

Modern Piano Foundations



The Complete Beginner Program

by Jered McKenna

This is a sample PDF version of the full program.

To buy the full book, visit
www.jeredmckenna.com

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Important Notes About This Book

This book is best used when the exercises can be observed and heard by the student.

While all the needed information is taught on these pages, the student will benefit most from experiencing the music through video or real life demonstrations.

If no teacher is available, each exercise can be found at www.jeredmckenna.com

You can access the video course that accompanies this book by using the guest password

(purchase copy to get password)

at the website

<https://www.jeredmckenna.com/modern-piano-foundations-full>

Read and do everything you can.

Try your best to follow all the instructions and pay careful, close attention to the details.

Observing a skilled teacher (or watching the videos on www.jeredmckenna.com) are crucial in your musical journey.

We don't hand a baby a book and say, "Now go learn how to speak English!"

We speak and demonstrate first. After the physical act of speaking is firmly established, we introduce the symbols and theory behind it.

Do not get frustrated with the symbols and math. Imitate, like a child, and enjoy the process of learning as a joy in and of itself.

What is the goal of this book?

The goal of **Modern Piano Foundations: The Complete Beginner Program** is to equip the new piano student with the ability to read music and play in modern and classical styles.

Specifically, completion of this program means the student can successfully play Bach's "Prelude in C Major" and Beethoven's "Für Elise", along with the famous Christmas carols "Away in a Manger" and "Silent Night".

Along the way, the student will be exposed to modern playing styles, sounds, and percussive, rhythmic keyboard techniques.

Watching and imitating a master demonstrating each example is a crucial part of success.

For examples, find the Modern Piano Foundations course at

www.jeredmckenna.com

and use password

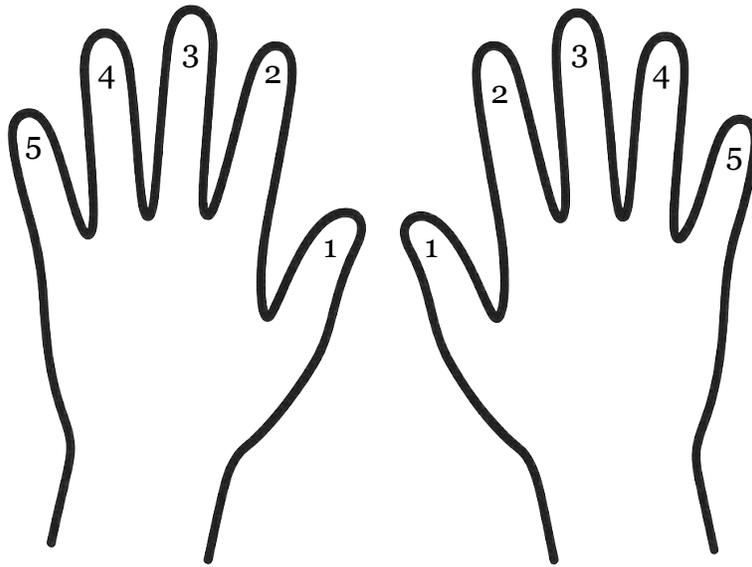
(purchase copy to get password)

to access.

How To Read Music

Wiggle each finger and say its
number out loud.

Do this for both hands.

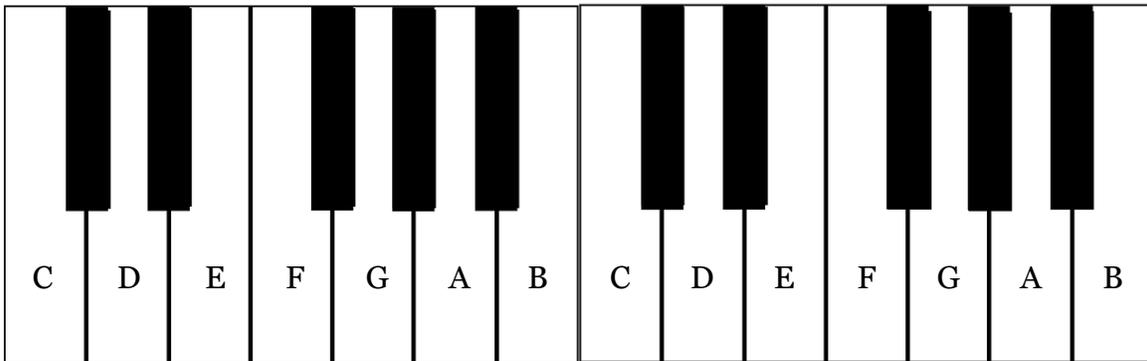


Use your favorite finger.

Find and **play these notes while saying or singing the note name out loud.**

Do it once going up (left to right), looking up and down at this page and your hands on the piano as needed.

Do it once going down the notes (right to left).



Fun Tip: looking only at the picture on this page, use your fingers to feel the group of 3 black notes, and the group of 2 black notes, so you can "blindly" find F and C all around the piano.

Try finding C and F with your eyes closed.

Use your right hand fingers

1, 2, 3, 4, 5

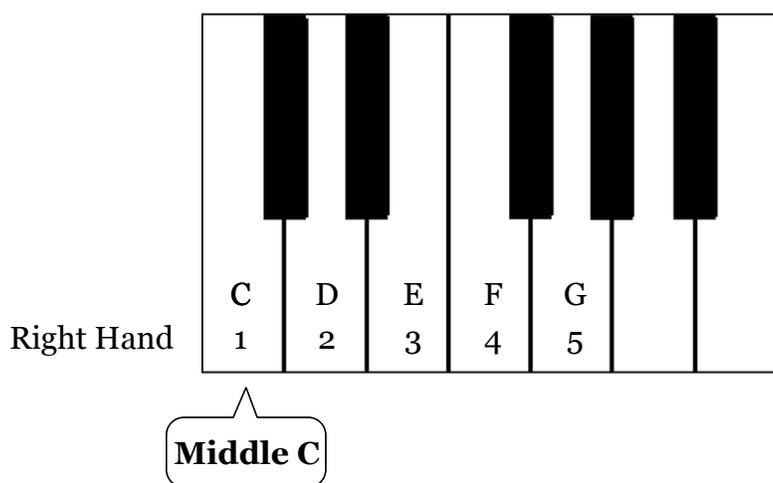
to play and say

C, D, E, F, G

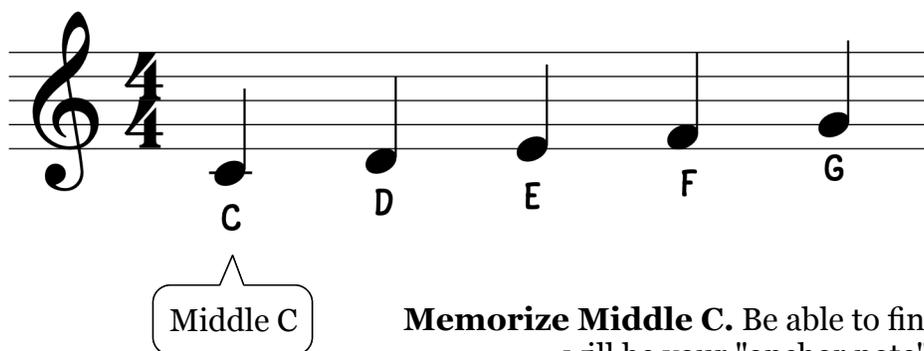
starting on the C in the middle of the piano, right in front of you.

