

Your Music Lessons....

Classic Kid Move: "Practicing" an Instrument

HEDGER HUMOR FOR MUSIC & ARTS



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Getting the most out of your music lessons..

You'll find a comprehensive list of resources and important information for students and parents so you can be prepared for every lesson, and for your musical journey.

Getting Ready..

Being Prepared to learn

Learning to play any instrument or learning to sing is pretty tricky! You must be prepared to put in lots of hard work if you want to get better. You'll improve much faster the more you try, even if it feels really tough to start with.

Your regular lesson is your chance to iron out any difficulties you've encountered whilst working on the things you've been tasked to do at home. Don't worry if you haven't quite got things right yet. Just remember, the more you try, the easier it will become, and the better you'll get at playing and reading the music, or controlling your voice.

Keep on trying!

Find a good time **every day** to try out the tasks you've been set. It could be just five minutes or even twenty five minutes, but it should be at least **something** every day if you can. It's better to practice little and often than a two minute panic practice just before your next lesson!

Top Tips for Parents.

Encourage your child to practise regularly by helping them find a good practice time. This could be early in the morning, whilst dinner is cooking or before bath time. But whatever time it is, make sure you're not trying to squeeze it in, don't rush and take your time. Try to keep to the schedule so wanting to play becomes a habit.

Sharing their musical experience is great too. Ask them to "be the teacher" and you can be the student so they can show you what they've been working on. Perhaps a "mini concert" or quick recital may encourage your child to keep on trying. Reward good practice with lots of praise and encouragement. Try keeping a "practice journal" and attach it to their notebook. An example of a practice journal is found at the end of this guide.

Adult Learners.

Our lives can get very busy and often your limited free time is "chill time"! Just remember that it takes time and effort to develop and fine tune your new skills, be patient with yourself and set small realist goals. But do make sure you schedule in some practice time. Shorter sessions immediately after your lesson are better than one brain numbing and frustrating long session the following week! Keep a note of things you need help with in your notebook so you can sort it out with your teacher at your next lesson.

What Do I Need To Bring To My Lesson?

1. A notebook!! Bring the same notebook every week. Your teacher will write down what you have covered, what tasks you need to work on, and useful information for you to think about whilst you are practicing. There is so much to recall – trust me, you won't remember it all without help! Plus, your teacher sees many students each week, so your notebook will help her to remember what you did too!
2. Your music! This could be your exam book, tutor or method book, or sheet music. There are lots of extra resources your teacher may use during your lesson, but it's important you have your own music so you know exactly what to work on each week and during your home practice.

What will happen in my Piano lesson?

Your music lessons will be fun, hopefully! You will likely spend time “on the bench” and sometimes “off the bench”. In other words, you'll be sat at the piano at times, and others, doing other activities away from the piano. There's lots of knowledge you need to gain, plus practical playing skills. You might play games in addition to playing the piano to help your learning.

You'll definitely spend time learning new pieces of music, plus lots of exercises to help develop hand coordination and flexibility.

If you're new to reading music, you'll discover it's not easy! It's like learning a foreign language! But don't worry, you'll soon start to get to grips with it the more you play. There is a lot of music theory to take in, but you'll go through this during your lessons.

What About Music Books?

It's important to have your own method book or book of pieces to bring to each lesson so you have something solid to work on that will help to develop your skills and knowledge. Which book really depends on your age, what stage and aims you have, but here is a list of some of my “Go To” piano books, all of which can be purchased from www.musicroom.com. Your teacher will provide supplementary material, pieces, games and theory during your lessons, but unfortunately they are not be available for you to take home. You'll need to purchase any exam material too.

Young players and new to piano

Piano Time Book One (OUP Oxford), Pauline Hall

Get Set Go Piano Tutor Book 1, (Collins Music) Heather Hammond and Karen Marshall

Get Set Piano Pieces Book 1 (Collins Music) Heather Hammond and Karen Marshall

Piano Star Five Finger Tunes, (ABRSM), David Blackwell

Piano Star Book 1 (ABRSM), David Blackwell

Should I take Piano Exams?

It's up to you! You don't have to do exams, but it's a good way to track your progress, and steadily increase your skill level as you move through the grades. You'll find some literature in The Studio about exams.

ABRSM Piano exams are available at all grades, from Prep Test to Grade 8. You'll need to purchase the correct exam syllabus. Your teacher will let you know what you need, and you should bring the books to every lesson, plus your notebook. You can find out more about piano exams <https://gb.abrsm.org/en/our-exams/piano-exams/>

When you and your teacher are ready, you will be entered into the exam. Your teacher will make sure you know what to expect by doing mock exams with you during your lessons.

The exam fee is payable to your teacher who will then arrange the exam and send the correct fee to ABRSM. The date of your exam is usually confirmed about four weeks in advance. There are various exam venues around the local area, usually in a church hall or community centre. Parents are not allowed in the exam room during the exam, and will be asked to wait in the waiting room. Your results are sent to your teacher a few weeks later, after they have been verified. However, Prep Test feedback is given on the same day.

When will my son/daughter be ready to take their exams?

This really depends on the progress they make. And that really depends on the effort they put into working on the tasks they are set during their lesson. A student who practices regularly is likely to be ready much sooner than a student who doesn't put in any practice time.

Singing Lessons and Vocal Coaching.

If you're new to singing, or have never had any vocal instruction before, then you'll need to start at the beginning. Just like learning to play an instrument, it's important to learn all of the important basic steps first. Without them, you run the risk of causing damage to your delicate vocal instrument.

When you have progressed, or perhaps you've been singing professionally for some time, then our sessions will become coaching sessions. You'll probably have a good repertoire of songs by this point you need to fine tune!

Being Prepared

Just like taking lessons for anything, you'll need a note book to write down everything you need to work on. You'll also need a device on which to record your voice exercises – a mobile phone or iPad, or similar device, is fine. Daily practice is essential. It could be five minutes, or twenty five minutes, but you must try to work on your voice exercises every day if you can.

It's a good idea to have some songs in mind you'd like to work on. Whilst your teacher can make lots of suggestions, every singer has their own taste in music, and their own style to develop. Think about what songs you'd like to sing before you arrive for your lesson.

If you are working on something specific, perhaps for an audition or exam, you'll need to bring the sheet music or lead sheet with chords on if you want your teacher to accompany you. Your teacher has lots of resources but may not have the backing track or sheet music for the song you have selected. It's important therefore to be prepared and bring your own music.

There are lots of karaoke backing tracks available on YouTube but it's great, if you will be singing to backing tracks, to bring your own to each session. Good backing tracks are available to purchase and download from various sources, but you can try <https://www.musicbackingtracks.co.uk/>

Online Sessions

If you have booked an online session, you'll need to log into Zoom. Your teacher will send you the link a few minutes before your session time.

Make sure you have any backing tracks ready to play. The tracks must be played by you at your location on a different device to what you are using for your online session to maintain good connectivity. You'll need to do your sound check before your session starts too. Headphones are a great idea to enhance the sound.

Singing Exams.

If you choose, you can take your graded singing exam, from Grade 1 – 8. Exams are available with LCM (London College of Music) and can be taken in Contemporary Vocals (pop music) and also Musical Theatre. You can find out more about these exams <https://lcme.uwl.ac.uk/exams/singing/popular-music-vocals>

When you and your teacher are ready, you will be entered into the exam. Your teacher will make sure you know what to expect by doing mock exams with you during your lessons.

The exam fee is payable to your teacher who will then arrange the exam and send the correct fee to ABRSM. The date of your exam is usually confirmed about four weeks in advance. Currently, the nearest exam centre is in Wolverhampton. Parents are not allowed in the exam room during the exam, and will be asked to wait in the waiting room. Your results are sent to your teacher a few weeks later, after they have been verified.

PIANO SKILLS CHALLENGE

Keep a note of what tasks you have been set each week, and what you need to remember for your next lesson.

Date:

Technical Skills (scales, exercises):

Music knowledge and theory (key signatures, note names, etc):

Pieces and Songs:

Notes:

Weekly Target (number of practice sessions, what to work on):