

IDENTIFYING AND PLAYING THE KEYS OF THE PIANO KEYBOARD

By David Pinto, Director Academy of Music for the Blind

LESSON 1

OVERVIEW

These lessons may be used by a teacher teaching a student, or a student who is very literate. The lessons are based on the assumption that the student knows very little about the piano keyboard. With that assumption, no explanatory steps have been omitted. The content of these lessons also assumes that a teacher will not be able to have physical contact with the student, as in a virtual lesson via the internet. If the student or teacher follows the steps in these 9 lessons, the student will be able to successfully learn the complete layout of the piano keyboard. The lessons are so thorough that a teacher can use them to successfully teach a 4 or 5-year-old student.

For some students, certain steps in this tutorial may be overly explanatory and thus unnecessary. Nevertheless, students and teachers should first read through all the steps in each of the lessons before deciding to skip any of them. After that, and according to the aptitude of the student, particular steps may be skipped or not.

Even though these lessons are designed with no possibility of physically guiding the blind student, if a teacher is teaching in-person, occasional physical guidance of the student's hands and fingers can be a great supplement to the spoken directions.

It's important for those students who do have some usable sight that they not look at the keyboard. Relying on partial sight will ultimately slow the student down. Of course, looking at the keyboard once in a while is just fine. As a rule, however, it is a mistake for the student to rely on sight in order to orient to the keyboard. If the student habitually looks at the keyboard, then donning sleep shades is a great solution to the problem.

SPATIAL DIRECTIONS

For teachers, it's good to think through clearly the best ways to communicate spatial directions to the blind student. Directions should often be in relation to the student's body, and then in relation to the piano keyboard. For instance:

- Teachers may automatically use the term "higher" and "lower" to indicate going to the right and going to the left on the keyboard. But at first, it's best to use "right" and "left", and then later in the lesson, or the next lesson, explain that "higher" means going right, and "lower" means going left.
- Similarly, teachers may also use the terms "bottom" and "top" to indicate left/right and lower/higher on the keyboard. Again, it's best to start out using left/right at first. And then gradually during the first or second lesson introduce the equivalents of lower/higher and bottom/top.
- Teachers may also use the terms "back" and "front" or "in" and "out" to indicate the direction along the length of the individual key. But, at first, it's best to use the terms "away from your

body” and “towards your body”. So, for instance, if you wish the student to feel the full length of a key, then instead of first saying, “Slide your finger “into” the key, and then slide it “out” of the key” you would say, “Slide your finger on the key away from your body until you feel a board and can’t go any further.” When they’ve reached the back board, say, “Slide your finger on that key toward your body.” Then, you can tell the student that “into” the keys means away from your body, and “out” of the keys means toward your body. Similarly, don’t use “front” and “back” of the key at first. You can explain later in that lesson, or the next, that “front” is the part of the key that is closest to the body, and the “back” of the key is furthest from their body.

- When identifying the numbers of the fingers, realize that there are different numbering systems according to the instrument. For instance, if the student plays guitar or violin, their index finger is number one and their pinky is number 4. Whereas on piano, the thumb is number one, and the pinky is number 5. So, be aware of that possible confusion

EXERCISES

1. The piano keys are divided into 2 groups: the white keys and the black keys. The white keys are the smooth keys you can run your fingers over without feeling any big bumps. And the black keys are the big bumps above the white keys. The first thing the student should do is feel all the different piano keys. And whenever they feel the bumps, say “Black keys”. And when they feel the smooth keys, say “White keys”. Do that now.

2. The second thing the student should do is find the very first piano key on the left side of the keyboard. So, with their left hand, find the left most key, and with the right hand, find the rightmost key. Do that now.

3. When you felt the leftmost keys, was it a white note or black note? And what about the last key on the right? Was it a white note or black note?

4. Now, count how many black keys there are. Start at the left most black key and count all the way to the rightmost black key. Do that now.

5. On a full size 88 note keyboard, there are 36 black keys. But there are also smaller keyboards. You might have a smaller keyboard with less keys. Or, you might have the full size one with 88 keys. Go ahead and count the white keys now. Start at the left most white key and count all the way to the rightmost white key. On a full-size keyboard there are 52 white keys. Go ahead and count the white keys now.

INFORMATION

1. Pitch means how high or low a sound is. For instance, a bird has a high-pitched chirp, and a lion has a low pitch roar. When you move your hand to the left on the keyboard you go to keys that produce sounds that are “lower” in pitch. And when you move your hand to the right side of the keyboard, you move to the keys that produce sounds that are higher in pitch.

2. The black keys are ordered into clumps of 2 black keys and clumps of 3 black keys. Each clump of black keys is separated from the next clump by 2 **white** keys. One can find any particular **black** key by its location in a clump of 2, or clump of 3 black keys. And you can find any particular **white** key by its

position in relation to the clump of 2 or 3 black keys. These groups of 2 and 3 black keys alternate in a fixed regular pattern like this: 2 black keys, 3 black keys, and then again 2 black keys then 3 black keys, etc. etc. We'll learn to distinguish those 2 different groups of black keys a little later.