Do it while looking only at this page.

Do it while looking only at your hand.



You just played these notes below. Instead of using a picture of the piano keys, we will use this. It's called the "staff".



Memorize Middle C. Be able to find it easily. It will be your "anchor note".

Again, it's the C that is in the middle of the piano, in front of you.

Just like before, use your right hand fingers to play the notes below.

Play and say the notes while looking directly at each note you are playing on this page only.

Now do it backwards.

Now do it forwards and backwards while looking at your hand.

Right Hand

Middle C

A musical staff in 4/4 time with a treble clef. It contains five quarter notes: C (first line), D (second line), E (third line), F (fourth line), and G (fifth line). Below each note is its letter name and a finger number: C (1), D (2), E (3), F (4), and G (5). A callout box labeled "Middle C" points to the first note.

Like you did above, use your right hand fingers to play the notes below.

Play and say the notes while looking directly at each note you are playing on this page only.

Now do it backwards.

Middle C

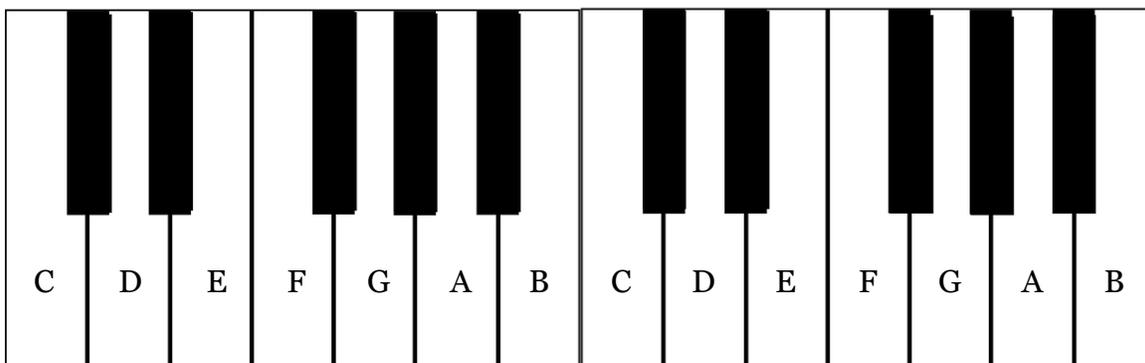
Skip!

Same note!

A musical staff in 4/4 time with a treble clef. It contains eight quarter notes: C (1), D (2), E (3), D (2), F (4), G (5), G (5), and C (1). Below each note is its letter name and a finger number. Callout boxes are present: "Middle C" points to the first note, "Skip!" points to the fourth note (D), and "Same note!" points to the seventh note (G).

We've been using our **RIGHT HAND** thumb (1) to play this note.

We called it
"Middle C"



Now, put your **LEFT HAND** thumb (1) on the C below Middle C.

We'll call this one

"Bass C"

Reading Music

With your thumb now on "Bass C", use your left hand fingers

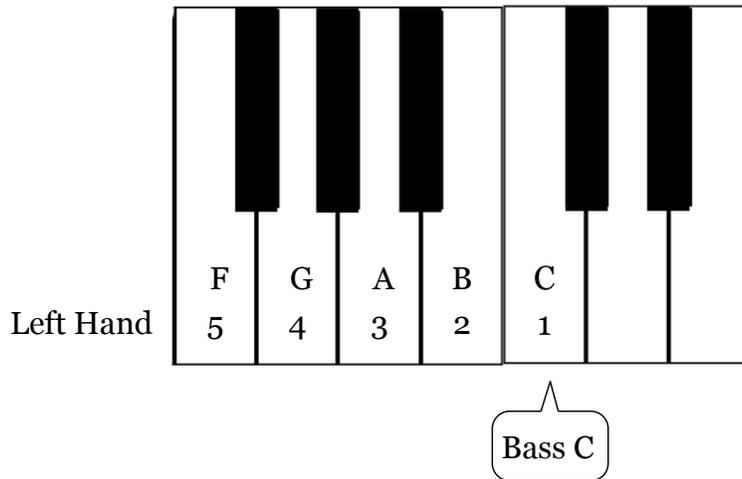
5, 4, 3, 2, 1

to play and say

F, G, A, B, C

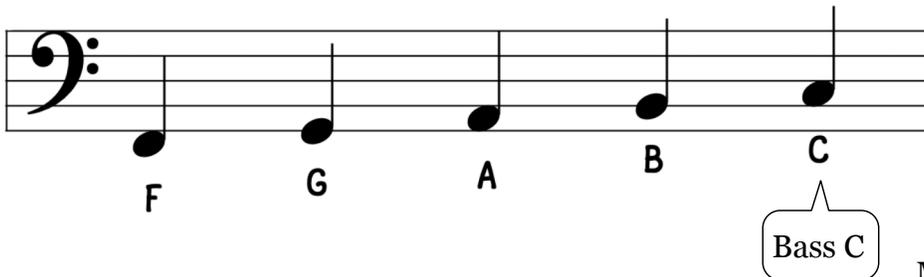
Do it while looking only at this page.

Do it while looking only at your hand.



You just played these notes on the piano.

This is the left hand's "Staff" that we will use to read notes from now.



Memorize Bass C. Be able to find it easily. It will be another "anchor note".

Again, it's the C that is **BELOW** middle C, that you learned before.

Reading Music

Just like before, use your left hand fingers to play the notes below.

Play and say the notes while looking directly at each note you are playing on this page only.

Now do it backwards.

Now do it forwards and backwards while looking at your hand.



Left Hand

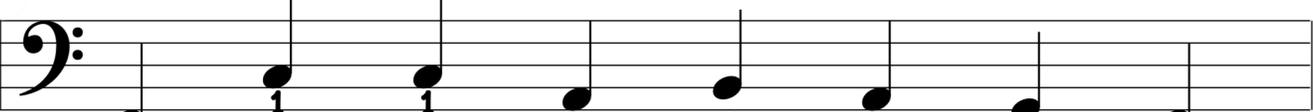
F 5 G 4 A 3 B 2 C 1

Detailed description: A musical staff in bass clef showing five notes: F, G, A, B, and C. Each note is a quarter note. Below each note is a number indicating the finger to use: 5 for F, 4 for G, 3 for A, 2 for B, and 1 for C.

Like you did above, use your left hand fingers to play the notes below.

Play and say the notes while looking directly at each note you are playing on this page only.

