

Learn How to Play
PIANO / KEYBOARD

For

ABSOLUTE BEGINNERS

*A Self Tuition Book For
Adults & Teenagers!*

SPECIAL EDITION



Martin Woodward

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To all the fantastic musicians who I've had the privilege of working with back in the 1960s / 70s including: Pip Williams (guitarist / record producer); Tex Marsh (drums); Roger Flavell (bassist / singer / songwriter); Kevan Fogarty (guitarist); Tommy Hunt (singer); Ron Thomas (bassist); Martin Johnstone (bassist / vocals); Geno Washington (singer); UK No. 1 singer / songwriter Emile Ford; U.K. top 10 artists: *'The Fantastics'* - John Cheatdom, Jerome Ramos, Donald Haywoode and Richard Pitts.

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Aquila album cover design by Keith Besford - *Thanks Keith, I still Love it!*

A Couple of my many memorable 'Aquila' gigs in 1970



Note that the links may not work if you are viewing this in a Google or Amazon preview. Please go to https://learn-keyboard.co.uk/abso_se.html for a more complete free *working* pdf preview.

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← Introduction →

As the name suggests, this book has been written for the absolute beginner and assumes no prior musical knowledge - *just the desire to do it!*

The contents are suitable for piano and / or electronic keyboard.

Items covered include:

- Buying your first keyboard or piano
- Reading music from scratch
- Easy, effective finger exercises which require minimal reading ability
- Important musical symbols
- Your first tunes
- Audio links for all tunes and exercises
- Key signatures and transposition
- Pre-scale exercises
- Major and minor scales in keyboard *and* notation view
- Chord construction
- Chord fingering
- Arpeggios in keyboard *and* notation view
- Arpeggio exercises
- Playing from a *Fake Book* with and without auto-accompaniment
- Plus, more!

After completing this book, you should have a good basic understanding of music theory as well as a good basic playing technique, paving the way for more advanced study in your chosen field - *jazz, blues, pop, classical etc.*

Ok, but what is special about this 'Special Edition'?

Compared to Editions 1 and 2 (both of which are still available) this Special Edition is both a lot more and a little less in the fact that I have only included the first three major and harmonic minor scales and arpeggios and removed the chord charts to make the paperback version more cost effective.

BUT... to make this version much better I have included free links for the digital pdf versions of the items shown next. Consequently, this edition offers far more '*bang for buck*' and if you're serious about learning you would eventually need to buy these other items anyway.



The Chord books give more information about chords and just about every chord that you will ever need including 9ths, 13ths etc., as well as diatonic chords in most keys. The scale book includes every major, minor (harmonic, melodic and natural) scale and arpeggio in every key as well as the pentatonic and blues scales and modes in the most used keys.

The Hanon book provides more of the great finger exercises already included in this book in an easy-to-read format.

One of the tune books is for normal easy two hand playing and the other has top line and chords only - for auto-accompaniment. There are also links to other free sheet music sites.

If you click on the graphics, you can see more details of these books. The download links are given at the end of this book [page 138](#).

With the inclusion of these additional resources, I believe this book is the most complete beginners' book available and incredible value for money.

Note that all these items are available as free downloads (with this book) *only* while I'm still alive. If my website at <http://gonkmusic.com> or <https://learn-keyboard.co.uk> is still working, you can be sure I'm still here and the downloads will be available. At the time of writing this (2022) I am / was 73 and plan on living forever and so far, I have to say that it's not going too badly! But nevertheless, I realise that every day is a bonus! *If I'm dead and you can't get the downloads, please feel free to sue me!*

Get the Best from this Book

This book has been written to be read as a paperback and / or a digital eBook. If you have the paperback version - *great*, - without doubt this is the best version for flipping backwards and forwards to where you want to be. However, if you wish to hear the audio examples included, you may find it convenient to also have the digital version in pdf format which can be read on any PC, laptop or tablet. You may also find it useful to print out certain pages, perhaps to make notes on, or maybe because of inconvenient page turns etc. This you can do easily with the digital version.

If you have purchased the paperback version, the digital version is *freely* available to you *for your own use only*. The download link can be found on [page 138](#) along with the links for the other included items. Be sure to copy the link exactly as written including the hyphen and the underscore between the words. If you have any trouble with this, I will be happy to help.