3. As stated, the white keys are identified by their position relative to the 2 and 3 black key groups. A sighted student can easily learn to identify the alternating groups of 2 and 3 black keys because they can **see** the 2 white keys that separate each group. Then, having learned to identify the black key groups, the sighted student can proceed to identify the white keys that are neighbors of those 2 distinct black key groups. On the other hand, the blind student will use their sense of touch to identify the groups of black keys by **feeling** the large gap of 2 white keys that separate each black key groups. If there were no groups of black keys, but rather a uniform series of black keys, the distinct keys of the piano keyboard would be impossible to find . . . regardless of whether you have vision or are blind.

THE WHITE KEYS

EXERCISES

1. Put your right hand on the far left of the keyboard and swipe your fingers over the keys all the way to the far right. Just swipe your right hand over the smooth white keys. Don't hit the bumpy black keys. Just swipe over the white keys from low to high. Don't make the keys sound their notes, either. Just gently brush over the keys. Do that now, and then do it with your left hand.

2. Now, do that again, but once you get all the way to the top right, swipe back to the left to where you started. In other words, from bottom to top, and then back again. Do that, and then do it with your left hand.

3. Now, with the right hand, put all 5 of your fingers on 5 different white keys of the piano. Line your fingers up carefully so each finger is on a neighboring white key. But be careful not to put any of your fingers on a bumpy black key. Then, once you've got them lined up on the white keys, press your fingers down so they make a sound. The sound won't be a pleasant sound. But make the sound anyway. Do that now, and then do the same thing with your left hand.

4. Now, with the right hand, once again put all 5 fingers on 5 different white keys. But this time, instead of pressing them down to make a sound, slide your fingers along the full length of the keys. In other words, don't slide left and right. Just slide in and out. Slide them away from your body is called sliding "into" the keys. And sliding them towards your body is called sliding them "out" of the keys. Make sure you don't move your fingers off the white keys. When you slide them into the keys, you will notice that your fingers get surrounded by the black key bumps. Do that now. And then, do the same thing with your left hand.

5. Once again, with the right hand, put all 5 fingers on 5 different white keys, and then slide them into the keys until they reach a board, and you can't go any further. You probably felt that board in the previous exercise. When you move into the keys, you are eventually stopped by this vertical board. Go ahead and slide your fingers into the keys until you feel that board. Then do it with your left hand.

6. When you move into the keys all the way to the vertical panel, that's also called moving to the "back" of the piano keys. And when you move out of the keys towards your body, that part of the keys is called

the “front” of the key. So, with **both** hands on the piano this time, and with all 5 fingers of each hand touching 5 different white keys, slide into the back of the keys all the way to the vertical board, and then slowly slide out to the front of the keys. Do that now.

THE BLACK KEYS AND THE GAPS OF 2 WHITE KEYS BETWEEN THEM

INFORMATION

As you know, in between the black keys are white keys. Sometimes there is one white key between adjacent black keys, and sometimes there are 2 white keys in between adjacent black keys. In this exercise, we are going to identify the places where there are 2 white keys in between adjacent black keys.

EXERCISES

1. You are going to run your right hand's fingers over the bumpy black keys. At this point, it doesn't matter which fingers you use. Just don't use your thumb on the black keys. So, start at the bottom of the keyboard and swipe your fingers all the way to the top of the keyboard. Don't press so hard the keys make a sound. Just lightly swipe over them in one continuous motion from left to right. It will be a bumpy ride! Do that now. Then do it with the left hand.
2. Now, do this again very slowly. But this time, notice that periodically there will be larger spaces between some of the black keys. You'll feel like you're driving on a bumpy road, and sometimes you fall into a wider pothole. Finding these larger gaps is the key to orienting yourself on the piano keyboard. So, do that now. Note the larger spaces of 2 white keys as you swipe from the bottom to the top of the keyboard. Do it first with the right hand, and then the left hand. Do that now.
3. Now, swipe across the black keys again, but this time when you reach the larger white key gap, feel the 2 white keys in that gap and press one of them down, and then press the other white key down. Do it first with the right hand, and then the left hand. Do that now.
4. Once you're proficient at finding these 2 white keys, you should also learn to press down the other white keys. Those other white keys are the single white keys between adjacent black keys. So, what you will be doing is after feeling a black key, you will move a little to the right, and your finger will fall down onto a white key. There will be either 2 white keys next to each other, or one white key. It will be helpful to make sure you move into the keys when you do this. That way you can feel both the black and white keys that are adjacent to each other. So, start at the very bottom of the piano, and with your right hand, play the very first key. It will probably be a white key. Then slide into the key so that you will be able to feel the adjacent black key. Then, play that black key to the right. Then move to the right again and play the white key you fall down onto. Keep doing that till you reach the last note of the piano. Then do it with your left hand. Do that now.

THE GROUPS OF 2 BLACK KEYS, AND THE GROUPS OF 3 BLACK KEYS

EXERCISES

1. After doing the above exercises, you will have noticed that sometimes it takes going across 3 black keys to reach the gap of 2 white keys, and sometimes it takes only 2 black keys to reach the gap of 2 white keys. In this exercise, we're going to play all the notes of the piano, both whites and blacks, but now we're going to count the number of black keys in each group of black keys. There will be either 2 black keys, or 3 black keys. And the first black key of either of those groups will be called "number 1". So, if you play all the notes of the piano and were to start at a group of 3 black keys the exercise would sound like this: "Black 1, white, black 2, white, black 3, 2 whites. Black 1, white, black 2, 2 whites." And then it will repeat: "Black 1, white, black 2, white, black 3, 2 whites. Black 1, white, black 2, 2 whites." Etc. So, go ahead and do that now. Remember to speak out loud just as in the example above. Do it first with your right hand, and then with your left hand.