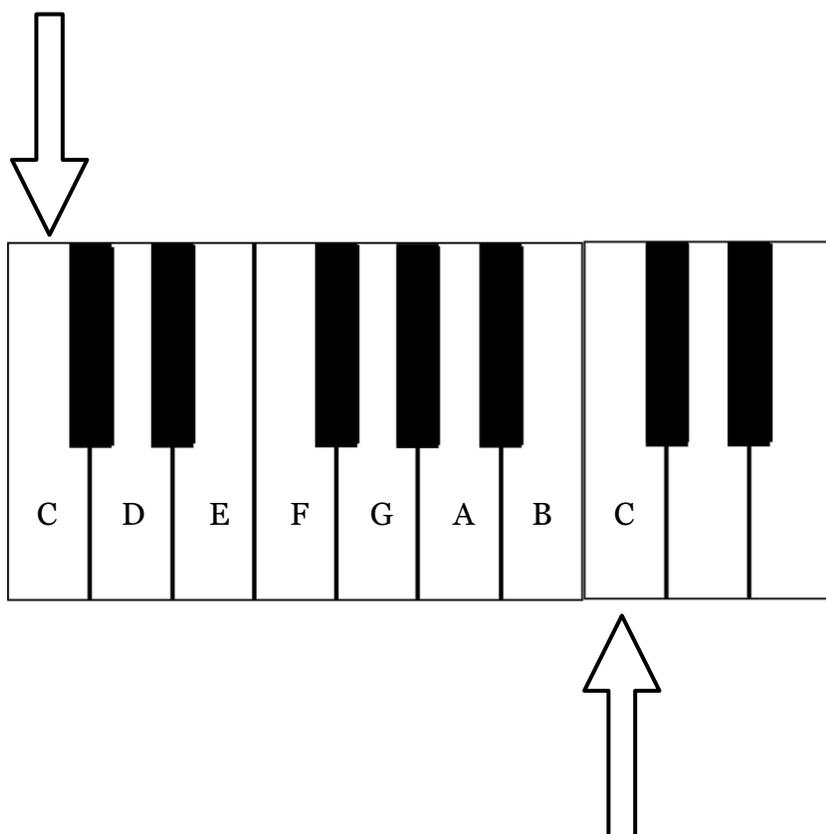
Now do it backwards.



F 5 C 1 A 3 B 2 G 3 4 5

Detailed description: A musical staff in bass clef showing seven notes: F, C, A, B, G, and two more notes. The notes are: F (finger 5), C (finger 1), A (finger 3), B (finger 2), G (finger 3), and two more notes (finger 4 and finger 5). The notes are quarter notes.

We've been using our **RIGHT HAND** thumb (1) to play Middle C.



Now, put your **RIGHT HAND** pinky (5) on the C ABOVE Middle C.

We'll call this one

"High C"

With your RIGHT HAND pinky (5) on "High C":
play and say the notes below while looking directly at the note
you are playing on the page only.

Do it again, but backwards.

The image shows a musical exercise on a two-staff system. The top staff is a treble clef staff with a key signature of one flat (B-flat). The notes and fingerings are: High C (finger 5), B (finger 4), A (finger 3), High C (finger 5), G (finger 2), A (finger 2), A (finger 3), and F (finger 1). The bottom staff is a bass clef staff, which is empty. Two callout boxes labeled "High C" point to the first and fourth notes.

Notice the left hand staff.
It's empty! That means
your left hand has no notes
to play right now.

Memorize High C. Be able to find it easily. It will be another "anchor note".

Again, it's the C that is **ABOVE** middle C, that you learned before.

And now, **a challenge!**

Using your **RIGHT HAND**,

put your **thumb on Middle C**, then

play the notes below using the correct fingers

and saying the note names as you play.

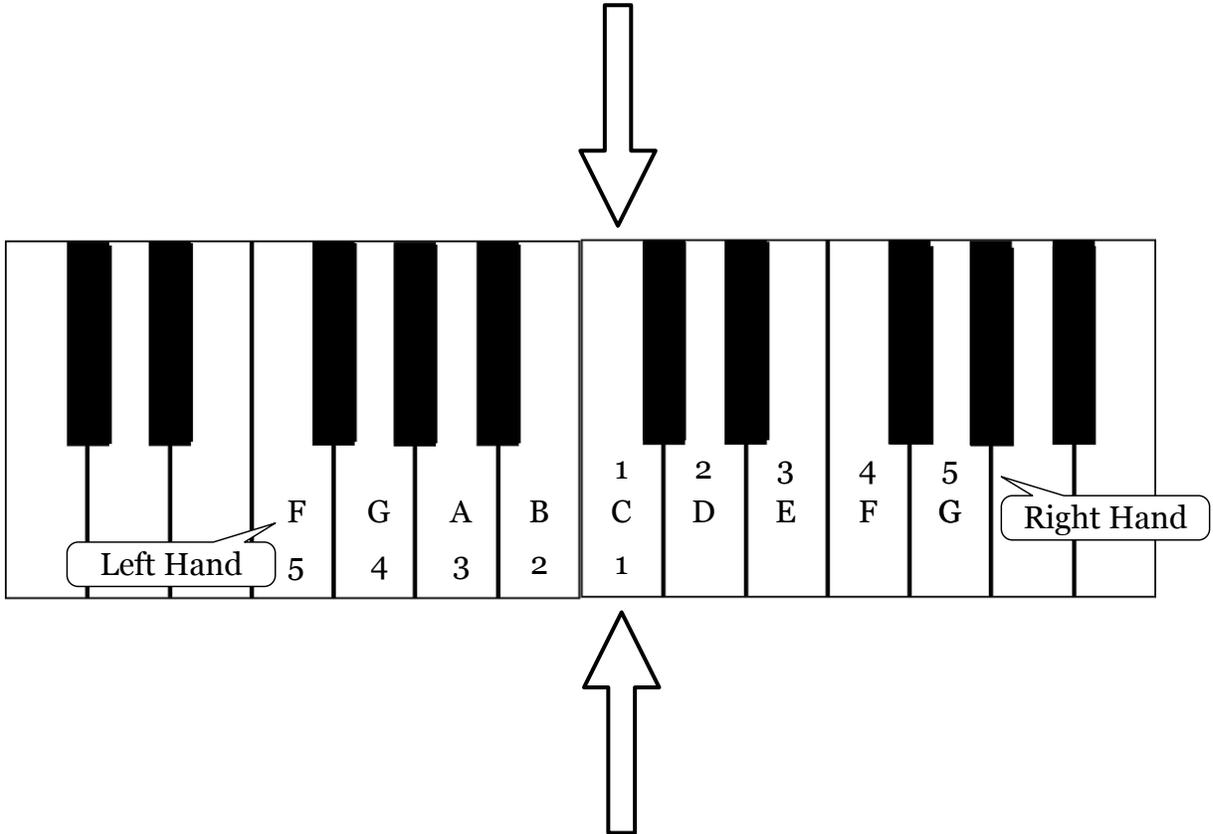
Let your hand/wrist move freely from side to side as needed.

Your fingers don't need stay in the same position the whole time.