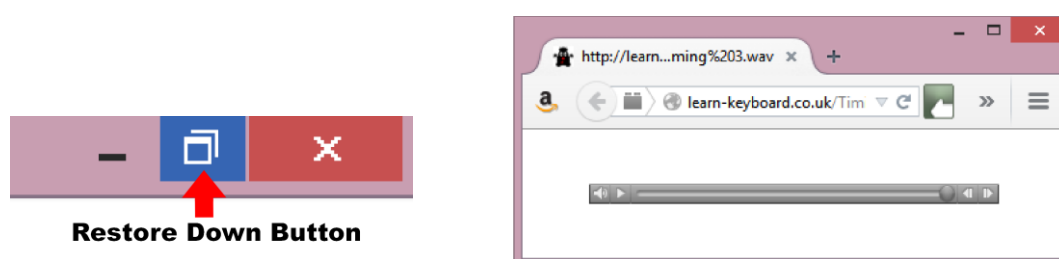
The audio links throughout the book can be accessed two ways:

- by using the free external links at:
https://learn-keyboard.co.uk/audio-links/abso_se.html which gives access to all the links in the order in which they appear in each chapter or
- by using the links throughout the book as they appear in the digital pdf version - *internet connection required*

Using the *in-Book* Links

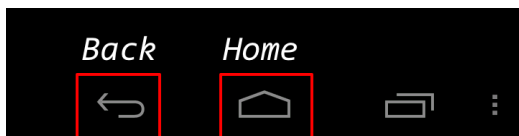
Quite probably you may only need to listen to some of the audio links, but all are included for your convenience.

To access the links easily, if you are viewing this on a laptop or PC first of all go to your browser and click the restore down button in order to reduce the view size to something like the image below to the right (by dragging the bottom and sides).

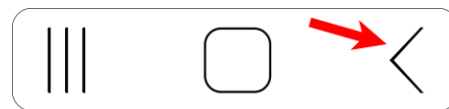


Then click on the link which should then appear in front of the document enabling you to move it out of the way of anything that you may wish to see at the same time.

If you are viewing this on an Android tablet as soon as you click on the link you will lose the book view until you push the '*Back*' button (shown next).



or



If you want to you can have a trial run now by clicking on the following graphic which actually is *'Pop Goes the Weasel'*!



Note also that each link will open a new page in your browser, so you will eventually need to cancel them - *or just close the browser!*

In addition to the external links, there are also numerous internal links to help you navigate to certain reference points in the book and return, including the arrows either side of the chapter headings. Clicking the green right-hand arrow will take you instantly to the next chapter and the red left-hand arrow to the beginning of the last chapter.

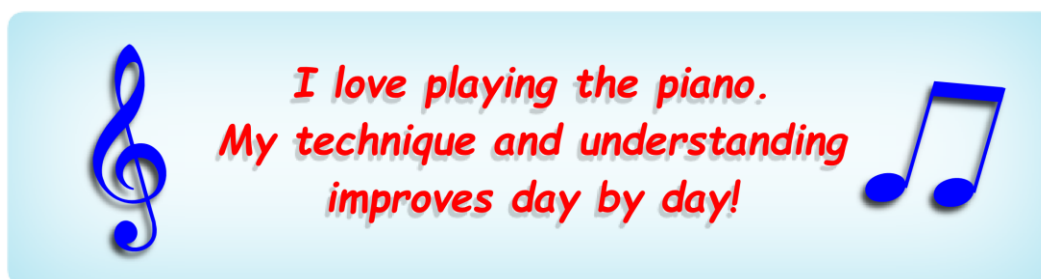
If you want to navigate to another chapter quickly, simply click on the '[≤](#)' icon which is in the footer of every page (including this one). This will take you instantly to the *'Contents'* page where you can then click and go to any section you wish - *so you can basically whizz through the document at lightning speed!*

Trust Your Self

As you progress you will no doubt have good days and bad days, but whatever happens never doubt your ability to succeed, however old you may be.

Now, what I'm going to say next you may think is absolute *'BS'*, but please hear me out - humour me if you like, as I happen to *know* that it is of tremendous value.

Throughout the book you will periodically come across the following message:



All I ask you to do is *pause* and *read* this every time you see it, out loud would be great, but silently is ok too. The more you can do this the better. Actually, it has to be a true statement as presumably you wouldn't be reading this if you didn't want to play

the piano or keyboard and if you follow the advice herein your technique and understanding *must* improve day by day!