2. Before going any further, there's one thing you should be aware of. Some piano keyboards do not start out with a full group of 2 or 3 black keys. They start off with a truncated group of 2 or 3 black keys. For instance, the first black key on a full 88 note keyboard is actually the third black key of a group of 3. So, it's one lonely black key followed by a gap of 2 white keys. With that in mind, you won't get too confused by the odd beginning you may find at the bottom of your particular keyboard.

3. Now it's time to play all 3 black keys in the group of 3, all at the same time. And then play both 2 black keys in the group of 2 at the same time. Just press the 3 black keys down at the same time and say, "3 black keys". Then move to the right and press the 2 white keys and say, "2 white keys". Then move to the right and press the group of 2 black keys and say "2 black keys". Then move to the right and press the 2 white keys and say, "2 white keys". Do this from the bottom of the piano all the way to the top. Go ahead and do that now, first with the right hand and then with the left hand.

4. Now that you're proficient at that, you are ready to identify the groups of 2 and 3 black keys without having to play the white key gaps. Just play the groups of 2 black keys, followed by the groups of 3 black keys. So ahead, play them and say aloud, "3 black keys, 2 black keys, 3 black keys, 2 black keys" etc. First with the right, and then the left hand.

5. Now that you can do that, just play the groups of 2 black keys. That means you will merely run your fingers over the 3 black keys so you can identify them. You won't be pressing down the group of 3 black keys. Just play the 2 black keys while you say, "2 black keys". Every different group of 2 black keys is said to be in a different octave. So go ahead and play and say the 2 black keys in every octave of the piano. Do it with the right, then the left hand.

6. Now play the groups of 3 black keys in every octave of the piano. To do this, you will only run your fingers over the 2 black keys . . . you won't press the 2 black keys down. Only play the 3 black keys while you say, "3 black keys". Do it with the right, then the left hand.

Congratulations! The student has now accomplished the most important step in learning the piano keyboard. Now, in the next lesson they will learn the names of the black keys, how to name the fingers of both hands, and how to play the black keys with the correct fingers of the right hand

END OF LESSON 1

LESSON 2

RIGHT HAND FINGERING OF THE GROUP OF 2 AND 3 BLACK KEYS

In Lesson 1, the student learned to find the gaps of 2 white keys in between the groups of black keys. And using those gaps, the student learned to reliably find and play the groups of 2 and 3 black keys with both the left and right hands. In this lesson, the student will learn how to name the black keys, name the fingers of both of his hands, and play the black keys with the correct fingers of the right hand.

FINGER NAMING CONVENTIONS

INFORMATION

Different instruments have different naming conventions for the fingers. For instance:

- When playing the guitar or the violin the thumb is called the thumb; the index finger is called finger number 1; the middle finger is number 2; the ring finger number 3; and the pinky is number 4. So, there is the thumb and 4 fingers.
- On the piano, the thumb is considered finger number 1; the next finger, the index finger, is called number 2; the middle finger number 3; the ring finger number 4; and the pinky is number 5. So, there are 5 fingers.

RIGHT HAND FINGERING OF THE GROUP OF 2 BLACK KEYS

EXERCISES

1. With your right hand, find a group of 2 black keys near the middle of the piano, right in front of your body. Now, the first one of the 2 black keys (the one at the left side of the group of 2) should be played with the right hands 2nd finger, the index finger. Go ahead and play that black key with your 2nd finger.

2. That first black key is named either C sharp, or D flat. For now, we will just call it C sharp. So, go ahead and play all the C sharps on the piano with your right hand's 2nd finger. Start at the first group of 2 black keys that you can find at the bottom of the keyboard. Say C sharp whenever you play it with your 2nd finger. Go ahead and play and say the C sharps in every octave of the piano from the bottom to the top.

3. Now, just to reinforce the correct fingering of the C sharp, we're going to do the wrong fingering. Play a C sharp near the middle of the piano with your thumb. That's right, your thumb. You're not supposed to do that right? But do it anyway.

4. Now, let's play the C sharp with your thumb once again. But then play the C sharp again with your 2nd finger. And then play that same C sharp with the 3rd, 4th and finally with your 5th finger. Do that now.

5. Now, let's return to the correct fingering. This time, you're going to play the C sharp with your right hand's 2nd finger, and then you are going to play the next black note to the right with your 3rd finger. That second note of the 2 black key group is called either a D sharp or and E flat. We will call it a D sharp. So, go ahead and find all the groups of 2 black keys on the piano, and play C sharp with your 2nd finger, and say, "C sharp". Then play the next black key with your 3rd finger and say, "D sharp". Start at the

bottom of the keyboard and play all the C sharps and D sharps in every octave of the piano. Go ahead and do that now.