The image shows a musical staff with a treble clef. The notes and their fingerings are: C (1), C (5), B (4), G (2), E (1), D (2), F (4), E (3). Callouts include 'Big jump!' for the first C, 'Skip!' for the G, 'Skip!' for the E, and '2 finger crosses over 1 finger!' for the D. A small square icon is at the end of the staff.

Do not go on until you can play this very well.

Put your **RIGHT HAND** thumb (1) on Middle C.



Also, put your **LEFT HAND** thumb (1) on Middle C.

With both hands now hovering over their correct notes,
play and say the notes while **looking directly at each note** (on the staff,
here on the page) as you play it.

Use the previous page as a "cheat sheet" if you need to.

Then, while looking at the notes here on the page, play and say the notes
again but backwards.

After that, play and say the notes while looking at your hands on the piano.

Then, do it backwards.

The image shows a musical exercise on a grand staff. The bass clef (left) contains five notes: F (finger 5), C (finger 4), G (finger 3), D (finger 2), and E (finger 1). The treble clef (right) contains five notes: C (finger 1), D (finger 2), E (finger 3), F (finger 4), and G (finger 5). A repeat sign is at the end of the treble staff.

With both your **LEFT HAND and RIGHT HAND thumbs** sharing Middle C, play these two challenges with the correct fingers while saying the note names.

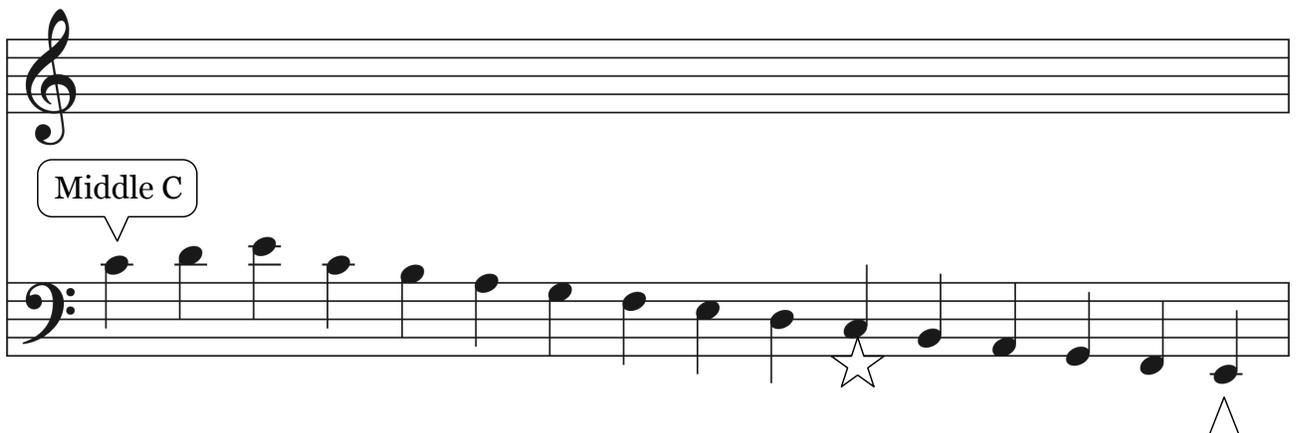
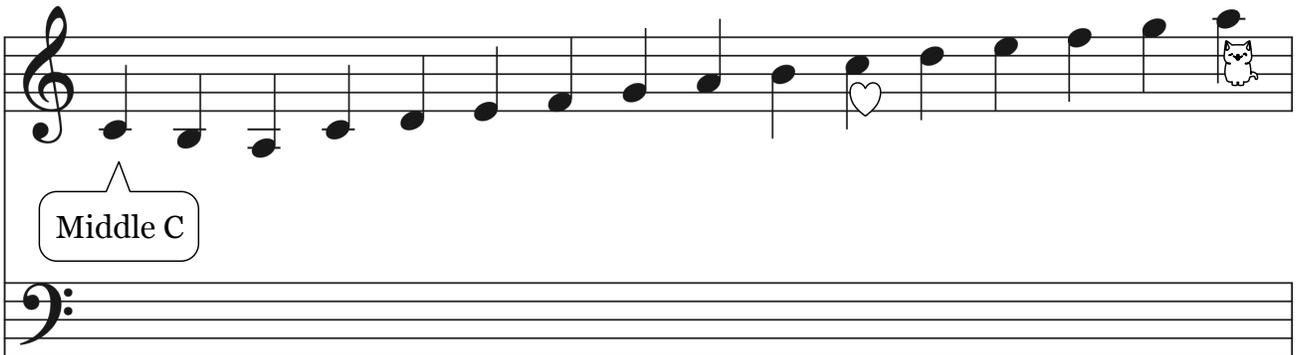
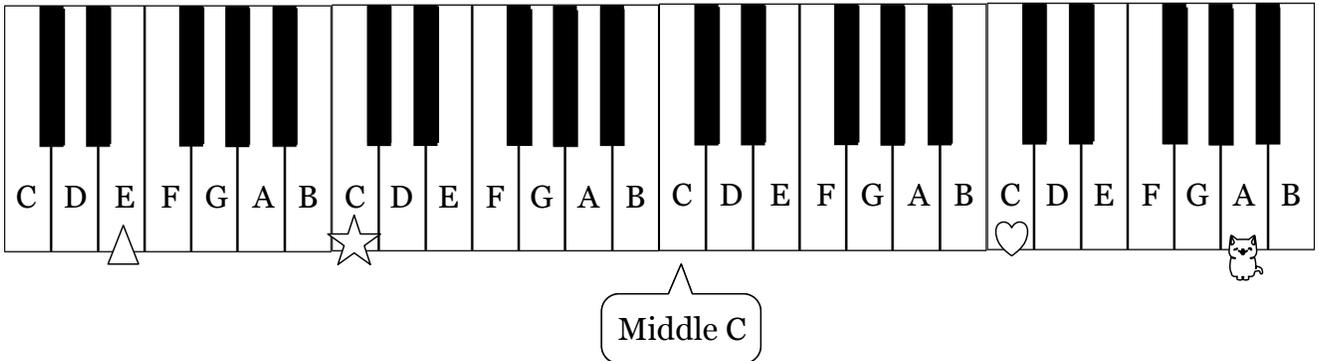
5 3 3 4 5 4 2 3 1
F B B D G F E D C B

