



Play • Discover • Develop

# A Little Book of Piano Lessons

Everything you need to know to make the  
most of your piano lessons!

September 2019

## LESSON CONDUCT

Regular, punctual attendance is necessary for good lessons. Come prepared (with short fingernails, please), having read the previous lesson's notes and practised what was set. If you have any questions regarding lesson notes, email them during the week. Don't wait a whole week to find out!

For children aged 5, I prefer parents to sit in on lessons, in order to know how to help at home. For older children, parents are welcome to sit in but I find that most children tend to work better without parents there! During lessons, I often make video/sound recordings which I send home by email.

“Don't practise until you get it right...  
Practise until you can't get it wrong.”

## CHILDREN, TEENAGERS, PARENTS AND PRACTICE

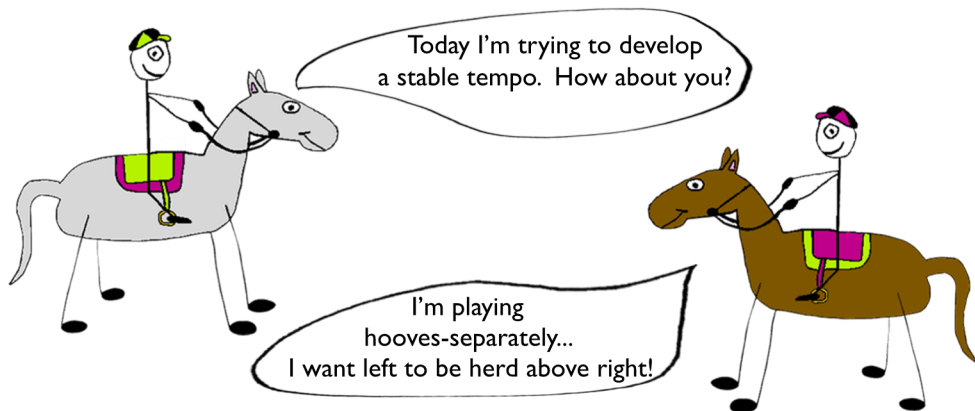
All children and teenagers should be encouraged to play piano whenever they want to; piano playing should always be framed as a 'fun' activity and a treat, never a chore... this applies even more when exams are concerned!

Children under 7 will usually only improve if they practise with help from parents several times per week (every day is ideal). For older pupils there are many different approaches which can work. Some children and teens are motivated by having a captive 'audience' at home; they may put on concerts or play duets with siblings. Some pupils use the piano as 'me-time' - an activity they pursue independently without too much parental involvement!

See [steppingtones.co.uk](http://steppingtones.co.uk) for: useful articles, including How to Help Your Child Practise the Piano.'

## HORSES FOR COURSES!

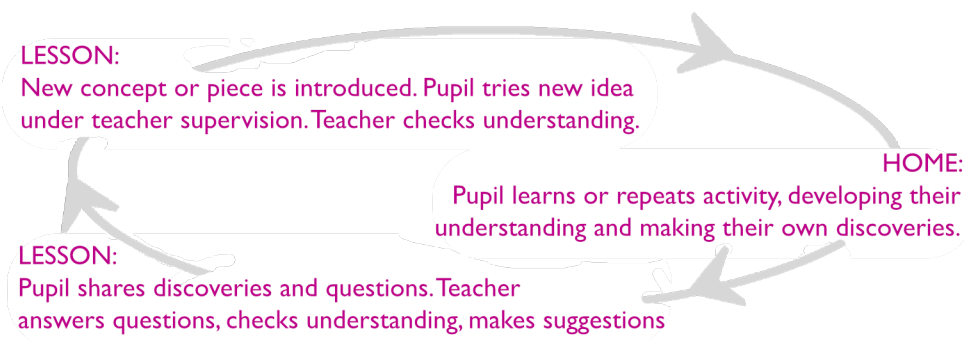
Learning piano is different for everyone. Some pupils take exams and some like to improvise or compose. Some pupils like to perform and others just want to let of steam...



It's fair to assume that all of my pupils want to develop their skills in some way. Most know that the more often they practise, the quicker they will improve... but the quality of practice can affect the outcome even more!

## LOOPS

I like to think of the learning process as a loop:



For a pupil to enjoy learning and to progress well, both the pupil and the teacher need to be actively involved in this feedback loop. If any stage is missed out, there can be no learning!

## GOALS

Set a goal at the start of each practice. It might only be one bar of correct notes, or a small movement of the wrist or dynamic detail; try to make sure you've achieved your goal before you finish that session. If you're not hitting your goals, then your goals are too large, or your practice sessions are too small or unfocused! If you're hitting your goals, but stuck on the same piece of music for weeks, try larger goals and longer sessions!