RIGHT HAND FINGERING OF THE GROUP OF 3 BLACK KEYS

1. The right hand fingering of the 3 black keys starts out the same as the fingering of the 2 black keys, with the 2nd and 3rd fingers. The only difference is that in the group of 3 black keys you have an extra key to play. What finger do you think plays that third black key? It will be the 4th finger, right? OK. With your right hand, find a group of 3 black keys near the middle of the piano. The first one of the 3 black keys should be played with the right hands 2nd finger. Go ahead and play that black key with your index finger.

2. That first black key in the group of 3, is named either F sharp, or G flat. For now, we will just call it F sharp. Now go ahead and play all the F sharps in every octave of the piano with your right hand's 2nd finger. Start at the first group of 3 black keys that you can find at the bottom of the piano. And remember to say "F sharp" whenever you play it. Go ahead and play and say all the F sharps on the piano with your 2nd finger.

3. Now, this time, you're going to play the F sharp with your right hand's 2nd finger, and then you are going to play the next black note to the right with your 3rd finger. That second black note is called either a "G sharp" or an "A flat". We will call it a "G sharp". So, go ahead and find all the groups of 3 black keys on the piano, and play F sharp with your 2nd finger, and say, "F sharp", then play the second black key with your 3rd finger and say "G sharp". Go ahead and do that now, starting at the bottom of the keyboard.

4. Now, there is a third black key in the group of 3 black keys, right? What finger do you think you play it with? Of course, you play it with your 4th finger, right? Also, that third black key is named either "A sharp", or "B flat". We will call it "A sharp". Notice then, that the notes in the group of 3 black keys are named F sharp, G sharp, and A sharp. That's because in the musical alphabet, after G, comes A. You see, the musical alphabet has 7 letters: A, B, C, D, E, F, and G. So after G, comes A again. So, once again, the 3 black keys are named F sharp, G sharp, and A sharp. So, starting with the first group of 3 black keys that you can find at the bottom of the keyboard, go ahead and play all the black notes in every group of 3 black keys on the piano. Remember to say their names as you play them with your 2nd, 3rd, and 4th fingers. Do that now.

6. Finally, it's time to play and say the name of each note in the group of 2 black keys, followed by each note in the next and adjacent group of 3 black keys. So, you would play and say the following, starting with a group of 2 black keys at the very bottom of the piano: C sharp then D sharp. Then the adjacent group of 3 black keys. F sharp, G sharp, and A sharp. Then do it again in the next octave of the piano, all the way to the top of the keyboard. Go ahead and do that now.

Congratulations on learning how to identify and play with the correct fingers all the notes in the groups of 2 and 3 black keys with your right hand. In the next lesson, you will learn to do the same thing with your left hand.

END OF LESSON 2

LESSON 3

LEFT HAND FINGERING OF THE GROUPS OF 2 AND 3 BLACK KEYS

INFORMATION

Now that you've mastered playing and naming the black keys with the correct fingers of your right hand, let's do the same thing with the left hand. It should be easier now that you've identified the names of the notes. The only challenging thing is that the first black key in the group of 2 black keys and the first black key in the group of 3 black keys will be played with your left hand's 4th finger. That takes a bit of concentration. It's not as easy as when your right hand plays the first note of a black key group with the 2nd finger. The latter is very natural. But, because the hands are mirror images of each other, finger placements get reversed. So, in the left hand, the 2 black keys are played with your 4th and 3rd finger. And for the group of 3 black keys, you play them with the 4th, 3rd and then 2nd fingers.

LEFT HAND FINGERING OF THE GROUP OF 2 BLACK KEYS

EXERCISES

1. With your left hand, find a group of 2 black keys at the very bottom of the piano. Now, the first one of the 2 black keys, the C sharp, should be played with the left hand's 4th finger. Go ahead and play every C sharp on the piano with your left hand's 4th finger, from the bottom octave of 2 black keys all the way to the top octave of 2 black keys. Say "C sharp" whenever you play it. Go ahead and do that now.
2. To reinforce the correct fingering of the C sharp, let's do the wrong fingering. Play a C sharp near the bottom of the piano with your left hand's thumb, then play it with the 2nd finger, then the 3rd, 4th and finally with your pinky.
3. Now, returning to the correct fingering, play the C sharp with your left hand's 4th finger, and then play the next note, the D sharp, with your 3rd finger. Start at the bottom octave of the piano, then find all the groups of 2 black keys and play the C sharp and D sharp with your left hand's 4th and 3rd fingers while you say their names. Do that now.

LEFT HAND FINGERING OF THE GROUP OF 3 BLACK KEYS

1. As you know, the left hand's fingering of the 3 black keys starts out same as the fingering of the 2 black keys. The only difference is that in the group of 3 black keys you have an extra key to play, the A sharp, which is played with your left hand's 2nd finger. Now, with your left hand, find the first group of 3 black keys at the bottom of the piano. The first one of the 3 black keys, the F sharp, should be played with the left hand's 4th finger. Go ahead and play the F sharp in every group of 3 black keys on the piano with your 4th finger. Say "F sharp" when you play it.
2. Now, you are going to play the next note of the 3 black keys, the G sharp, with your 3rd finger. Go ahead and find all the groups of 3 black keys on the piano, and play F sharp with your 4th finger, and say "F sharp", then play the second black key with your 3rd finger and say "G sharp". Go ahead and do that now.