1 2 3 4 5 4 5 3 2 1
C B B D E F G E D C

This is the **ultimate note challenge!**

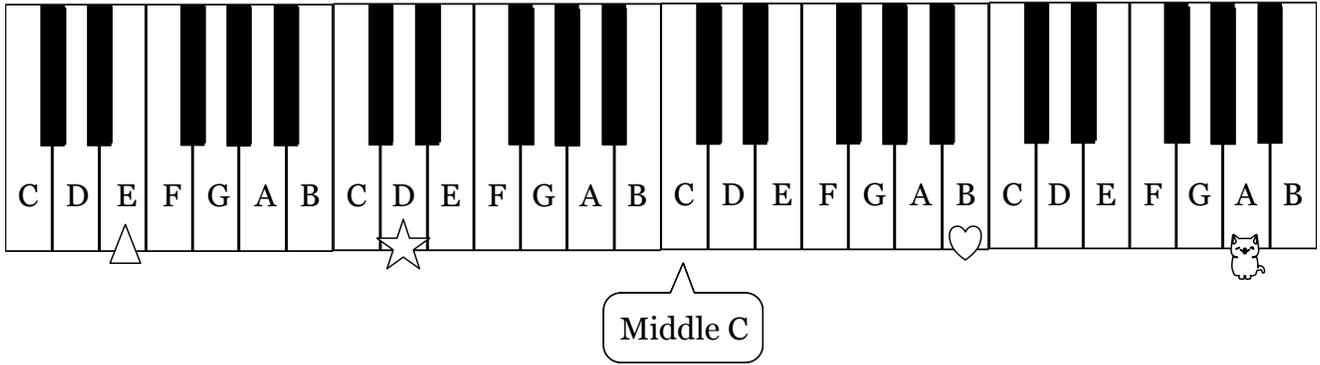
Using the picture of the keyboard as a cheat sheet,
play and say all the notes on the staff below. Write them in if you'd like.

Use "Middle C", the triangle, star, heart, and cat to help you find the notes.



Final **note challenge!**

Play and say the note names. Again, use the picture of the keyboard as a cheat sheet.

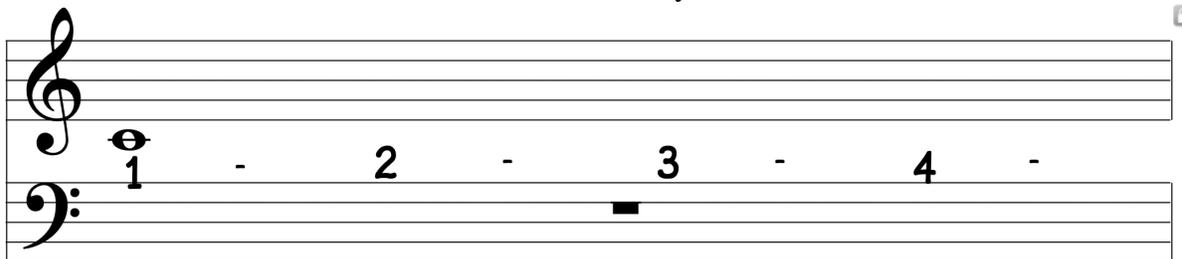


Musical notation on a grand staff. The bass clef contains a sequence of notes: C (with a triangle below), D, E (with a star below), F, G, A, B. The treble clef contains a sequence of notes: C (with a speech bubble labeled "Middle C" pointing to it), D, E (with a speech bubble labeled "Middle C" pointing to it), F (with a heart below), G, A, B (with a cat below). A callout box at the bottom points to the bass clef notes and contains the text: "Notice that you are skipping the F, and all the space notes!"

Reading Music

Count, slow and steady, to 4. Play Middle C when you count "1", and hold it for all 4 beats. This is called a "**whole note**".

Watch the numbers as you count.

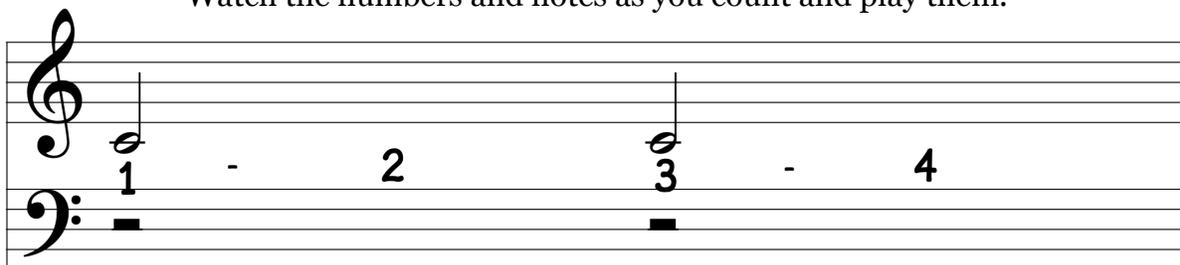


A musical staff with a treble clef and a bass clef. The treble clef staff has a whole note on the middle line (Middle C). The bass clef staff has a whole rest. Below the staffs, the numbers 1, 2, 3, and 4 are written with hyphens between them, indicating a four-beat count.

The left hand shows a "**whole rest**". A "rest" means "don't play anything for those beats".

Count, slow and steady, to 4 again. This time, play and hold a Middle C on "1-2" and "3-4".

Watch the numbers and notes as you count and play them.



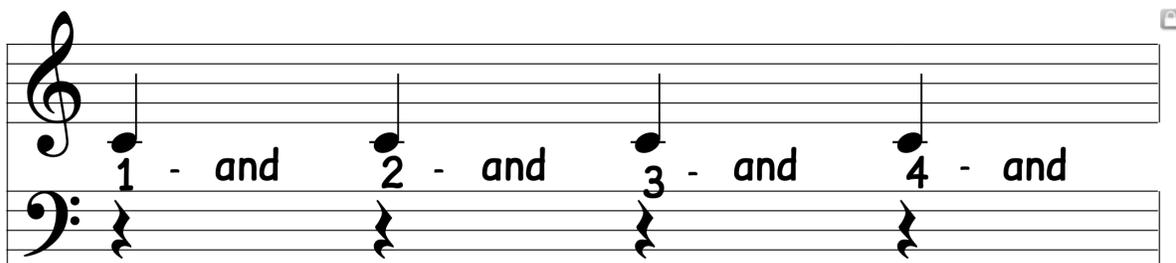
A musical staff with a treble clef and a bass clef. The treble clef staff has two half notes on the middle line (Middle C), one on beat 1 and one on beat 3. The bass clef staff has two half rests, one on beat 1 and one on beat 3. Below the staffs, the numbers 1, 2, 3, and 4 are written with hyphens between them, indicating a four-beat count.

These are called "**half notes**", and the left hand shows "**half rests**".

Count, slow and steady, to 4 again. This time, say an "and" in between each number.

Play Middle C on beats 1, 2, 3, and 4 this time.

Watch the numbers and notes as you count and play them.



A musical staff with a treble clef and a bass clef. The treble clef staff has four quarter notes on the middle line (Middle C), one on each beat. The bass clef staff has four quarter rests, one on each beat. Below the staffs, the numbers 1, 2, 3, and 4 are written with "and" between them, indicating a four-beat count.

These are called "**quarter notes**". The left hand shows 4 "**quarter rests**".

Count, slow and steady, to 4 again. Keep saying the "and" in between the numbers.

This time, play Middle C on all of it: "1 and 2 and 3 and 4 and".

Watch the numbers and notes as you count and play them.

These are called "**eighth notes**", and the left hand shows 8 "**eighth rests**".