## FRUITFUL PRACTICE

Careful practising can save so much time! Here are a few dos and don'ts:



**DO:** Notice if you keep making the same mistake. Rather than repeating the 'problem note', play the note before, and practising getting to the problem note. Play these two notes until it feels and sounds good.

**DO:** set aside time every day for sight reading and technical work.

**DON'T:** be disheartened and stop your practice when you go wrong. That's where the learning takes place! Stick at the difficult bit - it always gets easier!

**DO:** write down questions to ask your teacher next lesson.

**DO:** notice your mood. If you feel frustrated, take a few deep breaths or a short break. If you're someone who gets annoyed during practice, be proud of yourself for the times you're able to remain calm!

## MUSIC & EQUIPMENT

It will be necessary to buy books. I recommend beginners allow £30-£45 per year and advanced pupils £50-£80. Why not treat yourself to a trip to Foulds in Derby? They can take phone payment and post books if you prefer.

In addition to music, each pupil needs:

- A good piano. Acoustic is best. Digital will do but is not ideal. Yes - pianos are expensive, but learning on a poor piano encourages bad habits. Most electric pianos simply don't do what an acoustic piano does. Imagine a motor bike compared to a car: two completely different ways to drive!
- An adjustable stool and something to rest your feet on if you can't comfortably reach the floor - books/boxes work well. Adjust as you grow!



**MIND THE GAP**

metro-gnome

- A metronome. An app or a real one both work fine. For iOS, try 'Metronome 4' (pay for the full version - it's worth it). For Android, try 'Metronome Beats' (again, the 'Pro' version is definitely worth it).
- A sharp pencil and rubber for music theory! This may sound obvious, but it's surprising how many pupils don't have these!
- For note-reading, try a free app called 'Music Tutor' (available on iOS and Android).

## TUITION FEES - WHAT DO THEY COVER?

- Time spent with pupils
- Time spent in preparation for pupils
- Time spent planning concerts, piano parties and other events
- Lesson planning, book-keeping, timetabling, phone calls and emails. I am happy to email or call a parent or pupil wherever necessary.
- Music books for lending to pupils to keep costs down for them.
- My training (24 years so far!) and continuous professional development, including my own regular practice. I hold the following qualifications:

ATCL (piano performance diploma) - May 2017

Certificate in Dalcroze Eurhythmics - Jan 2017

Dip.ABRSM (piano teaching diploma) - Nov 2009

- Membership for EPTA and the ISM. Networking and sharing ideas with other teachers is one way I keep lessons fresh and inspiring!
- Time spent designing or discovering resources such as worksheets, flash cards, videos, recordings... or piano handbooks! 🤔
- Tax, national insurance, DBS checks, insurances, retirement
- Room hire, stationery, IT equipment, apps, photocopying

## PAYMENT

Tuition is based on a set number of lessons in the year, divided by 12 to calculate a monthly fee. For some months there are 5 lessons, for some only 1, and in August there are no lessons but your fee is the same each month.

Tuition is paid monthly in advance, on the 28th of each month. The first payment of the year is due on Aug 28th. Payment is to be made by standing order or bank transfer. I do not accept cheques. At the start of the year you will receive a Lesson Agreement, detailing your tuition and how to pay.

## ABOUT GROUP LESSONS

Those who learn instruments such as the violin, guitar, trumpet or voice have the opportunity to play in orchestras, choirs or bands, but us poor pianists can get quite lonely in our music-making! Group work is lots of fun and some important musical skills can only be learnt in a social setting:

- keeping in time with another person who is NOT your teacher!
- improvising based on someone else's ideas
- learning how to focus and not be nervous in front of others
- helping to put other people at ease when they play in front of you
- playing duets and trios
- learning how to listen and give feedback to others



Some of my pupils have regular shared theory and musicianship lessons as well as their individual ones and I often run group activities so I can offer the opportunity for pupils to work on these skills.

## PUPIL CONCERTS

I hold concerts every 9-12 months. These are often themed, with fancy dress and tasty food. Parents, pupils, their family and friends have told me they LOVE these events! It's vital to me that all my pupils (including adults, children and teenagers), have a chance to play and to listen to each other.

## COMMUNICATION

As a general policy, I try not to discuss scheduling or fees during lesson time. I find it best to discuss these subjects by email if possible, so all parties have a record of what was said and so lesson time is not wasted. I don't use What's App, text messages or Facebook for work, because I find them hard to keep track of... **if you have a different preference, please do tell me!**

## MISSED LESSONS

If you cannot make a lesson, please provide as much notice as possible so we can decide whether there's anything else I can be doing for you during your scheduled lesson and so I can adjust my room booking if necessary.

## ILLNESS

Please, if you are unwell, do not come to your lesson!

## VIDEO/PHONE CONTENT

If you cannot make your lesson but are well enough, sometimes it can be helpful for pupils to send videos of their playing, or photos of music theory homework.

Where possible, please send me video/email content before your scheduled lesson, so I can use your lesson time to mark it or watch it and to reply.

## MAKE UP LESSONS

If you need to miss a lesson, I will **ONLY** offer to reschedule if:

- you missed the lesson because I had to cancel
- you missed your lesson because you or your family suffered a bereavement or serious illness.



## QUITTING LESSONS

I understand that sometimes there are factors which mean pupils are not able to continue lessons. **If your lessons are not working for you, please speak to me before giving notice.** There might be something I can do to help.

If you do decide to quit, here are four useful tips:

1. Feel happy to have tried!

Everyone is different. It's good to try things out - you learn about yourself, which is always a good thing. Hopefully along the way, you might even have learnt some music, too! Never feel guilty if you decide it's not for you!

2. Give us chance to close our time together

I would like all of my pupils to finish on a positive note (bad pun intended!). It's good to go back to some old pieces, to try a few duets, or re-cap some theory, just to refresh the pupil's sense of accomplishment so they can value the lessons they had. It's easier and more friendly to say goodbye gradually!

3. Respect the Lesson Agreement

I ask for four weeks' notice. As soon as I receive notice, I will calculate how many lessons you will have had and how many you have paid for. If the notice period includes any time marked 'no lessons' on the calendar, you will not be billed for those weeks. Depending on when you cancel, it may be the case that I owe you a refund, or that there are outstanding fees for you to pay.

4. Learn to play 'Happy Birthday' (if you celebrate birthdays)

Do it for your Mum... or your Dad, wife, husband, boyfriend, girlfriend, sibling or best friend. It's a special gift and they will LOVE it.

# Piano Lessons 2019/2020

## SEPTEMBER 2019

M	T	W	T	F	S	S
30						1
2	3	4	5	6	7	8
9	10	11	12	13	14	15
16	17	18	19	20	21	22
23	24	25	26	27	28	29

## OCTOBER 2019

M	T	W	T	F	S	S
	1	2	3	4	5	6
7	8	9	10	11	12	13
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
28	29	30	31			

## NOVEMBER 2019

M	T	W	T	F	S	S
				1	2	3
4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15	16	17
18	19	20	21	22	23	24
25	26	27	28	29	30	

## DECEMBER 2019

M	T	W	T	F	S	S
30	31					1
2	3	4	5	6	7	8
9	10	11	12	13	14	15
16	17	18	19	20	21	22
23	24	25	26	27	28	29

## JANUARY 2020

M	T	W	T	F	S	S
		1	2	3	4	5
6	7	8	9	10	11	12
13	14	15	16	17	18	19
20	21	22	23	24	25	26
27	28	29	30	31		

## FEBRUARY 2020

M	T	W	T	F	S	S
					1	2
3	4	5	6	7	8	9
10	11	12	13	14	15	16
17	18	19	20	21	22	23
24	25	26	27	28	29	

## MARCH 2020

M	T	W	T	F	S	S
30	31					1
2	3	4	5	6	7	8
9	10	11	12	13	14	15
16	17	18	19	20	21	22
23	24	25	26	27	28	29

## APRIL 2020

M	T	W	T	F	S	S
		1	2	3	4	5
6	7	8	9	10	11	12
13	14	15	16	17	18	19
20	21	22	23	24	25	26
27	28	29	30			

## MAY 2020

M	T	W	T	F	S	S
				1	2	3
4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15	16	17
18	19	20	21	22	23	24
25	26	27	28	29	30	31

## JUNE 2020

M	T	W	T	F	S	S
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
29	30					

## JULY 2020

M	T	W	T	F	S	S
		1	2	3	4	5
6	7	8	9	10	11	12
13	14	15	16	17	18	19
20	21	22	23	24	25	26
27	28	29	30	31		

## AUGUST 2020

M	T	W	T	F	S	S
31					1	2
3	4	5	6	7	8	9
10	11	12	13	14	15	16
17	18	19	20	21	22	23
24	25	26	27	28	29	30

Autumn Term: 8 + 7 = 15 weeks

Spring Term: 6 + 6 = 12 weeks

Summer Term: 5 + 8 = 13 weeks

**TOTAL: 40 weeks**