

7 DAY STARTER

PRACTICE GUIDE

YOUR FIRST WEEK PLAYING PIANO



MILWAUKEE MUSIC LESSONS

WELCOME TO PIANO

Learning piano doesn't start with full songs or fast fingers – it starts with small, steady wins. In the beginning, any victory is a good victory. Sitting down at the bench. Getting familiar with the keys. Playing simple patterns that feel comfortable under your hands. These little moments add up and build the habits that lead to long-term success. Every pianist grows at a different pace, and that's exactly how it should be. Your only job for now is to keep showing up. If you don't give up, you don't fail. Build the practice habit first, and we'll fine-tune everything else as we go.

What You'll Find In This Guide

- A seven day task list designed to get you into the habit of playing
- Simple warm-up exercises
- Daily skill focus
- Tiny wins to celebrate
- Instrument-specific tasks
- Video demonstrations

If You Need Help Buying An Instrument Or Accessories

You can view our special buying guide which we update on our website every year by clicking this link: [\[CLICK HERE\]](#)



DAY 1 – JUST SHOW UP

Goal – Build the habit by touching the instrument and creating a practice space.

What to Do Today:

1. Set up a practice spot.
2. Do 5 minutes of warm-ups.
3. Start developing some coordination
4. Celebrate the win.

Reading Music On Piano

Learning to read piano music is kind of like learning to read a new language. It looks confusing at first... but once you understand a few simple rules, everything starts to make sense. And when you pair that with the right fingerings, you'll play smoother, faster, and with way less frustration.

Let's keep this simple, friendly, and beginner-friendly. No overwhelm. Just quick wins.

DAY 1 – JUST SHOW UP

1. How Piano Notes Work

The piano is laid out in patterns. If you can spot the pattern, you can find any note.

Finding Notes on the Keyboard

Look for the **groups of black keys**:

- **Two black keys** → the white key just to the left is **C**
- **Three black keys** → the white key just to the left is **F**

That's it.

Every other note falls in between as you move alphabetically:

A B C D E F G, then it loops.

Middle C

Most beginners start with Middle C, the “home base” of piano.

It sits near the middle of your keyboard, just left of the brand logo on most pianos.

DAY 1 – JUST SHOW UP

2. How to Read Piano Notes on the Staff

The staff is just a map. Think of it like Google Maps for music.

Treble Clef (Right Hand)

This is where the higher notes live.

- Lines (bottom → top): E - G - B - D - F
- Phrase: "Every Good Boy Deserves Fun."
- Spaces: F - A - C - E
- Easy: it spells FACE.

Bass Clef (Left Hand)

This is where the lower notes live.

- Lines: G - B - D - F - A
- Phrase: "Good Boys Deserve Fun Always."
- Spaces: A - C - E - G
- Phrase: "All Cows Eat Grass."

Connecting the Clefs

Right in the middle is—you guessed it—Middle C, sitting on its own little line between both clefs.

DAY 1 – JUST SHOW UP

3. Finger Numbers (This Part Is Really Important)

Piano players don't use "pointer finger" or "ring finger."

We use numbers:

1 = Thumb

2 = Index

3 = Middle

4 = Ring

5 = Pinky

This applies to **both hands**.

The goal is simple:

Use the finger that gives you the easiest and smoothest motion.

Good fingering helps you:

- Play cleaner
- Avoid hand tension
- Learn songs faster
- Keep your hands in the right place without guessing

DAY 1 – JUST SHOW UP

4. The First Hand Position to Learn: C Position

This is the “starter” hand position for most beginners.

Right Hand

- Thumb (1): C
- 2: D
- 3: E
- 4: F
- Pinky (5): G

Left Hand

- Pinky (5): C
- 4: D
- 3: E
- 2: F
- Thumb (1): G

Your hands mirror each other.

This makes reading music way easier when you’re just starting out.

Listen to an example of this finger exercise: [\[Click Here\]](#)

The image shows a musical exercise in 4/4 time, marked 'pno.' (piano). It consists of three systems of two staves each (treble and bass clef). The first system shows a sequence of notes: Treble clef (C4, D4, E4, F4, G4) and Bass clef (G3, F3, E3, D3, C3). The second system shows: Treble clef (A4, B4, C5, B4, A4) and Bass clef (B2, A2, G2, F2, E2). The third system shows: Treble clef (D5, C5, B4, A4, G4) and Bass clef (D2, C2, B1, A1, G1). Fingerings are indicated by numbers 1-5 above or below the notes.

DAY 2 – BUILD THE ROUTINE

Goal – Choose a daily practice time and start a streak.

What to Do Today:

1. Pick a consistent time to practice
2. Do 3 minutes of coordination exercises
3. Play the first line of 'Ode to Joy'

Your First Song – 'Ode To Joy'

Instructions: This song is nice and simply rhythmically. It also does a great job of challenging your fingers without overly complicated patterns.

Pay close attention to the numbers so you know what fingers to use.

Try playing with the attached demonstration to see if you can play in time with the song: [\[Click Here\]](#)

The image shows the musical notation for the first line of 'Ode to Joy' in 4/4 time. The notation is presented in two systems, each with a treble clef staff and a bass clef staff. The melody is written in the treble clef, and the piano accompaniment is in the bass clef. The melody consists of quarter notes with the following notes and fingerings: 1 E, E, F, G, 2 G, F, E, D, 3 C, C, D, E, 4 E, D, D. The piano accompaniment consists of quarter notes in the bass clef, with the notes: E, E, F, G, G, F, E, D, C, C, D, E, D, C, C. The piano part is marked 'pno.' on the left side.

DAY 3 – FOCUS BEATS LENGTH

Goal – Ten to twelve minutes of focused practice on a small section of song.

What to Do Today:

1. Do 3 minutes of coordination exercises
2. Pick 1-2 measures and focus on playing them really well.

Why Focus Is Better

Playing too much of a song at once can actually slow you down. Repetition is helpful, but short bursts on small sections will get you farther, faster, and with way less effort.

The goal here is simple: see how well you can play just 1-2 measures of a song. When you zoom in like this, your hands learn the movements faster, and later on the full song becomes easier because you already have one section locked in so solidly that it barely needs practice.

Tip: A great way to memorize a passage is to slowly cross out notes as you learn them. For example, if a section has eight notes, play all eight a few times. Then choose one note to memorize, cross it out on your music, and play the passage again. Keep crossing out notes one at a time until the entire section is memorized.

DAY 4 – HEAR IT FIRST

Goal – Try to sing your song. Either out loud or in your head.

What to Do Today:

1. Do 3 minutes of coordination exercises
2. Before practicing your song, you should know what it sounds like before you play it.

Why This Is Important

This idea comes from something called ear training. High-level musicians can often hear what something sounds like before they even play it – including songs, licks, or patterns they come up with on the spot.

It works the same way we read. When you look at a sentence, you first hear the words in your head. Then you say them out loud. Music should work the same way.

But a lot of people skip that step because their instrument “does the talking” for them. They rely only on muscle memory and hope their hands will figure it out.

Just like phonics, ear training is a skill you have to spend time developing. If you avoid it, you’ll eventually hit a wall in your playing and either get stuck or have to go back later and rebuild your ear from the ground up.

DAY 5 — THE PRACTICE PYRAMID

Goal – Build a balanced routine that is both fun and structured.

What to Do Today:

1. Do 3 minutes of coordination exercises
2. Before refining your song some more, spend five minutes playing something you already enjoy or experiment and explore for fun!

Why This Is Important

The goal of practice is to push your limits, but that doesn't mean it has to be painful or overwhelming.

One way to keep practice fun is to dedicate part of your session to something familiar – a comfort song, a favorite riff, or even some creative writing time.

Try structuring your session into three parts:

- **Warmups**
- **Work Time**
- **Play Time**

You can do them in any order you like, as long as you stay structured and don't let "play time" take over the whole session.

Tip: Creativity is a huge part of becoming a musician. Just like teachers ask students to "put it in your own words," improvisation does the same thing for music. It reveals what you truly know and helps your brain build stronger connections as you explore new ideas.

DAY 6 — RECORD YOURSELF

Goal – Listen back to yourself in an unbiased way.

What to Do Today:

1. Do 3 minutes of coordination exercises
2. Take out your phone or computer and record a 10–30 second segment of you playing.

Why Recording Yourself Is Important

Just like many people don't like looking at pictures of themselves, a lot of musicians can't stand hearing themselves play. The version of ourselves we think we sound like rarely matches what the recording shows.

But that doesn't have to be a bad thing. Being able to look at yourself honestly is an important part of growing at anything.

For others, the opposite is true — they're overly critical and need to give themselves permission to say, "Hey, that sounded better than I expected."

Recording a short clip of your playing helps with both. It gives you a chance to evaluate yourself clearly while also reminding you not to take things too seriously.

Tip: When you're done reviewing your recording, don't delete it. Add a quick date or timestamp and save it. Weeks or months from now, you'll be able to look back and see real, undeniable progress.

DAY 7 — CELEBRATE + STRETCH

Goal - Choose next week's goal + one dream goal.

What to Do Today:

1. Do 3 minutes of coordination exercises
2. Play your cleanest section on your instrument and celebrate the win.
3. Set a goal for next week as well as a big 6-12 month goal.

Why Setting Long-Term Goals Are Important

"Shoot for the stars and you'll land on the moon." Having a big long-term goal gives you focus and clarity on the days when practice feels tough. It's just like driving a car or riding a bike — you don't stare right in front of the tire. You look further down the road so you can move in a straighter, more stable line.

Tip: Don't be afraid to set a wild goal. We call this a BHAG — a Big Hairy Audacious Goal. Having a BHAG doesn't guarantee you'll hit it, but too many people set tiny goals just to avoid failing.

It's much better to fall a little short on a big, exciting goal than to set the bar low and hit something you knew you couldn't fail.

BONUS SONGS AND EXERCISES

Ode To Joy (Full)

Listen to a demonstration of this exercise: [\[Click Here\]](#)

pno.

1 E E F G 2 G F E D 3 C C D E 4 E D D

5 E E F G 6 G F E D 7 C C D E 8 D C C

9 D D E C 10 D F E C 11 D F E D 12 C D G

13 E E F G 14 G F E D 15 C C D E 16 D C C

BONUS SONGS AND EXERCISES

Finger Exercises #2

Listen to a demonstration of this exercise: [\[Click Here\]](#)

pno.

1 3 2 4 2 3 5 3 4 3 2 3 1

4 5 6

5 3 4 2 3 1 3 2 4 3 5

7 1 3 2 4 8 3 5 3 4 9 2 3 1

5 3 4 2 3 1 3 2 4 3 5