Again, count to 4 slow and steady. As you count,

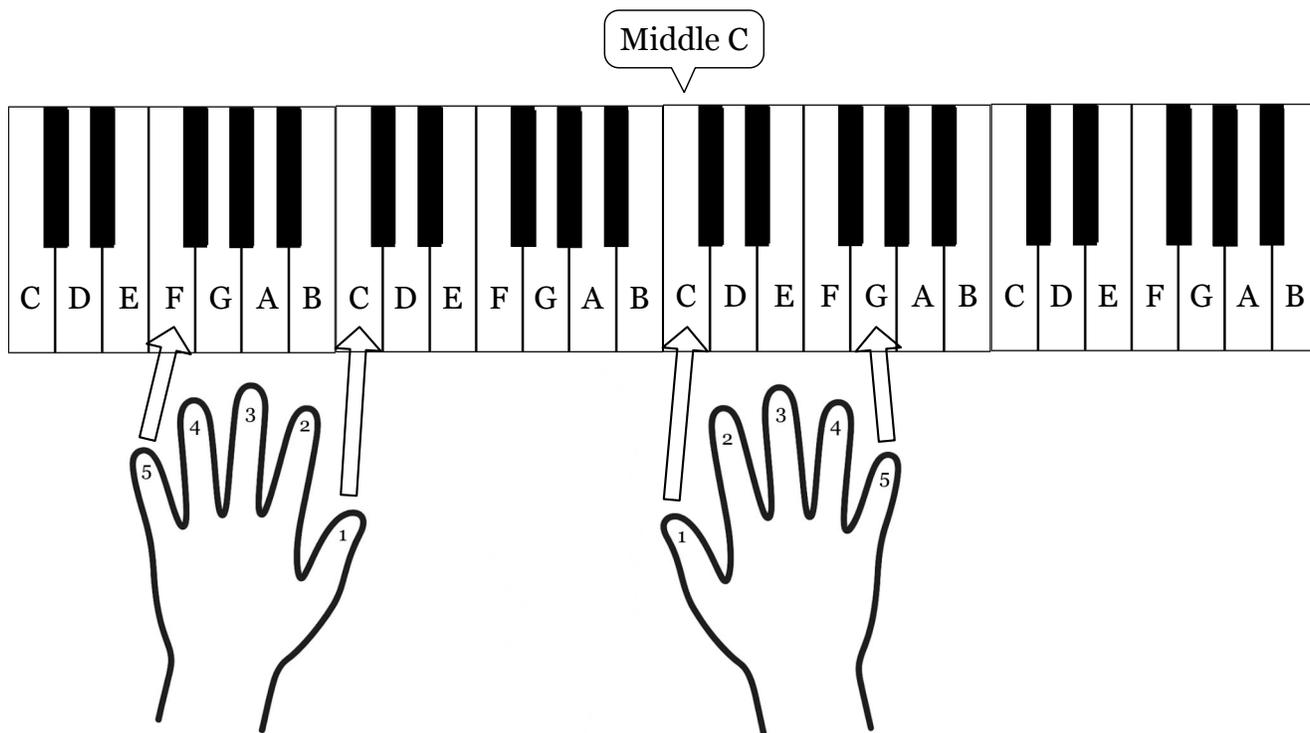
play Middle C only where you see it above the those note's numbers and "ands"

Notice how this "dotted quarter note" takes up the same amount of beats as three "eighth notes".

This "rhythm" shows up soon in exercise 2.

Getting ready to play

Exercise 1



Put your thumbs and pinkys over the correct notes.

Your hands will not move from this position for this exercise.

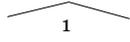
Pay attention to the finger numbers and note names as you learn and play.

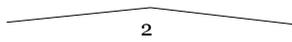
Exercises

Exercise 1

Before you play, ask your teacher to demonstrate. Find example videos at www.jeredmckenna.com. Watching and imitating is a **VITAL** part of this training.

The musical score for Exercise 1 is written in 4/4 time. It consists of two staves: a treble staff and a bass staff. The treble staff begins with a treble clef and a 4/4 time signature. The first measure contains a quarter note C (finger 1), a quarter note G (finger 5), an eighth note E (finger 3), and an eighth note D (finger 2). The second measure contains a quarter note F (finger 4) and a half note. The third measure contains a quarter note and a half note. The fourth measure contains a quarter note and a half note. A bracket labeled "1" spans the first two notes of the first measure. Brackets labeled "2" and "3" span the eighth notes of the first measure. A callout box points to the final measure, which contains a whole rest, labeled "1 beat of nothing ('rest')". The bass staff begins with a bass clef and a 4/4 time signature. The first measure contains a whole note C (finger 1). The second measure contains a whole note F (finger 5). The third measure contains a whole note A (finger 3). The fourth measure contains a whole note G (finger 4). A large number "1" is placed to the left of the first measure of the treble staff.


Practice bracket "1" until it is easy


Practice bracket "2" until it is easy, etc.

Repeating small sections and building is very important.

Exercises

Exercise 2

Remember how to play this rhythm from the "eighth notes" page.

Remember how to play this rhythm from the "eighth notes" page.

This "eighth note" is silent because it is "tied" to the half note before it.

2

1

1-and-2 and 3 4

1 - 2 - 3 and 4

Remember to **only try to learn very small chunks at a time** and build. For example, repeat the first box (measure) many times until it is easy. **THEN** add the next box (measure).

Exercises

Adding pedal to

Exercise 1

The image shows a musical score for Exercise 1 in 4/4 time. The right hand (treble clef) plays a sequence of notes: C4 (finger 1), E4 (finger 5), G4 (finger 3), F4 (finger 2), A4 (finger 4), and B4 (finger 4). The left hand (bass clef) plays a sequence of notes: C3 (finger 1), E3 (finger 5), G3 (finger 3), and F3 (finger 4). Below the bass clef staff, a diagram illustrates the pedal technique. It shows a horizontal line representing the pedal. A small upward-pointing triangle indicates the pedal being lifted. A small downward-pointing triangle indicates the pedal being pressed down. The sequence of these triangles corresponds to the notes in the left hand: up for C3, down for E3, up for G3, and down for F3. A large upward-pointing arrow is positioned below the diagram, pointing towards the text below.

Lift the pedal up just as you play the note, then press it again to "catch" the notes quickly.

This line shows us how to use the pedal.

Hold the "sustain" pedal down with your foot.

Right **after** you play the left hand note...

your foot should pop up!

...and then fall down again to press the pedal,

like it got pricked by a needle!

It should go like this: (VERY quickly)

note-up-down.

Exercises

Let's make sure we understand how to use the pedal properly.

First, press **DOWN** the pedal with your foot.

Then, play the left hand note.

Then, **AFTER** that note is played, lift the pedal foot **up** off the pedal.

Then, while your left hand finger is still playing the note...

...let your foot **FALL** back down and "catch" the note.

To practice this:

Hold the pedal down.

Play a single note with your left hand.

Just **AFTER** you play that note...

