

HOW PARENTS *Can Help Their Children* **PRACTICE PIANO**

1 Sit down with your child immediately after the piano

lesson. Ask him/her to show you the teacher notes, demo the newest material, and tell you what was covered in the lesson.

2 Establish a realistic and predictable

practice time that can happen easily every single day... regardless of other family activities.

Give your **3** undivided attention.

4 Start practice routines

early in the week to avoid "cramming".

5 Problem solve together when your child gets "stuck". Use cues from the book, teacher notes, and previously completed material to aid the problem-solving process. Be in touch with your child's teacher to ask questions when needed. If all else fails, encourage your child to improvise a solution.

Inform yourself of the basic skills you will need to help your child at home. By following along with your child as they learn, you too can gain the knowledge you may need to assist with practice.

6 Allow free exploration on the piano. It may sound like "noise", but your child is actually making important connections. Free play also serves as a confidence-boosting, creative outlet.

7 Encourage frequent and short "stop-overs" on the piano in addition

**Be present, attentive and
*encouraging***

Music Lesson Supply List

Have these items in reach of your student's practice space to help their practice and lesson time be successful!

Elementary:

- Pencils
- Highlighters
- Eraser
- Timer
- Metronome
- Folder for loose music assignments
- Sticky Notes
- Small box/container to keep items organized
- Lesson books
- Optional: Colored pencils, small stickers, notebook

Middle/High School: (In addition to the above items)

- Manuscript paper
- Binder
- Notebook for assignments
- Access to notation software (Every student has access to our subscription of NoteFlight!)



EXCERPT FROM TEACH PIANO TODAY

1. **Your children will need help** – Up until about age 11, children need hands-on help with home practice. And even though you yourself may not read music or play the piano, your assistance is still very much needed! Parental help can take the form of reading lesson notes, organizing practice time wisely, providing encouragement through difficult sections or situations, and seeking out answers for “I’m stuck on this” problems. Asking a young child to be in charge of something as important as piano practice is often asking too much. Your help at home will make a substantial difference in your children’s progress.
2. **Your children need you to establish a routine** – Piano practice that happens every single day is by far the most effective practice structure. 30 minutes three times a week is just 90 minutes. 20 minutes *seven days a week* is 140 minutes. The total difference is 43 hours of missed practice per year if your children are only at the piano three times a week. Short, focused and regular visits to the piano help your children retain and understand what they are learning while making the most of generally short attention spans. If practice is enjoyable, rather than arduous, your children will naturally (and unknowingly!) increase the time they spend on the bench... eventually reaching that 30 minute mark. Setting a regular time of day when piano practice happens “no matter what” will ensure a daily practice routine is easy for your children to maintain.
3. **Your children need lots of encouragement** – Learning to read music and play the piano can be difficult; it can be discouraging... it can feel overwhelming. Your children (no matter what their age) need loads of encouragement. And not just verbal encouragement. You can show your children that you value their efforts by attending their recitals with enthusiasm, inviting friends and family to listen to them play, and taking the time to sit and listen to them practice with your undivided attention.

4. **Your children need a home instrument that is enjoyable to play** – Much of the pleasure from playing the piano comes from one’s ability to emote feeling, nuance and expression through music. Even young beginners will experience great satisfaction from making beautiful sounds.... so choose an instrument that gives them the best opportunity to make beautiful sounds. Guidance from your children’s teacher will help you find an affordable piano (don’t worry, there are many great and affordable options) that will give your children the tool they need to *truly* experience piano lessons. An investment in a good instrument protects the investment you are making in your children’s musical education.
5. **Your children need a positive practice environment** – Aside from providing encouragement, your children need you to create a positive practice atmosphere. Help your children avoid “cramming” the day before lessons. Stick to your daily routine to avoid weeks of forgotten practice (which lead to feelings of inadequacy on the part of your children). Music is joyful... and so practicing music should be as well. This is, fortunately, something that you are able to create easily with a commitment to regular practice.
6. **Your children need you to communicate with their teacher** – Working as a parent/child/teacher triangle is the optimal way to ensure progress and success in piano lessons. Be sure to communicate often with your children’s piano teacher. Check in on how lessons are progressing, ask for help if something is difficult for your children at home, let your teacher know when practice weeks have gone extremely well (or not so well). Working as a team means your children are supported equally on all sides at all times.
7. **THE PLEASURE OF BEING A PIANO PARENT...**
Learning to play music is a life-changing experience. And, as a parent, the process is a thrill to watch. Being a major part of this accomplishment is incredibly rewarding! The profound pleasure of being a “piano parent” far outweighs the required extra efforts; and this is, by far, the most important thing that piano teachers want parents to know about piano practice.



EXCERPT FROM *TEACH PIANO TODAY*

1. When choosing a location for your piano, select a space that is lived-in, welcoming, and well-lit. Keep it close to “the action” but not in the action. Your children will gravitate to the piano more often if it is in a central place in your home. Avoid bedrooms, basements and other “put away” places. If a student feels shut-off from the family while practicing, it will inevitably lead to reluctance to spend time on the piano.

While choosing an appropriate space, also consider the noise factor; not only from the piano, but also from your family’s day-to-day activities. Your children want to be close by, but not competing with noise from TV’s, dishwashers and washing machines.

2. Make the space warm and welcoming. Your children will be encouraged to spend upwards of 30 minutes every day in this space. Is it a happy place to be for this amount of time? Small adjustments to lighting and heating can make a world of difference. Seek out places with natural light and ensure it is a cheerful and welcoming space that will encourage your child to visit the piano often for their own enjoyment.

3. Ensure your children have all required materials at hand. Help your children put together a small basket or bin of everything they may need for home practice. Pens, pencils, highlighters, and post-it notes will give your children a sense of organization that will then spill over into their practice habits. Your children will also need adequate lighting to see their music, and a comfortable bench at the correct height to practice comfortably and correctly.

4. Make the “Practice Nest” a communal space. Children of any age appreciate company while they practice. Having a chair, couch, beanbag chair or pillows nearby where family members will be inclined to sit, listen and enjoy the music immediately sets the tone for a happy time on the piano. Encourage siblings to stop by and listen quietly, and allow yourself even just 10 minutes to sit and listen with undivided attention each time your children practice. A set-up that is conducive to including the family in home practice will encourage everyone involved to make piano practice an activity the entire family can be a part of.

Plus one more! Adding small surprises to your children's practice nest (fresh flowers, a hand-written note of encouragement, a small treat, a new sticker pad, a special pen etc.) helps to show that you value the time they are spending on the piano and that you appreciate their efforts and dedication. Preserving the "specialness" of their practice space encourages positive feelings towards their home music time.

HOME PRACTICE IS SO MUCH MORE THAN MINUTES SPENT

Cultivating good home practice habits is so much more than logging minutes spent on the bench. Long-lasting practice habits that result in long-term progress come from a commitment to making the piano a vital part of your child's day-to-day life... not as a requirement, but as a desire. One giant step towards this goal can be accomplished by making your piano a place he or she looks forward to visiting.

Is It Time To Fill The **Piano Practice Tank**?



Excerpt from Teach Piano Today

Your child has a **piano practice tank**. It's usually about 3/4 full; fun pieces, enjoyable lesson activities and a love for music keep your kiddies motoring. But occasionally that Piano Practice Tank dips below half... and the indicator light comes on telling you that a fill-up is in order. But how do you fill this Piano Practice Tank? How do you avoid finding your child stranded on the side of the piano bench with an empty tank and 4 flats?

The key is in having your child see that you truly value music lessons; that you understand the commitment it takes to learn an instrument and, most of all, that you are proud of his or her efforts. And while kids who are involved in sports get a lot of "proud parent moments" to boost them as Mom shrieks encouragement from the sidelines and Dad is ready with an enthusiastic pat on the back... piano kids don't get this as much. But let's change this!

- 1. Surprise with Piano Pancakes** – On a Saturday morning, surprise your child with Piano Pancakes topped with chocolate chip "quarter notes". For each pancake on the plate have your child perform a piece for your family while you all watch in your PJ's.
- 2. Balloon Surprise** – Fill your kitchen cupboard with balloons that will spill out as soon as it's opened. On each balloon, write something you love about your child's piano playing (i.e. "I love hearing your music when I'm making dinner" or "You play your piece with so much expression"). Ask your child to help you with dinner and wait for the cupboard to open. Read each balloon message aloud together.
- 3. Monday Morning Mirror Message** – Use a white board marker to leave a surprise message on the bathroom mirror for your child on a Monday morning before he or she wakes up. Write "It makes me so HAPPY to hear you play the piano!" or something to that effect.
- 4. Sneak a Practice** – Leave your child a note on his or her pillow on a weekend night that says "Tonight you get to stay up late! When everyone else is sleeping you and I are going to sneak downstairs so I can listen to you play the piano." Serve warm milk and cookies in the piano room and light it by candle light only. This will be a memory not soon forgotten.
- 5. Take it to the Highway** – Kids who are involved in sports get a lot of glory. Music kids.. not so much. Make your child smile by writing a message on the back window of your car that says "My Kid Rocks on the Piano! Honk if you love music!". Roll the windows down and let your child wave to the honking fans.
- 6. Build Excitement** – Before recitals or performances, build excitement with a countdown. Use a blackboard or white board (or a piece of paper on the fridge) that says "___ More Days Until Max's Piano Performance!" Showing you value involvement in performances ensures participation well into the teen years.
- 7. Surprise Sheet Music Shopping** – Pick your child up from school and head out on a surprise trip to your local music store, offering the chance to choose any music book or piece of sheet music. The key is in looking with your child... spend enjoyable time browsing the books and finding just the right thing to take home.
- 8. Exclaim with Pleasure** – You don't always need to be fancy. Sometimes a genuine, enthusiastic and unexpected "Holy smokes that was AMAZING!" mid-way through his or her practice is all it takes!
- 9. Buddy Practice!** – Piano practice can be lonely, but if there's a buddy on the bench it can be a lot of fun.

13. Host a Piano Picnic – Invite the entire family to a Piano Picnic Dinner. Spread out a blanket on the floor beside the piano. Serve cheese and grapes, yummy crackers, and tea and cookies. Have your child provide the dinnertime music in between bites. Drink your tea with your pinkies raised and speak in a very dignified manner (“Ohhhh... that piece was simply splendid my dahling... simply splendid I say.”).

14. Check In – When you’re on your way home, call your child from your car (using hands-free of course!) and make a special and heart-felt request for some driving music as you make your way home.

15. Post-Office Piano Package – Create a small package of treats and a note about how proud you are of your child’s piano accomplishments. Mail it to your child and allow it to be discovered in the mail box.

FULL TANKS = HAPPY PIANO KIDS

Do these take a little bit of effort? Yes. Does it take a whole lot of effort on the part of your child to master an instrument like the piano? Absolutely! By demonstrating just how much you care about their involvement in piano you lay a very strong foundation for years of musical enjoyment. Beyond that, you also help to strengthen self-esteem and self-image. So pick a “tank filler” and give it a try!



12 Reasons WHY Every Student Should Participate in Recitals!

excerpt from Teaching Piano Today

1. **Recitals provide a tangible goal to work towards.** In having a set date and a pre-planned performance selection, your child learns how to manage their practice time and what it feels like to polish and perfect a piece.
2. Recitals provide an opportunity to feel successful. Learning the piano requires many, many hours of solo practice. Performing **gives your child the recognition they deserve for their hard-work.**
3. Recitals provide an opportunity for you to show your child that you value their involvement in music. Setting aside time in your busy life to attend a recital supports your children and their peers and **shows your child that your family values music.**
4. Recitals provide a chance for your children (and you!) to reflect upon where they've "come from" when watching beginning students. Progress at the piano can sometimes feel slow, but watching younger students perform **reminds your children of the gains they have made and motivates them to continue to progress.**
5. Recitals provide a chance for your children (and you!) to see "where they'll go" when watching more advanced students. **There are few things more motivating to a piano student than watching their peers perform.** They get to hear pieces that they will enjoy playing in the future, see more advanced technique first-hand and experience the pride that comes from becoming proficient at the piano.
6. Recitals provide a chance for your extended family to be involved in your child's piano education. Athletes get all the glory... everyone comes to watch soccer games but no one really heads over to watch a piano practice session! Involving grandparents and aunts and uncles in the recital audience **gives your child an opportunity to share their hard work with the ones they love.**
7. Recitals provide a chance for your child to experience nervousness... and to realize that those feelings are okay. We like to protect our children from feeling uncomfortable, but in "real life" these feelings are part-and-parcel of being human. **Early experiences with successfully conquering nerves gives children confidence.**
8. Recitals give you the opportunity to **provide genuine and heart-felt praise.** Bring on the photos and videos and big hugs and flushed-face smiles. Clap enthusiastically. **Let your child know just how much you recognize their efforts** and watch their commitment to piano lessons soar.
9. Recitals provide a chance for your child to practice public speaking and to gain confidence in front of a group; two skills that will serve your child well in many other areas of his or her life. Speaking and performing in a safe environment means that **your child gains important experience in front of a crowd.** The earlier these experiences happen, the easier it becomes for your child as they enter adolescence and adulthood.
10. Recitals provide an opportunity for your child to get to know his or her peers who are also taking lessons. Making these connections helps to build community within a studio and **helps your**