3. Now, let's include the 3rd key in the group of 3 black keys, the A sharp. As you know, you will play it with your 2nd finger, right? So, starting at the very bottom of the keyboard, go ahead and play all the notes in every group of 3 black keys. Remember to say their names as you play them with your 4th, 3rd, and 2nd fingers. Do that now, from the bottom octave to the topmost octave.

4. Finally, it's time to play and say the name of each note in the group of 2 black keys, followed by each note in the group of 3 black keys. So, you would play and say the following, starting with a group of 2 black keys at the very bottom of the piano: "C sharp, D sharp, F sharp, G sharp, and A sharp." Then do it again in the next octave of 2 black keys and 3 black keys, etc, etc. Go ahead and do that now.

You have now learned to name and play with the correct fingers all the black keys of the piano with both the right and the left hand. In the next lesson, you will learn how to name the white keys of the keyboard.

END OF LESSON 3

LESSON 4

RIGHT HAND. FINDING THE WHITE KEYS SURROUNDING THE 2 BLACK KEYS

In the first 3 lessons, the student learned to find the groups of 2 and 3 black keys with both the left and right hands and to name and play each of the notes in those groups with the proper fingers. In this lesson, the student's right hand will become proficient at identifying all the white keys surrounding the 2 black keys.

INFORMATION

As you know, the "front" of the piano keys is the part of the keys that is closest to your body, and the "back" of the piano keys is the part that's furthest from your body. At the very back of the keys is a vertical panel that stops you from going any further. Interesting fact: that vertical panel is also called the "fall board" because on acoustic pianos, and some electric pianos, that panel can actually fold down over the keys to protect them when they're not being played. As you know, when we say move "into" the keys, that means to move toward the back of the keys where the fall board is.

RIGHT HAND. FINDING THE WHITE KEYS B & C, VIA THE 2 BLACK KEYS

EXERCISES

1. With your right hand's 2nd and 3rd fingers, find a group of 2 black keys near the middle of the piano: a C sharp, and a D sharp. Slide your 2 fingers to the front of those 2 black keys so you almost drop off them onto the white keys below. Then slide your 2 fingers to the back of the 2 black keys so that you butt against the fall board. Go ahead and slide your fingers on those 2 keys several times so that you get familiar with how long those black keys are.
2. Now we're going to play the 2 white keys in the gap that's to the left of those 2 black keys. Those 2 white keys in the gap at the left of the C sharp are named "B" and "C". If you were to put your right hand's 2nd and 3rd fingers on the C sharp and D sharp and slide them all the way in against the fall board, your thumb will actually be resting in the white key gap. In fact, it's actually trapped between the black key C sharp that your 2nd finger is on, and black key A sharp on the left. Go ahead and put your right hand's 2nd and 3rd fingers on the C sharp and D sharp and slide them all the way in against the fall board. Then with your thumb, feel the black key on the right that you bump against, and then feel the black key on the left that you bump against. Do that now.
3. The first white key of those 2 white keys is named "B". And the second white key, the one to the right of the B, is named "C". Now, touch the 2 black keys and slide your fingers into them so you are against the fallboard. Then play the B with your thumb and say, "B". Then play the C with your thumb and say, "C". So, your thumb is being used to play two different notes: the white notes B and the C. Go ahead and do that now.
4. Now, start at the bottom of the piano, and find the first octave of 2 black keys. Then do the following in every octave of the piano, from the bottom of the keyboard to the top: Move into the 2 black keys and then play and say C sharp, D sharp then C sharp again. Then play and say the white notes B with your thumb, then C with your thumb. Repeat for every octave of the piano.

RIGHT HAND. FINDING THE WHITE KEYS C, D, E, F, & G, VIA THE 2 BLACK KEYS

1. With your right hand's 2nd and 3rd fingers, find a group of 2 black keys near the middle of the piano and slide your 2 fingers to the back of those 2 keys. Play and say, C sharp, D sharp, and then back again to C sharp. Then with your thumb, play the white note C. You are experienced enough to know if you are playing the white note B or the white note C, right? The C is adjacent to the C sharp right? In other words, it's just below and immediately to the left of the C sharp. So, go ahead and play and say, "C sharp, D sharp, C sharp, C."

2. Now, instead of moving "into" the keys as we did before, you'll will play near the front of the 2 black keys. And then you will play the white note C with your thumb. In this exercise, playing at the front of the 2 black keys might prove a little more difficult because your short thumb will not be surrounded by black keys. That will mean it's a bit harder to know which of the 2 white keys you're playing, the B or the C. Of course, if you ever get confused whether your thumb is playing the B or C, just move your thumb "into" the keys and you will see if it's snuggling against the C sharp to the right or if it's snuggling against the A sharp to the left. Go ahead and play near the front of the 2 black keys. and then play the white note C with your thumb and say out loud "C". Do that in every octave of the piano starting from the bottom of the keyboard.

3. Now, from now on, instead of speaking the notes you play, actually sing them. It doesn't matter if you have a good voice or not. Just try to make your voice match the pitch of the note that you are singing, So, go ahead, and do the following: Locate the first group of 2 black keys at the bottom of the piano. Play the front of the 2 black keys and sing C sharp, D sharp, then C sharp again. Then with your thumb play and sing the C. Do this in every octave of the piano

4. Now, the white key immediately to the right of the C, is "D". And you play the D, with your right hand's 2nd finger. So, go ahead, and from the bottom of the piano to the top, play and sing C sharp, D sharp, C sharp. And then the white keys C & D. Do this in every octave of the piano. Do that now.