...**lift UP** your foot and **let it fall** back down.

Then, **remove your finger** from the piano note and hear it ring out.

Once you have mastered using the pedal, apply it to **Exercise 1** until you are very happy with it.

Looping

Once you are able to play through the exercise without major pauses, start playing it again without skipping a beat. Loop it!

Pretend the exercise is a little song that just keeps going on and on.

"Loop" the exercise 2, 3, or 4 times and see how many times you can repeat it without making a mistake.

When you are ready to finish your looping, simply play Bass C and Middle C at the same time to make a nice finish.

Try it with exercise 1 now.

The image shows musical notation for Exercise 1 in 4/4 time. It consists of two staves: a treble staff and a bass staff. The treble staff begins with a treble clef and a 4/4 time signature. The melody starts on a quarter note G4 (fingered 1), followed by a quarter note A4 (fingered 5), an eighth note B4 (fingered 3), and an eighth note C5 (fingered 2). The second measure contains a quarter note D5 (fingered 4) and a half note E5. The third measure contains a quarter note D5 and a quarter note C5. The fourth measure contains a quarter note B4 and a quarter note A4. The piece concludes with a double bar line. The bass staff begins with a bass clef and a 4/4 time signature. It contains four half notes: C3 (fingered 1), G2 (fingered 5), E2 (fingered 3), and C3 (fingered 4). Below the bass staff, a horizontal line with four upward-pointing triangles indicates the timing of the notes: the first triangle is under the first measure, and the other three are under the second, third, and fourth measures.

In the back of this book, there is a "**Progress Checklist**".

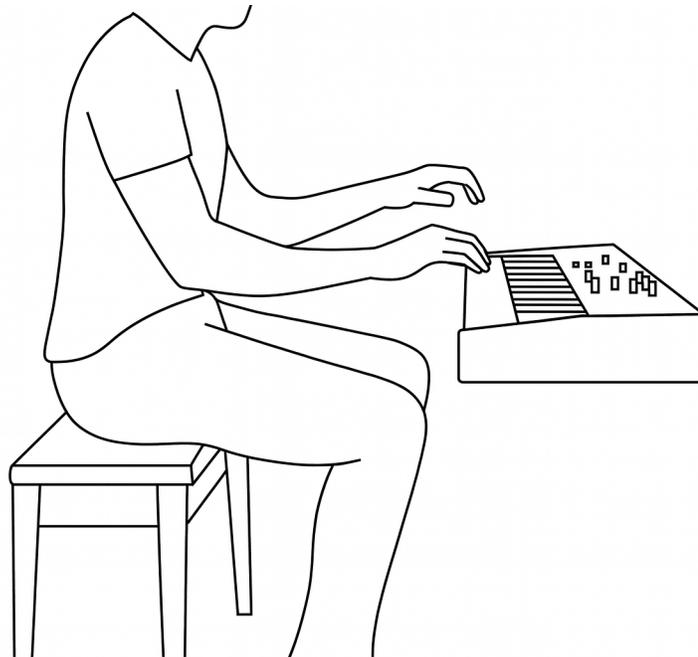
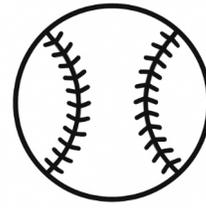
Being able to "loop" an exercise is a good way to know that you have mastered it. Once you have mastered it, you can check it off the list.

Watch your teacher (or the videos at jeredmckenna.com) to see demonstrations of how to play each exercise.

Keep checking in on the demonstrations to make sure you are correctly imitating the teacher and being inspired toward greatness.



Bouncing Baseball Hands



Now that we are using the pedal to let our notes ring out, we will begin to use

"Bouncing Baseball Hands"

Hold your hands, palms up, as if you are holding a baseball in each one, relaxed.

Then, turn your hands over, palms down.

Bending **only at your elbows**, let your arms gently fall as your finger settles into your note.

The note-playing finger should move **only just enough** so the other fingers don't touch the keys.

Easily **lift your hand off the key, so your finger breaks contact with the key,**

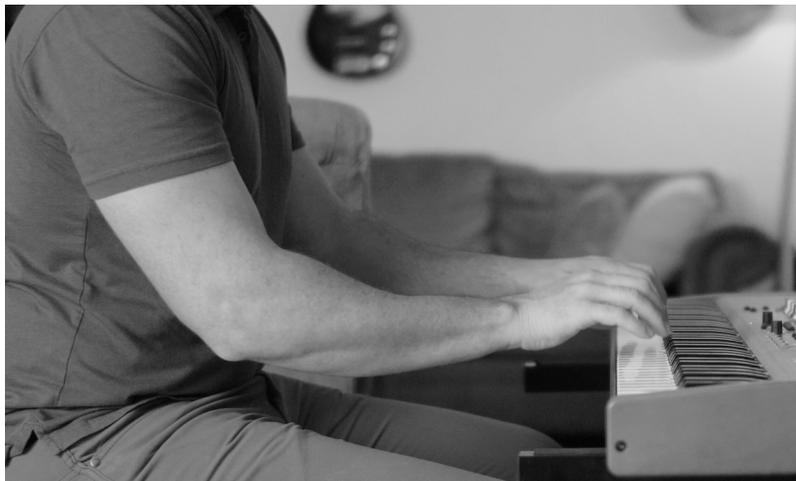
bending **ONLY** at your elbow to raise up your forearm about 1 inch.

Now, gently let your forearm fall as your "baseball holding" hand plays the next note...

...and repeat this for EVERY new note/beat you play.



To play a note, let your forearms **gently fall into the keys**, keeping your hands and wrists in a relaxed "holding a baseball" position.



Bending **ONLY** at the elbows, lift your "baseball shaped hands" a tiny bit **OFF the keys** in between **EVERY** note you play.

Move your fingers as little as possible i.e try to maintain the "baseball holding hand shape" as much as you can. It is your **ELBOW** that allows you to lift off of one note and fall back into another.

Eventually, yes, we will be able to play a run of notes with our fingers. For now, trust in "**bouncing baseball hands**".



Here is an exaggerated example of "bouncing baseball hands."
Your fingers/hands **do not** need to come up this high every time.

How high should your forearms lift in between each note?

High enough to **break contact with the key.**

Simply make sure your hands/arms/wrists/fingers look like the above images in between every note you play.

Exercises

Let's return to Exercise 2, this time using pedal.

Be sure to re-watch the video for inspiration and guidance.

2

1

1-and-2 and 3 4

1 - 2 - 3 and 4

1

Keep using the "sustain pedal" as before.

The pedal changes (your foot goes "up-down") after you play each left hand note.

Once Exercise 1 and 2 are mastered, learn

Exercise 3

after you have studied the way the teacher plays it.

3

2

Exercises

Play Exercises 1, 2, and 3 back to back, without pausing or breaking the musical flow or rhythm.
Use the "sustain" pedal and try to make it sound pretty.

1

Lift the pedal up just as you play the note, then press it again to "catch" the notes quickly.

