

"Keys" to Success

At the Lesson

- At lessons, be a quiet observer. A child can only learn from one teacher at a time.
- Ask questions at the beginning or the end.
- For younger students, take notes on what they need to practice.
- Video lessons, or your child's new piece, as well as your child's home playing.
- Other children are welcome at lessons as long as they can occupy themselves quietly and not be distracting.
- Try to arrive early or stay late and sit in on another student's lesson, or part of one. It's amazing what your child will pick up, and they can also play duets together.

At Home

- Play the recordings of your child's piano music every day in the background. Get used to repetition. Children don't mind it – it's how they learn (unless others make negative comments). Make occasional positive comments such as "I hear the music getting louder right there."
- Figure out which time of day works best for you – before school, after, or in the evening – or 2 or 3 short practices. Make a schedule, chart, or reminder. Try calling it "playing" instead of "practicing". Or practice can fit in with doing homework, or you can say "After piano playing and homework, you may play or watch TV." Let your child have a say in what time you practice together. For older students, a contract or agreement with them can work well.
- For younger children, sit with them and help them practice, at least their newest pieces.
- Use games such as Go Fish, Dice, etc. Keep it positive and fun. Go to the piano yourself and play their pieces.
- Ask, don't tell: "What did Ms. Diane say you need to remember in part 2 of Lightly Row?" Don't give answers, but help them figure things out.
- Practice in small steps repeatedly, then put the steps together.
- Please do not begin working on a piece until it's assigned. There may be tricky skills to learn which will need specific instructions.

- Be specific with praise – instead of “that was good”, say “you used the correct fingers” or “I liked your smooth phrasing”.
- Ask your child to help *you* learn something. Make a mistake now and then, and have them help you correct it.
- Keep playing pieces previously learned (review pieces). Find fun ways to do this – duets, transposing, games, etc. One of the purposes of review pieces is to go back and learn a new technique with a familiar song.
- Stop the practice session if there is extreme frustration, attention span is waning, or child is becoming tired. Avoid power struggles. Better to return with joy tomorrow than to force a few extra minutes today.
- At practice, do the same things the teacher does at lessons. Techniques need to become natural and automatic.
- Let her make mistakes without comment. Musicians need to learn to play fluently through mistakes. If there is a recurring mistake, work on that section of the piece separately.
- Allow and encourage “noodling”, or improvisation. Your child will learn the sounds that the piano makes, might figure out a tune by ear, and may make up his own songs!
- Try to practice at least the new piece(s) or section(s) later the same day of the lesson.
- Keep the piano in tune, and seat and footstool at proper height.
- Try to attend all group activities and recitals, plus other community musical events. These are very motivational.
- Play other classical music in addition to your piano music. Classical music is not often heard in today’s culture. There are classical radio stations, internet stations, Pandora and Spotify channels, etc. as well as TV or Youtube videos.
- Have a home concert once a week for the “other” parent. Video and send to relatives.
- Please do not criticize, threaten, or punish children in relation to their music learning, or remind your child of the expense of lessons. Guilt does not produce motivation.
- Try to stay positive. If you feel stressed or your child begins losing interest, act quickly by asking your teacher for new ideas. Remember nothing works forever.