5. Of course, the white key to the right of the D would be an E, right? And logically, you will play the E with your right hand's 3rd finger. So go ahead, play and sing C sharp, D sharp, C sharp. And then the white keys C, D & E in every octave of the piano.

6. Now, the white key to the right of the E, is F and you play it with your 4th finger. And the white key to the right of the F, is a G, and you play it with your right hand's 5th finger. So, starting with your thumb, you can play C, D, E, F, & G with all your right hand's fingers, from 1 through 5. OK. Play and sing C sharp, D sharp, C sharp. And then play and sing the white keys C, D, E, F, & G in every octave of the piano.

7. Finally, do the above again, but this time when you reach the white key G with your 5th finger, reverse direction and play G, F, E, D, C. Do that now.

Congratulations! Your right hand is now proficient at finding and playing all the white keys surrounding the 2 black keys. In the next lesson you will learn to do the same thing for the white keys surrounding the 3 black keys.

END OF LESSON 4

LESSON 5

RIGHT HAND. FINDING THE WHITE KEYS SURROUNDING THE 3 BLACK KEYS

Now that you have found all the white keys surrounding the 2 black keys of C sharp and D sharp, we're going to find the white keys that surround the 3 black keys of F sharp, G sharp and A sharp.

RIGHT HAND. FINDING THE WHITE KEYS E & F VIA THE 3 BLACK KEYS

1. With your right hand's 2nd, 3rd and 4th fingers, find a group of 3 black keys near the middle of the piano. Then slide your 3 fingers all the way to the back of the keys, right against the fall board. Your thumb will be resting in the white key gap. It's trapped between a D sharp on the left, and an F sharp on the right. Go ahead and do that now and with your thumb, feel the D sharp on the left, and the F sharp on the right .
2. The white key to the left is named "E", and the white key to the right is named "F". This is the same E and F that you played when orienting to the 2 black keys. This time, however, you are going to play and sing the 3 black keys up and down, like this: F sharp, G sharp, A sharp, G sharp F sharp. Then, with your thumb you will play and sing the "E", and then play and sing "F". So, play and sing F sharp, G sharp, A sharp, G sharp F sharp. Then, with your thumb play and sing the "E", then the "F". Do that now.
3. Now, start at the bottom piano, and find the first group of 3 black keys and just repeat the process of moving into the 3 black keys and then playing and singing the 3 black keys up and back and then the E and F with your thumb. Do that from the bottom of the keyboard to the top.
4. Now, this time, don't slide to the back of the black keys. Just see if you can find the white key F while playing the front of black keys. That will be a little more difficult because you can't feel the F# with your thumb when you are playing near the front of the keys. Nevertheless, once you get used to it, it will be easy. Go ahead and play and sing the above exercise again without moving deep into the keys.

RIGHT HAND. FINDING THE WHITE KEYS F, G, A, B, & C, VIA THE 3 BLACK KEYS

Now let's find 4 other white keys that are within the orbit of the 3 black keys.

1. The white key to the right of the F, is "G". This is the same G that you play when orienting to the 2 black keys. But this time, because you are orienting to the 3 black keys, you play the G with your right hand's 2nd finger. So, go ahead, from the bottom of the piano to the top, play and sing the 3 black keys up and back, then play and sing F, then G. So you would play and sing: F sharp, G sharp, A sharp, G sharp, F sharp, F then G. Do that in every octave of the piano.
2. The white key to the right of the G, is A. Remember, G is the last letter of the musical alphabet, so the next note after G is an A. And what finger do you think play's the A? Well, F is played with the thumb, G is played with the 2nd finger, so A will be played with the 3rd finger, right? So, go ahead, and from the bottom of the piano to the top, play and sing the 3 black keys up and back, then play and sing F, G & A. Do this in every octave of the piano.

3. Now, the white key to the right of the A, is B and you play it with your 4th finger. And the white key to the right of the B, is a C, and you play it with your right hand's 5th finger. Yes, it's the same C that you play with your right hand's thumb when you are orienting to the 2 black keys. But this time, since you are orienting to the 3 black keys, you play it with your right hand's 5th finger. So, in every octave of the piano, play and sing the 3 black keys up and back, then the F, G, A, B, & C with all your fingers 1, 2, 3, 4, 5.

Congratulations! Your right hand is now proficient at playing and identifying all the keys on piano, both black and white. In the next 2 lessons you will learn the exact same thing while using the left hand.

END OF LESSON 5

LESSON 6

LEFT HAND. FINDING THE WHITE KEYS SURROUNDING THE 2 BLACK KEYS

In this lesson, the student will learn to use the left hand to identify the white keys on the piano that surround the 2 black keys. Remember, you use the left hand's 4th finger on the first of the black keys in both the 2 black key group and the 3 black key group.

1. With your left hand near the middle of the piano, find a group of 2 black keys. Put your left hand's 4th and 3rd fingers on the C sharp and D sharp and slide them all the way back to the fall board. Note that when you do that, your 5th finger will be resting in the white key gap, trapped between an A sharp on the left, and a C sharp on the right. Play and sing C sharp, D sharp, then C sharp again, and then play and sing the B with your 5th finger. Then play and sing the C with your 5th finger. So, your 5th finger is being used to play two different notes: the B and the C. Do that now.

2. Now, find the first group of 2 black keys at the bottom of the piano, and do the following in every octave of the piano: Move into the 2 black keys and play and sing C sharp, D sharp, C sharp. Then play B, then C with your 5th finger.

3. Now, this time, don't move into the back of the 2 black keys. Play more to the front of the 2 black keys. Then, do the following in every octave of the piano: Sing and play C sharp, D sharp, C sharp. Then play and sing only the C with your 5th finger. Do this in every octave of the piano

4. Now let's play the white keys C, D and E with your left hand's 5th, 4th and 3rd fingers. Do the following from the bottom octave all the way to the top octave: Sing and play C sharp, D sharp, C sharp. Then the white keys C, D & E.

5. Finally, let's play the white keys C, D, E, F and G with your left hand's 5th, 4th, 3rd, 2nd and 1st fingers. Do the following from the bottom octave all the way to the top octave: Sing and play C sharp, D sharp, C sharp, then C, D, E, F & G.

Congratulations! Now that your left hand is proficient at playing the white keys surrounding the group of 2 black keys, you will learn to do the same for the white keys surrounding the group of 3 black keys.

END OF LESSON 6

LESSON 7

LEFT HAND. FINDING THE WHITE KEYS SURROUNDING THE 3 BLACK KEYS

1. With your left hand near the middle of the piano, find a group of 3 black keys. Put your left hand's 4th, 3rd and 2nd fingers on the F sharp G sharp and A sharp and slide them all the way to the back, right against the panel. Note that your 5th finger is now resting in the white key gap, trapped between an F sharp on the right, and a D sharp on the left. Now, play and sing the F sharp, G sharp, A sharp, G sharp, F sharp, and then play and sing the E with your 5th finger and sing "E". Then play the F with your 5th finger and sing, "F". So, your 5th finger is being used to play two different notes: the E and the F. Do that now.
2. Now, find the first group of 3 black keys at the bottom of the piano, and do the following in every octave of the piano: Move into the 3 black keys and play and sing F sharp, G sharp and A sharp, G sharp, F sharp. Then play F & E with your 5th finger.
3. Now, this time, don't move to the back of the 3 black keys. Play more to the front of the 3 black keys. So, do the following in every octave of the piano: Sing and play F sharp, G sharp, A sharp, G sharp, F sharp. Then the white key F with your 5th finger.
4. Now let's play the white keys F, G and A with your left hand's 5th, 4th and 3rd fingers. So, sing and play the following from the bottom octave all the way to the top octave: F sharp, G sharp, A sharp, G sharp, F sharp. Then the white keys F, G and A.
5. Now let's play the F, G, A, B and C with your left hand's 5th, 4th, 3rd, 2nd and 1st fingers. Do the following from the bottom octave all the way to the top octave: F sharp, G sharp, A sharp, G sharp, F sharp. Then the white keys F, G, A, B & C.

Congratulations! You are now proficient at using the right and the left hand to play all the black key groups and to play all the white keys on the piano by relating them to the groups of 2 and 3 black keys. In the next lessons, you will learn to play both hands at the same time.

END OF LESSON 7

LESSON 8

PLAYING THE BLACK KEYS WITH BOTH HANDS TOGETHER

INFORMATION

Now that you have learned to locate all the keys of the piano via the groups of 2 black and 3 black keys, it's time to play both hands at the same time in unison. Playing in unison means that both hands will play the same notes. But, in this case, the hands will play in different octaves. This is a challenge because of one thing: the hands are mirror images of each other. So, for instance, if you play the right hand fingers 1, 2, 3, 4, then 5, the notes get higher and higher in pitch and you go from left to right on the piano, right? But when you play the same left hand fingers 1, 2, 3, 4, then 5, the notes get lower and lower in pitch and you go from right to left on the piano. So, what if you want both hands to go the same direction on the piano? Well in that case, they will have opposite fingering, right?

Consider this: when locating a C in relation to the 2 blacks keys, the right hand plays the C with the thumb, right? But the left hand would play the C with the 5th finger. Or, when the right hand plays the first note of a black key group with the 2nd finger, the left hand plays the first note of that black key group with the 4th finger. Obviously, it will take concentration to be able to play the same note in both hands, but with a different finger in each hand.

BOTH HANDS TOGETHER: 2 BLACK KEYS

EXERCISES

1. Do the following:

- With the right hand locate a group of 2 black keys near the middle of the piano, and play and sing the C sharp with the right hand's 2nd finger.
- With the left hand, locate a group of 2 black keys in the next octave below where the right hand is, and play and sing the C sharp with the left hand's 4th finger.
- Now play the C sharp with both hands at the same time and sing C sharp.

2. Now do the following:

- With the right hand, once again locate a group of 2 black keys near the middle of the piano, and play and sing C sharp then D sharp, then C sharp.
- Now do the same thing with the left hand an octave lower: locate the group of 2 black keys and play and sing C sharp, D sharp, C sharp.
- Now with both hands at the same time, play and sing C sharp, D sharp, C sharp.

3. Did you notice that when you play the D sharp, both hands played it with the same finger, the 3rd finger? This is because the 3rd finger is the middle finger, and the mirror image of the middle is the middle. Now, do the following:

- With the left hand, locate the lowest 2 black key group on the piano.
- With the right hand, locate the next 2 black keys in the next octave above the right hand.

- With both hands playing at the same time, play and sing the C sharp, D sharp, C sharp with the proper fingers
- Do this in every octave of the piano

BOTH HANDS TOGETHER: 3 BLACK KEYS

1. Now let's practice playing both hands on the groups 3 blacks. Do the following:

- With the right hand locate a group of 3 black keys near the middle of the piano, and play and sing the F sharp with the right hand's 2nd finger
- With the left hand, locate a group of 3 black keys in the next octave below where the right hand is, and play and sing the F sharp with the left hand's 4th finger.
- Now play the F sharp with both hands at the same time and sing F sharp.

2. Now do the following:

- With the right hand, once again locate a group of 3 black keys near the middle of the piano and play and sing F sharp then G sharp.
- Now do the same thing with the left hand an octave lower: locate the group of 3 black keys and play and sing F sharp, then D sharp.
- Now with both hands at the same time, play and sing F sharp, G sharp.

3. Once again, did you notice that when you play the G sharp, both hands played it with the same finger, the 3rd finger? Now, do the following:

- With the left hand, locate the lowest 3 black key group on the piano.
- With the right hand, locate the next 3 black key group that's right above the left hand's octave.
- With both hands play and sing the F sharp, G sharp, A sharp, and then reverse back to G sharp and F sharp.
- Do this in every octave of the piano

Congratulations. You are now able to play the black key groups with both hands at the same time. In the next lesson, you will learn to play the white keys in unison with both hands.

END OF LESSON 8

LESSON 9
PLAYING ALL THE WHITE KEYS BOTH HANDS TOGETHER

BOTH HANDS TOGETHER: C, D, E, F, & G

Now, let's play the notes surrounding the 2 black keys with both hands at the same time.

1. Do the following.

- With the left hand, locate the lowest 2 black key group on the piano. Then play and sing the C with your 5th finger.
- With the right hand, locate the next 2 black keys right above the left hand's octave and play and sing the C with your thumb.
- With both hands at the same time, play and sing the C with the proper fingers.
- Do this in every octave of the piano

2. Now let's play C, D, E, F and G with both hands at the same time. You will be both delighted and challenged by the fingers having opposite numbers except for the 3rd finger. So, as you know, when the left plays the 5th finger, the right plays the thumb. And when the left plays the 4th, the right plays the 2nd. And then, when the left plays the 3rd finger, the right hand also plays the 3rd finger. And when the left plays 2nd, the right plays 4th, and finally when the left plays the thumb, the right plays the 5th finger. So, do the following:

- With the left hand, locate the lowest 2 black key group on the piano. And with the right hand, locate the next 2 black keys right above the left hand's octave.
- Play and sing C, D, E, F, & G with both hands.
- Move up one octave to the next group of 2 black keys and play and sing the C, D, E, F, & G with both hands.
- Keep repeating this all the way to the top of the keyboard.

3. Finally, let's do the same thing, but when you reach the G, go back down the opposite way until you come back to the C. So you will be playing with both hands at the same time, C, D, E, F, G. And then go back down G, F, E, D, C. Do that now in every octave of the piano.

BOTH HANDS TOGETHER: F, G, A, B, & C

For our final exercise, we will play the notes surrounding the 3 black keys with both hands at the same time.

1. Do the following:

- With the left hand, locate the lowest 3 black key group on the piano. Then play and sing the F with your 5th finger.
- With the right hand, locate the next 3 black keys right above the left hand's octave and play and sing the F with your thumb.
- With both hands at the same time, play and sing the F with the proper fingers.
- Do this in every octave of the piano.

2. Now let's play F, G, A, B and C with both hands at the same time. Do the following:

- With the left hand, locate the lowest 3 black key group on the piano. And with the right hand, locate the next 3 black keys right above the left hand's octave.
- Play and sing F, G, A, B, & C with both hands.
- Move up one octave to the next group of 3 black keys and play and sing the F, G, A, B, & C with both hands.
- Keep repeating this all the way to the top of the keyboard.

3. Finally, let's do the same thing, but when you reach the C, go back down the opposite way until you come back to the F. So you will be playing with both hands at the same time, F, G, A, B, C. And then go back down C, B, A, G, F. Do that now in every octave of the piano.

Congratulations! If you have mastered the last few exercises where you are playing with both hands then big kudos to you! Excellent work! With the skills you have learned in these lessons, you are now able to locate every note on the piano and play it with both hands with the proper finger. As you will learn later in your studies, there are many different "proper" ways to finger the notes of the piano. But, you have learned the most basic and most important fingering. It is the foundation for navigating on the piano keyboard. As you get adept at this, you will be able find your notes faster and faster, until there will come a time that there will be hardly any time lapse when moving your hands and fingers all over the piano. The fact is, when taught properly, a blind pianist can get their way around the piano just as easily as their sighted peers.

END OF LESSON 9

END OF TUTORIAL