2

Keep using the "sustain pedal" as before.

3

Check In

Are you using "**bouncing baseball hands**", a lifting off gently in between each note you play, and falling back gently into the next notes without moving your fingers a bunch?

Are you **using the pedal**, and making your foot go "up-down" RIGHT AFTER you play the left hand notes?

Are you **studying the way the teacher plays** and trying to imitate them?

Before going on:

Can you play Exercises 1, 2 and 3 without making a single mistake?

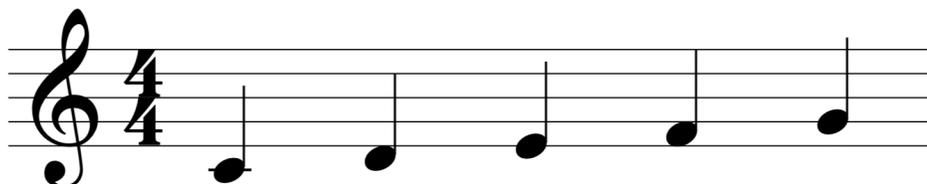
Are you playing with a very steady rhythm?

Are you holding the "half notes" for their full 2 beats, and not rushing them to "hurry up and get to the next note"?

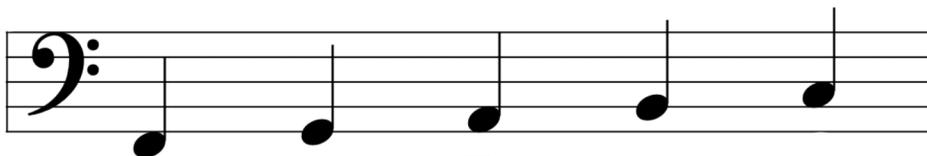
Are you able to play each Exercise from memory only?

Are you able to play each exercise while looking ONLY at the music notes on the page as you play them?

Sight Reading Check In



Find, say, and play these notes on the piano.



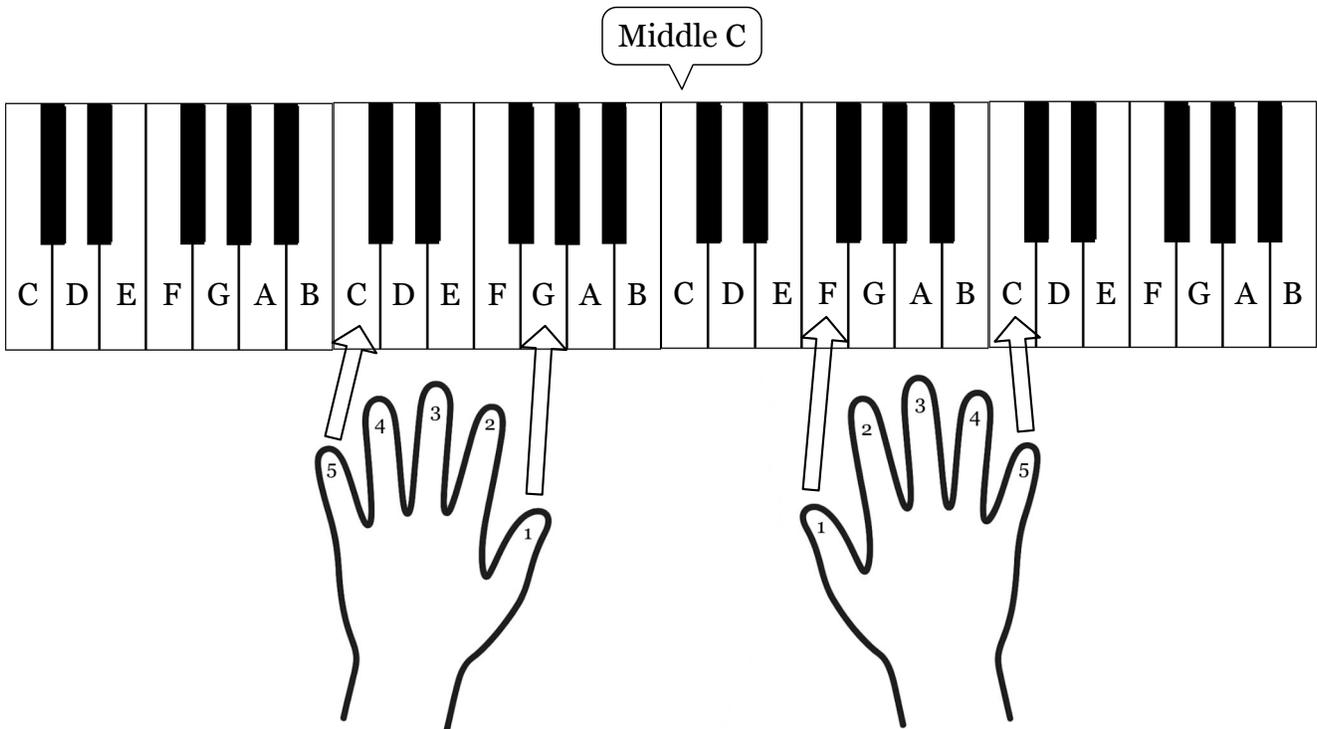
Find, say, and play these notes on the piano.

If you can't find, say, and play these notes, go back to the "sight reading" section at the beginning of this book. You can do it!

Exercises

Getting ready to play

Exercise 5



Challenge!

Play exercises 4 and 5 back to back without any mistakes or pauses.

Try again and again until you can do it.

4

Musical notation for exercise 4, consisting of two staves (treble and bass clef). The treble staff contains a sequence of eighth notes: G4, A4, B4, C5, B4, A4, G4, F4, E4, D4, C4. The bass staff contains a sequence of whole notes: C3, G2, C3, G2.

5

Musical notation for exercise 5, consisting of two staves (treble and bass clef). The treble staff contains a sequence of eighth notes: G4 (finger 5), A4 (finger 4), B4 (finger 3), C5 (finger 2), G4, A4, B4, C5, G4, A4, B4, C5. The bass staff contains a sequence of whole notes: C3 (finger 1), G2 (finger 5), C3 (finger 1), G2 (finger 5), C3, G2, C3, G2.

How fast should you be playing?

Using a metronome, set the "pulse" or "beat" to **108 beats per minute**.

If you can play along steadily at **108 BPM**, then you may move on.

When first learning each exercise, however, **practice as slowly as needed** to be relaxed and focused.

Keep track of your progress

As you master each exercise and challenge, check it off on the progress checklist in the back of this book.

Each checked box can represent a piece of candy, a dollar, or other tangible reward.

Exercises

Exercise 6

6

The image shows a musical score for Exercise 6. It consists of two staves: a treble clef staff on top and a bass clef staff on the bottom. The treble staff contains a melody starting with a dotted quarter note, followed by eighth notes, and then quarter notes. The bass staff provides accompaniment with chords and single notes. A small number '6' is positioned to the left of the first measure of the bass staff.

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Appendix

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Appendix

Notes: