation instead of a human force simultaneously possessing personality, intelligence, character, and ability. How depersonalized can you get?

Scales are, in a way, musically depersonalized textures, lacking the elements that can bring the full musical picture into focus. In conclusion, of course, it is of great benefit for every musician to know the theory behind building scales and know how to play them on their instrument. These two capabilities will help the guitarist improve their physical technique on the instrument and increase familiarity with the entire musical area surrounding each tonal center. But remember, playing scales is a preparation for making music; it cannot be the final product.

In improvising the decision to play a scale or to draw something from it must be spontaneous, but without proper understanding of their true role in the improvisers's work kit that much sought after spontaneity will be the first thing to go out the window. Playing scales is like a boxer punching a bag, skipping rope, and sparring with a partner. Making music - employing scales as the underlying alphabet to generate a limitless supply of melodic ideas - is like the main event of a boxing exhibition.

Mike Hayes is a guitar teacher, author, performing musician and session guitarist with over 30 years of professional experience. Find out more about how to learn guitar fast with his popular free course, available at:

<http://www.GuitarCoaching.com>

Article Source: http://EzineArticles.com/?expert=Mike_Hayes

Part 6:

Sight Reading

How Important is Sight Reading For Piano Players?

By [Duane Shinn](#)

Sight reading is the act of reading and playing a piece of music before having ever seen it: on sight. This technique is a vital one for musicians to learn. Being skilled in sight reading makes reading a piece of music easier; the musician doesn't have to labor over every note and re-teach themselves the common patterns. Sight reading after a decent amount of practice, becomes like second nature.

A solid knowledge of music theory is absolutely crucial to a musician who wants to become proficient in sight reading. Besides acting as the basis for understanding the notes, a music theory education provides the ability to see patterns within the piece of music, a large part of the sight reading puzzle. Sight reading after all, doesn't require the musician to read every single note. Most musicians rarely see the entire piece of music, but rather the patterns that emerge from it. They understand notes and how they function in relation to each other and are therefore able to deduce most of the chords and changes -- all from just glancing at the basic structure of the piece.

For example, musicians who know music theory will first determine the key of the song from the key signature, which in turn gives them strong hints about which chords will probably be used most in the song. This knowledge alone enables the sight reader to be mentally prepared when those chords occur, and to be alert for chords which are unexpected.

They will also be aware of intervals such as 3rds and 6ths and 7ths, and they will look for the form of the song - ABA, AABA, ABACA, or whatever. They will be aware of the probably rhythm patterns based on the time signature, and they will quickly scan the score for repeats, tempo signs, volume changes, and so on.

In fact, most sight reading mistakes typically happen when a piece of music takes an unexpected turn, deviates from the common pattern. These mistakes, however, are few and far between with those proficient in sight reading. An experienced sight reader will have learned to not only see patterns but also to read ahead in a piece of music while they are playing it. Looking several bars ahead to catch anything tricky or unexpected is often done while holding a sustain or resting.

Sight reading plays a large role in music education, and students are frequently tested on their ability to do it well. Some sight reading exams will allow the student a few minutes to look over the piece and prepare; he or she will be able to make notes, mark up tricky

time signatures or changes. Tempo is rarely a consideration in these sight reading exams as playing the piece well is far more important than playing the piece up to speed.

Advanced sight reading exams, however, aren't quite as forgiving. These exams give the student minimal, if any, time to prepare, and tempo is absolutely considered into the final grade. Advanced sight reading exams prepare a student for work as a studio musician, a career where near-perfect sight reading is a must. The majority of studio musicians record a piece of music after only seeing it once -- sometimes not at all. A flawed skill in sight reading will only prove to be a hindrance to the working musician; it is for that reason considered one of the most important parts of a music theory education.

This does not mean, of course, that a musicians can't reach the top rungs without good sight-reading skills. After all, many top jazz pianists don't read music at all, but are gifted with incredible ears and improvisational skills. But for most of us it is a helpful skill to develop to the best of our ability.

A free email newsletter on exciting piano chords and chord progressions from author-teacher Duane Shinn is available free at "[Exciting Piano Chords & Chord Progressions!](#)"

Article Source: http://EzineArticles.com/?expert=Duane_Shinn

8 Tips For Learning the Art of Sight-Reading Written Music

By [Richard Killey](#)

Sight-reading music is a common practice among piano players. This is when you play a piece of music for the first time, even though it may be unfamiliar to you. Though it is not common to play a song perfectly the first time through, here are 8 tips to make sight-reading music easier for you.

Tip # 1. Key Signature. Pay close attention to the key signature of the piece you are about to play. Try to remember the appropriate sharps and flats in that key signature so you will know to play those whenever they occur throughout the song.

Tip # 2. Time Signature. This is also important to look at before you start sight-reading the piece. You will need to know what kind of note gets one beat. You will also need to remember how many beats are in each measure.

Tip # 3. Changes in Key and Time Signatures. Check through your music for any changes to the key signature or time signature. This will help prepare you for a transition that can happen in the middle of a song when you otherwise did not know about it.

Tip # 4. Starting and Ending Notes. It helps if you are familiar with the starting and ending note or chord of a song before you start playing. These are good reference points to guide you during your sight-reading.

Tip # 5. Note the Rhythm. Check your left hand chords to see what rhythm is used throughout the piece. As you look through the song, you usually can get an idea of how it will go. This will ease you through when trying to play the correct rhythm during sight-reading.

Tip # 6. Play the Melody First. Also look through the right hand melody line. It helps to play just the melody first if possible. This will help give you an idea of the sound of the song and then you can put it all together and you will be able to identify the unique melodic line.

Tip # 7. Check for Other Markings. Look through the entire piece and check for any other markings covered in Music Terminology. Some examples include the loudness or softness of the piece, the speed of the music, and how long you should actually hold each note that is played.

Tip # 8. Relax and Focus. Finally, before you play it is important to take a deep breath and relax yourself. Focus on what you are about to play. Try to play the song all the way through for your first sight-reading. This gives you a general idea of what the song will sound like. Later you can break it down and work on each measure or group of measures as you see fit. Remember. We are playing music for the love of it, not as a chore.

Maybe you are asking yourself why you should learn to sight-read music. Why not just learn the song a little bit at a time? Sight-reading forces you to move forward at a faster pace until you finish the song, ultimately helping you learn to play music faster. You can avoid bad habits of starting and stopping too often and delaying your progress on a specific piece of music. Sight-reading is an important skill to learn if you wish to become a good piano player.

For more tips about learning to play piano, including a free mini-course, visit the [Learning To Play Piano Today](#) site.

Article Source: http://EzineArticles.com/?expert=Richard_Killey

How To Improve Your Sight Reading

By [Kevin Sinclair](#)

As most professional musicians will say; no matter how long you've been playing for there is always need for improvement. Most of us have discovered this already, and we can all do with some improvement in our sight-reading skills.

The goal with sight-reading is to be able to really get through a piece of music without needing to stop or start the song, and to be able to do so when you have just been given the song and never heard it ever before. Most musical circles - especially for theater and orchestra, but also around studio and professional circles - will expect you to read 'on demand.' You could lose or gain a gig depending on how well you are able to do this. Although those with good ears may be able to develop strategies to get around sight-reading, this is not always going to save us and isn't to our advantage either.

Benefits and Reasons to Practice Sight-Reading

Sight-reading improves your overall playing and musical skills significantly. For starters, your scale playing techniques drastically improve. Sight-reading also teaches you song and music dynamics, so you can understand both sound and feel. Sight-reading will improve your octave skills too, as well as your arpeggio techniques and your general theory. As you practice with a metronome, and get a feel for standard rhythms, you will greatly improve in your timing and phrasing.

Lastly, sight-reading will even help you to improve on your own songwriting, as you get used to phrasing and dynamics. All of these will help you pick up a piece of music quickly and on the fly, making you a better all-round musician and giving you some very sought-after skills. Bettering your sight reading really just comes with practice.

How to Practice your Sight-Reading

Practicing - like a lot of your musical skills - really only requires about 15 minutes a day. By doing this, you will already see your entire outlook on your instrument dramatically change within just a few days.

Firstly you need to always play along with a metronome, and play through a piece of music without stopping. This is important. Even if you make mistakes, keep going. This will train you to read without needing to stop and look at your instrument, or work out what the sheet music is telling you. You can clear up the mistakes next time around. Once you have the song done flawlessly, move to the next song.

You should start with easier music, and go through the entire music book. Once you've done that, get more music. Music training is also reflex and memory training - once you know a song, you don't need the music anymore, and you're not improving your sight-reading by going through it again - you're just rehashing what you know already.

Musical phrases are very much like words and once you know the words you don't need to learn new words. You need to always be practicing new material - by continuously getting more musical phrases into your memory, you will greatly improve your ability to read music on the fly when you see recognizable phrases.

When practicing sight-reading, don't look at your fretboard - keep your eyes on the music. This will get you used to reading instead of watching yourself play. This also helps you to get a 'feel' for your instrument, making playing it very natural for you, and training you to rely on your muscle memory and not your sight when playing.

You need to consistently work on your sight-reading, just as you do your technique, interpretation, rudimentals and scales. You should sometimes test yourself with an audience - they will be more critical of your ability, and will point out where you may be going wrong. If you have a good ear, try and find ways to depend on the sheet music. This will actually make you a better musician, with the ability to hear music through sight and sound, a wonderfully sought-after and advantageous skill.

Sight-reading has many benefits, and through consistent practice you will find that it gets easier and easier, giving you the necessary skill as you work towards becoming a well rounded musician, more professional and talented with your instrument and musical ability. Whether you play guitar, piano, rhythm or lead (or even the drums) it is highly recommended that you take sight-reading seriously and work it into your practicing schedule.

Kevin Sinclair is the publisher and editor of MusicianHome.com, a site that provides information and articles for musicians at all stages of their development.

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Part 7:

Repertoire

Top 5 Ways To Develop Your Piano Rhythm

By [Brian Shelton](#)

When playing the piano, a good sense of rhythm is essential. Here are the top five ways to develop your piano rhythm:

1) Learn the basic rhythms.

As one of the top 5 ways to develop your piano rhythm, learning the basic beats found in any kind of music will help. The more rhythms that you listen to in fact, the easier they are to identify and emulate. We have for example, the standard four-beat rhythm that counts out to four beats per measure. Pretty common. Then we have the three-beat rhythm that counts out to three beats per measure. Again, pretty common. We also have the two-beat rhythm which is half the four-beat rhythm, but as you delve deeper into the world of piano, you'll discover some rather interesting (albeit, a little tricky) beats to play. The five beat rhythm is an example. This pattern counts out five beats per measure, commonly found in non-European music.

2) Practice rhythms with your hands (clapping, clapping on lap, tapping foot).

Speaking of tricky rhythms, we find that clapping our hands or just tapping our feet is an effective method in developing rhythm -- especially when the music that we play gets a little complicated. Bear in mind that music doesn't have to be foreign to be complicated. Sometimes, music can be so "full" of "stuff" (notes, flags, sharps, and other twists and turns), we can get lost in trying to play it. Taking a few moments to clap out a rhythm however, helps us associate notes with a unique time signature -- a time signature that could at any moment, change right in the middle of a song!

3) Count out loud if you have to.

This strategy follows the hand clapping and foot tapping strategy above, except that counting aloud helps strengthen the concept of rhythm in our minds. When we repeat 1 -2 -3 -4 over and over, that pattern sticks and flows from our fingers. It's best to count aloud while looking at the music you're playing. The relationship between the notes you see and the beats that they represent will become clearer as a result.

4) Use a metronome.

Metronomes are pretty much standard staples when it comes to playing music. You would be hard pressed in fact, to stay on beat without one! A metronome is programmed

to produce a steady beat for a prolonged period of time, so they make perfect tools for strengthening adherence to certain beats.

5) Play the piano in your mind while doing something else.

Just for fun, you could use the sounds in your environment as a basis for a new rhythm. Imagine the sounds created in the office environment. A person typing... someone walking down the hall... a printer grinding out 20 sheets of music... you get the point. Pick any one of these songs and then play your imaginary piano to the rhythm of the sound that you're hearing. Even if the rhythm speeds up or slows down, the goal in this little exercise is to keep playing the music on time, no matter how much the beat sways.

Claim your [Free Piano Lessons](#) eBook entitled, "The Secrets To Playing Piano in Less Time Than You Ever Thought Possible!" plus our jam-packed eZine filled with tips to help you reach your piano greatness!

Article Source: http://EzineArticles.com/?expert=Brian_Shelton

10 Piano Styles You Can Learn to Play

By [Duane Shinn](#)

When studying the piano, a student encounters a myriad piano styles. To master the instrument, at least several of these styles must be learned, and all if at all possible. Knowledge of various playing styles enables a pianist to enjoy and play in any genre and to cross-pollinate styles to create a fusion he or she can call their own.

Many modern piano styles are based on the blues. The blues involve an emphasis on the major and minor pentatonic scales, with an additional note included. The flatted fifth is added to the minor pentatonic to create the blues scale. Many blues songs are based on a simple chord progression, known as 12-bar blues. This uses the I, IV and V chords of a scale to create a foundation for melodies and solos.

For example, rock piano was born out of the blues and then took on a life of its own in the stylings of Jerry Lee Lewis, Michael McDonald, Elton John, Billy Joel, and many others.

Cocktail piano is a style generally connected with Liberace, Eddy Duchin, Roger Williams, and others who play popular tunes with lots of great technique -- lots of notes, runs, flourishes, and so on. But I hate to categorize and of these great pianists, as many of them play in other styles as well.

Boogie-woogie is a piano style based on the blues. It started as a solo piano style, but has expanded into other genres, such as country-western and gospel. It differs from the blues in that it is considered dance music, while blues music traditionally expresses sadness and frustration.

Rhythm and blues piano is based on blues, jazz, and gospel styles. As the name suggests, the emphasis is on the rhythm of the song. Most R&B has a particular swing to it, with a strong feel of syncopation in the rhythm. Syncopation involves placing the stress on a normally unstressed beat. This often results in an almost off-time feel to the untrained ear.

Ragtime piano also incorporates syncopation. Ragtime uses syncopation in its melodies by placing melodic notes between the stressed beats of the rhythm. Ragtime is often considered the first completely American genre, even predating jazz.

Jazz piano encompasses such a broad palate of styles that it is impossible to describe. Many piano styles incorporate ideas borrowed from jazz, such as improvisation. An emphasis on extended chord forms and chord re-harmonization also stems from jazz piano.

New age piano often involves less chord changes than other styles, instead relying on simpler progressions and polychords. It often imitates the sound of nature - babbling brooks, wind, rain, and so on. A polychord occurs when two different chords are played

at once. This technique is taken from earlier classical works by composers such as Stravinsky.

Gospel piano is often similar to the blues, jazz and R&B. It emphasizes certain extended chords, such as the 11th, and usually has the swinging feel associated with jazz and R&B. The apparent simplicity of gospel songs often hides the fact that they are, indeed, quite musically complex. Syncopation is highly stressed in gospel music, as it contributes to the overall spiritual feel of the music.

Country and western piano has similar roots as blues piano. Both styles stem from earlier folk styles, often developed by the less fortunate people of the era. Many early country songs stem from Appalachian folk songs. Country and western piano is highlighted by very bright playing, with simple chord progressions underneath the melody. One of the greats in this style is Floyd Cramer.

Traditional sacred piano styles involve the playing of liturgical songs and hymns. These can range from the harmonically and rhythmically complex to simple two and three chord songs. Many hymns stem from folk songs of centuries past. The variety of sacred piano styles is as numerous as the liturgical songs themselves. These piano styles often involve a strict reading of notation, with less of an emphasis on personal interpretation than other styles.

The classical piano style is probably the most varied of all the styles. Classical music is older than other styles, and is considered to be the proper grounds for musical instruction. Many elements of other piano styles come from classical music, and nearly all forms of musical theory are used in classical music. Andre Previn is the classic example of a well-trained classical pianist crossing over into the world of jazz, and with great success. Classical music usually requires intense training to master, though there are many simpler pieces designed with the novice player in mind.

Though classical is often considered the high point of music, this "ain't necessarily so." For instance, many players who are "classically trained" have trouble adapting to the feel and sincerity of the blues. For this reason, a well-rounded player should be adaptable and learn as much about each of these piano styles as possible. In this way, a pianist is ready for any musical challenge. And besides, who knows where the future of music lies?

Duane Shinn is the author of the popular online newsletter on piano chords, available free at "[Exciting Piano Chords & Chord Progressions!](#)"

Article Source: http://EzineArticles.com/?expert=Duane_Shinn

Create Song Dynamics in Your Song

By [John Cowell](#)

Song dynamics are central to the art of songwriting and music. Learn this songwriting craft so your song development goes to the next level. What's the big deal you might ask? The answer usually is, without them the song gets boring fast.

Great songs and music need to be a journey for the listener. Too much of anything doesn't work. It's like eating too much turkey dinner. It gets uncomfortable and the thought of more is the last thing on your mind. It's the same with music.

It's like pitching baseball. The pitcher who only throws one kind of pitch doesn't last long. If you don't give your listeners music with variations or dynamics, the listener gets bored. They get bored and they go looking for some other pitcher, in your case another song.

Variety is what gives listeners satisfaction; it's the spice in music. It applies to all aspects of your song. For example, the volume, the rise and fall of the notes in the melody, the melody's structure in each section of the song, sectional between verses and choruses, where the lyric phrase comes in on the beat in the bar, how each instrument is attacked and how the vocals are phrased.

The idea is to have your song sound like music and not noise. Listeners need softness to feel the swell to high volume in lines and verses. They also need the swell or decay in individual words. Think of music as a journey of contrasts for the listener.

Dynamics can set the mood in your song or change the mood for your listener. It also gives the singer in your song something to work with.

Listen to Celine Dion's songs. She can really belt out the vocals. But you'll find she also sings softly at times. This contrast makes her power stand out even more.

All aspects of your song need to complement each other, so think about this as you're writing. Creating song dynamics will help your listener connect with your song because it will be a more enjoyable experience. They will want more and that's good for you and them.

John Cowell is self proclaimed songwriting addict. His fresh approach to songwriting tips and advice will have you saying "Ah-Ha" over and over again. To get simple and terrific ideas on how to write great songs visit his website <http://www.greatsongwriting.com>

To learn how to build your dream web site and web business like John did, go to <http://www.greatsongwriting.com/sbi-tv.html>

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Piano Pedals: What to Do With those Pedals, or are They a Foot Rest?

By [Alana LaGrange](#)

There are three pedals on the piano: the damper pedal on the right, played with the right foot; the soft pedal called the Una Corda, on the left, played with the left foot; and the sostenuto pedal in the middle, played with the left foot. In all cases, the end of the pedal should contact the ball of the foot in line with the big toe. The heel of the foot stays on the floor at all times, and the foot remains touching the pedal at all times.

The Damper Pedal raises the damper (hammers) off the strings at once, and holds them off, so that if the fingers are removed from the keys, the sounds does not stop, as the pedal is still holding the dampers of the strings.

Now let's work with the most common pedal, the damper pedal. The damper pedal is used for the purpose of playing legato, or purposefully allowing 2 or more tones to ring at the same time to create harmony, and/or for a rhythmic purpose.

Playing legato means to connect your sounds without silence between the notes. Hold the first key and keep it vibrating until the next note is played, then release the first note. This can be easily accomplished through your finger action if all the keys in your song are within close proximity of each other. If there is a huge span between the keys, then it is impossible for the fingers to play legato, for the hand will have to be moved to a new position to reach the key.

By using the damper pedal, you can connect these tones and retain the sounds of legato.

Example:

1. Play middle C, and at the same time depress the damper pedal.
2. Hold the damper pedal in the depressed position.
3. Lift your hand and move it up the piano to play a high C.
4. At the exact moment you play the high C, Lift and depress the damper pedal very fast.

How do you know you are playing the pedal correctly? All you have to do is listen. If you release the pedal too soon, you will hear silence between the two notes. If you release the pedal too late, there will be a point where both tones will be ringing.

Playing the pedal correctly takes practice, go slow and listen carefully. How do you know when to use the pedal? Change the pedal when you do not want tones ringing together. Change the pedal on every chord change. In classical music, it is customary to analyze

the composition and when the composer is changing chords, change the pedal. Composers will write in phrases, which are similar to sentences, if the same chord is used, but the phrase changes, you would change the pedal when the phrase ends and a new phrase starts. As you progress in your lessons and gain knowledge about music theory, you will be able to analyze the music and this will guide you as to when to change the pedaling.

Alana LaGrange is the founder of [Music and You](http://www.musicandyou.com), an online piano lesson website teaching beginning, Intermediate, music arranging and jazz. She has published piano lesson books, and is also an arranger and recording artist.

<http://www.musicandyou.com>

Article Source: http://EzineArticles.com/?expert=Alana_LaGrange

Part 8:

Making It Personal

Piano Improvisation in Three Steps

By [Duane Shinn](#)

Because of the technical virtuosity and skill of famous jazz, blues, and classical improvisers, many beginning pianists mistakenly assume that improvisation is to be learned in the distant future, when one's piano abilities are more developed. On the contrary, though, most contemporary piano teachers feel that improvisation is a huge part of playing piano at all skill levels, not just for experts.

In fact, with the influence of jazz on modern pianists and tutors, improvisation is now considered to be a huge part of learning how to play piano. It hones the beginning pianist's feel for her instrument, and it strongly reinforces what the student has learned about music theory, keys, and scales.

The best advice for a beginning improviser is to just start playing -- and to have fun with it. However, for students looking for a little more guidance, here is a brief tutorial on piano improvisation.

Three Points:

1) Learn and practice your keys, chords, modes, and scales. Outside of certain advanced jazz music forms, most improvisations work within a pre-decided key. For practical reasons, C Major is the first key most beginning pianists learn, because it includes all of the piano's white keys, and no black keys. Even if C Major is the only key you've learned so far, you can use it to improvise for hours. Meanwhile, for a moodier improvisation, the pianist who can play in C Major can play just as easily in A Minor. To do so, simply shift the focal point of the improvisation from the C chord to the A- chord.

After the student begins to learn keys that incorporate more sharps and flats, improvisation is a great way to internalize those keys. For instance, after you learn which notes make up the G Major key, try improvising within G Major, using no notes that don't fall within the key. After a while, G Major will be burned into your mind. Although playing scales is still an important way to internalize keys, improvisation is an equally valid way to learn, especially after scale-running becomes boring.

Modes usually come later in a pianist's development, and one doesn't need to know about them in order to improvise. Essentially, modes shift the focal point within a key. For instance, when you improvise in C Major, you'll find that your ear naturally wants your improvisation to return to the C chord. However, in the Dorian mode, for example, the improviser resists the urge to return to C, instead using the D- chord as the focal point.

Each of the conventional modes -- Ionian, Lydian, Mixolydian, Dorian, Phrygian, Aeolian, and Locrian -- is associated with a unique emotional range, which provides the improviser with a set of short-cuts to desired musical moods.

Again, the beginning improviser doesn't need to know about modes, but they will become very useful down the line. Find a chord progression. After you have chosen a key -- and if you only know C Major, it's as good of a key as any -- either find or create a chord progression within that key. For example, a common chord progression in blues and folk music is C F G C, which is simply repeated over and over. In general, the best way for beginners to improvise is to play the chord progression with the left hand, while improvising with the right hand. You're probably already used to this dynamic, as most piano pieces for beginners utilize the left hand for chords, and the right hand for melodies.

2) To internalize your chord progression, simply play it over and over. The goal is to be able to play the progression without any conscious thought, as automatically as breathing. Once you've achieved this, you're ready to improvise.

3) Improvise. If you've done the first two steps, this one will not be as difficult as it sounds. In fact, more than anything, it will be fun. The key to remember is that there is no pressure, and that you're not playing for an audience. In other words, once you have your chords down, you can spend hours upon hours exploring the harmonic and melodic possibilities of your chosen key and chord progression.

It doesn't have to sound beautiful right off the bat, but if you're doing it right, it won't sound terrible. For example, if your key is C Major, practically anything you play on the white keys will sound okay -- that is, it won't sound like you're making any huge mistakes. Many improvisers think of it like talking; just sit down at the piano, and say what's on your mind.

Now, as your piano playing skills progress, you'll learn more theoretical and technical tricks to incorporate into your improvisation. However, the important thing to remember is that improvisation is possible at all skill levels. Whether you are just learning the ins and outs of the C Major scale, or you are learning to appreciate the emotional qualities of the various modes, improvisation is always a productive and useful skill.

Duane Shinn is the author of the popular course on piano chords titled "[How To Play Chord Piano... In Ten Days!](#)"

Article Source: http://EzineArticles.com/?expert=Duane_Shinn

How To Dress Up "Naked Music" On The Piano

By [Duane Shinn](#)

What in the world is “naked music?”

You know it when you hear it, but the words that describe it sound strange, don't they? We've all heard of popular music and rock music and gospel music and jazz music, but naked music?

Naked music is simply the notes on a piece of sheet music. It's “naked” – not dressed up or arranged at all. No fills, no slurs, none of the ingredients that make a song come to life.

Not a single professional musician plays the music exactly as it appears on a piece of sheet music. Instead, they use the written music as a map, or an outline, and then proceed to do their own thing with it. They twist it, bend it, add to it, subtract from it, put fills in it, change the key, change the words, change some of the melody notes, and on and on.

So when you hear your favorite artist perform a piece of music, if you look at the written sheet music while they are performing it, you will see it is MUCH different and MUCH better than the plain old “naked music!”

So how can the average musician dress up naked music? There are many ways, but here are seven of my favorites:

1. Change the chords slightly by adding color tones. What are color tones? Color tones are notes added to the basic chord, usually expressed as 6ths, 7ths, 9ths, etc. For example, instead of playing just a straight C chord as it is written – C, E, G – try adding a color tone to it, such as a 6th (A) or a 7th (Bb) or a major 7th (B) or a 9th (D). In fact, try adding a couple together, like a 6th and a 9th. So instead of being a plain vanilla chord made up of C, E, and G, you've made it a tasty variation adding A and D to the equation.

2. During the pause between phrases, add a counter melody. How? Take the given melody notes and turn them upside down or inside out, or change the rhythm slightly so the tune is still recognizable, but different.

3. Add chord substitutions. Instead of always using the chords that are written, ask yourself this question: “Into what other chord will this melody note fit?” For example, if the melody is G and the chord is C, what other chords contain the note G in them? There are several answers to that question. G is not only in the C chord, but it is also in the Em chord, the Eb major chord, the G chord, the Gm chord, etc. Try one of those alternate chords until you like the sound combination, then use it instead of the C chord. It will add an originality and freshness to your playing almost immediately.

4. Add fills and runs between phrases. How do you do that? Simply break up the chord that is in force at the moment, and run it up the keyboard as a broken chord – one note at

a time. Or start at the top of the keyboard and come down. Or play with the chord a bit by playing 2 of the 3 notes instead of the entire 3 note chord.

5. Use melodic echos. After you have played the melody, echo it by playing it an octave higher, or two octaves higher, or an octave lower.

6. Use half-step slides. If the chord progression is from D7 to G7, instead of going to G7 directly, “slide into it” by playing the chord that is one-half step above – namely, Ab7, then quickly sliding off Ab7 to G7.

7. Use “blue notes.” Blue notes are created by sliding off a black key onto a white key quickly. For example, if the melody is E, slide off Eb to E quickly using the same finger.

This is just a tiny sampling of what you can do to dress up your music. There are literally hundreds of other techniques, from pseudo-modulations to inside blues moves to deceptive cadences to tremolos to twangs to crunches to straddles to 3-1 breakups to walk-downs and walk-ups and on and on.

By simply adding a few of these techniques to your playing you can easily double and triple the excitement created by your piano playing as you “dress up naked music!”

Duane Shinn is the author of over 500 music books, CD's & DVD's including “How To Dress Up Naked Music On The Piano!” at <http://www.pianoplaying.com> He also is the editor of the free email newsletter “Piano Lessons Online: Piano Chords & Progressions!” which has over 61,000 current subscribers. Available at <http://www.playpiano.com>

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Conclusion

Piano Practice Tips For Adults

By [Duane Shinn](#)

Adults often come to the point in their lives when they want to explore new hobbies. One of the most common hobbies adults pursue is learning to play the piano. It may be the first time they play or a return to a childhood pleasure. Whether you're an adult sitting down to learn the instrument for the first time or you want to brush up on your skills, keep in mind some basic rules of piano practice.

Posture is very important. Make sure that the piano bench is high enough. Your shoulders should hang freely, while your forearms are parallel to the floor. This allows the greatest freedom of movement and keeps your body from feeling constricted. While your hands are directly in front of you on the keyboard, your elbows should be just slightly forward of the center of your body. Sit forward on the bench so that your body is relaxed.

Create a regular piano practice schedule. Start with short sessions of 15 minutes. Increase the time as your skill progresses and your hands start to feel more limber. You may not have time for piano practices longer than half an hour, but that's enough to increase your skill and flexibility. Just try not to miss too many days in a row. Time of day is important. Pick a time when you'll be least distracted by the worries of life.

Practice books are extremely helpful for both beginners and experienced players. These contain exercises and tips that improve your technique. Many also teach musical theory, providing detailed explanations of scales, chords, modes and relative tonality. This is great for expanding your musical palette and understanding how melodies and harmonies work in the context of a piece.

Piano practice books also contain musical pieces adjusted to your skill level. At the end of each chapter you'll often find a piece that demonstrates techniques that you learned in the preceding pages. It may take a while to coordinate both of your hands, so don't expect to play at full speed right away. Practice each hand separately, at a moderate speed, before combining the two parts. You'll be less discouraged and find that your playing is more accurate.

Remember, piano practice isn't a competition. Even if you are a highly driven individual, take your time and be patient when learning the piano. You'll avoid frustration and possible injury if you avoid pushing yourself too hard. It's supposed to be enjoyable.

A metronome is an invaluable tool for piano practice. A metronome is a device that keeps perfect time, providing an audible beat set to an exacting tempo. Metronomes are adjustable from very slow to very fast, well within the limits of pieces you'll be

practicing. Even if you feel that you have a great sense of timing, invest in this handy little tool for your piano practice sessions. You'll be amazed how often you change tempos slightly while running through exercises.

Whatever amount of time and dedication you are able to invest in the piano, it's a great instrument for adults to learn. The piano is a few hundred years old, and people are still exploring its musical possibilities. Join their ranks and make music that you'll love for the rest of your life.

Duane Shinn is the author of a free newsletter on piano chords & chord progressions available at [Piano Practice](#)

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