Over the years I've met and known many individuals who have become extremely successful musicians, some are multi-millionaires and worldwide household names and some I knew when they were down and out and penniless (like I was). They all used similar techniques to the above. At the time I thought they were raving bonkers; now I know they weren't!

If you want to know more about similar success building techniques, please see my website at <http://deep-relaxation.co.uk> where you will find lots of freebies to prove their worth.

Also, throughout the book I have included a few of my favourite keyboards. These are not '*adverts*' *per se*, they are basically just to fill space. Links for *all* the major manufacturers as well as my '*keyboard review*' section can be found on my website so that you can get all the up-to-date relevant information in order to make up your own mind as to what suits your needs either now or in the future!



← **Buying Your First Piano / Keyboard** →

If you haven't already bought a keyboard or if you are perhaps thinking of changing, you may find the following information useful.

There are many different types of keyboards - all have black and white keys and to the uninitiated all look the same. But they can be vastly different, and which one will be right for you will be determined by:

- Your present needs
- Your ultimate needs; and of course
- Your budget

Prices can vary from as little as £50 to many thousands of pounds. The chance of buying one that is right for your initial and ultimate needs is about nil, *but you can at least try!*

Keyboards basically fall into the following categories:

- a) Digital Pianos
- b) Acoustic Pianos
- c) Arranger Keyboards
- d) Harpsichords
- e) Organs
- f) Workstations
- g) Synthesizers
- h) Controller Keyboards

And of course, all the above could be purchased either new or second-hand.

But here we are only going to discuss the first three which are the ones most suitable for beginners, but details of all the others and up to date information can be seen on my website at: https://learn-keyboard.co.uk/keyboard_reviews.html .

Digital Pianos - Home Use

Home use digital pianos in general tend to be less feature filled than the stage alternatives. Most up-to-date models will have 88 weighted hammer action keys - varying in quality. Many are also incorporated in a wooden frame with pedals included or at least have the option of a wooden stand making them fitting for a home

environment. Most will also have built-in speakers making the need for external amplification unnecessary.

Some will simply be pianos with few other features (although most do have a variety of tones). Others will have additional features such as [auto-accompaniment](#) and recording functions.

For a comparatively low-cost starter piano the Casio PX S1100 and PX S3100 are hard to beat. Both have quality piano sounds, built-in speakers, quality hammer action keybeds and many other useful functions.

Casio PX S1100 (88 Keys)



If you want the convenience of all the gadgetry on an electronic digital piano and also a nice bit of furniture, then there are many *low-tech* but generally expensive instruments available such as the Yamaha Clavinovas.

Yamaha Clavinova CVP-609GP (88 Keys)



But there are many, many more to choose from in all price ranges.

Digital Pianos - Stage / Studio

In contrast, digital pianos for stage or studio use tend to be more feature filled in relation to sounds, effects and other functions. These will have either 73 / 76 or 88 hammer action keys. Built-in speakers and auto-accompaniment are less likely to be found on these and an external stand and pedals would be required. Therefore, in all cases for stage use external amplification suitable for the venue would be required. See my website for details of external amplification.

Recording functions are not the norm on stage pianos, but some may have them.

Both home and stage digital pianos will have earphone sockets enabling personal practice.

Korg SV-2S Stage Piano (88 Keys)



There are some digital pianos that are suitable for both home and stage - the Korg SV2S is available with or without built-in speakers and is about the coolest looking keyboard on the planet as well as having top notch piano sounds and the top Korg RH3 graduated keyboard.

The main manufacturers for digital pianos are: Korg, Roland, Casio, Yamaha, Nord, Dexibell and Kurzweil so there's plenty of great models to choose from. There are good and possibly not so good features with most manufacturers. You may prefer the sounds on one and the key action on another, so it's worth doing some in depth study.

If it is your intention to play classical or jazz seriously, I would suggest that a digital piano could be a good choice for you. But if you are an absolute beginner then consider one which also has auto-accompaniment which in *no way* prevents the instrument from being used as a normal complete piano.

Acoustic Pianos

I would never discourage anyone from getting an acoustic piano if this is what they want, but the clear disadvantages are:

- They need periodic tuning
- They are space greedy
- They can be very expensive
- They're not suitable for gigging
- You will drive your family and neighbours nuts when you practice, as these of course don't work too good with headphones

On the plus side, when the world eventually forgets how to generate electricity, everyone will want one!

I don't think that anyone could deny that the Bosendorfer Beethoven Grand is a beautiful instrument, but at £83,000 I wouldn't really recommend this for a beginner - *especially if they live in a bedsit!*

But the sounds of this instrument and others have been faithfully reproduced by Clavia and available on all their Nord electronic keyboards. Ok, it's not the real thing, but only a *'purist'* could tell the difference and you'd save a massive £80,000 *and have a fair bit more room to walk around!*

Bosendorfer Grand Piano



So please also look at the digital piano alternatives - they are far better than they've been in the past and you might just be surprised.

Arranger Keyboards

Arranger keyboards generally come with 61 or 73 / 76 un-weighted or semi-weighted keys. The quality of the keybeds will vary tremendously from model to model. If you are wanting to learn classical or jazz piano, one of these would not be a good choice. Although piano pieces can be played on them, weighted keys give more control for this type of music. But for just about any type of *piano* playing I would advise at least 73 keys (6 octaves).

Korg PA4X Arranger Keyboard (76 Keys)



All arranger keyboards will have a fairly large selection of pre-installed sampled sounds which may or may not be editable. The quality and [polyphony](#) of these sounds will vary very much, although there are some surprisingly good sounds on some of the less expensive models.

Additionally, arranger keyboards have the facility to split the keyboard at certain (variable) points enabling different sounds to be played in each part of the board, (i.e. bass on the lower half / piano on the top half), and / or to use the lower half of the keyboard to trigger [auto-accompaniment](#) enabling the player to effectively be a one-man-band. Indeed, many of the better-quality arrangers are used for live gigging by solo players.

Korg PA 700 (61 Keys)



Many arranger keyboards have built-in speakers, which are suitable for home use, but most also have the facility for adding external speakers for better quality and more volume. The more expensive models (Korg PA 4X / Yamaha Genos) tend not to have built in speakers as is the norm for professional equipment.

Most also have recording features, in some cases with as many as 16 fully editable tracks enabling a fair degree of quality music production *on the better models - Korg PA 700 onwards!*

Arranger keyboards are available from as little as £50 up to more than £4,000. A good entry model is the Yamaha PSR E473 and the current top professional model (in my opinion) is the Korg PA 4X - *many would argue that the Yamaha Genos is better!*

Casio CT-X5000 (61 Keys)



So, who are they good for?

The lower priced models are ideal for anyone who wants to learn music in a fairly casual way and just have fun - *for classical or jazz go for a digital piano*. The more expensive models are ideal for solo gigging, or music production by more experienced musicians. At the entry level of the market, the Casios are excellent value and hard to beat, but do also look at the Korgs, Rolands and Yamahas.

Auto-Accompaniment

All arranger keyboards and some pianos / organs have the facility to either use the instrument as a full keyboard (in piano mode) or to split the keyboard at a chosen point and use the upper half for the right-hand melody work and the lower portion with an alternative sound / instrument for bass etc., or auto-accompaniment. But remember that you'd be struggling in full piano mode with less than 73 keys.

In the auto-accompaniment mode, a particular rhythm and style can be selected which will play bass, drums and other instrumentation as soon as a chord is played below the split point. As the chord is changed, the instrumentation will follow automatically.

In most cases there will be:

- An intro - one or more
- Variations - usually four different ones
- Fills which can be triggered to activate automatically between variations
- Endings - one or more

This results in the player being in control of a complete multi-instrument band / orchestra. Clearly using this option enables even a novice to produce professional sounding work easily.

The quality of the styles varies between instruments, but at the high end they are quite stunning. This feature can allow a good player to make truly professional performances solo, something that I have done personally in the not so distant past - using a Korg SP500 digital piano.

There are thousands of styles available (downloadable) for all genres of music and it can take hours (months) to wade through them. On the advanced keyboards, you can even create your own styles, but this involves a fair learning curve.

To use this feature, ideally you will need to understand chords and inversions details of which are included herein, but in most cases, there are also features for beginners whereby the chords can be triggered with only one or two fingers.

Auto-accompaniment can be used live or incorporated into recordings where plenty of manipulation is possible.

BUT I would strongly recommend that you learn to play both with *and* without the auto-accompaniment then you will get the best of both worlds. The exercises herein teach exactly this - for your greatest fulfilment. Don't make the mistake of spending hours pushing buttons, '*having fun*' and learning nothing - it's an easy trap to fall into!

Note that if you are playing with a band, auto-accompaniment would never be used.

Sequencers

Most arranger keyboards, workstations and some digital pianos have one or more built in sequencer(s). This enables you to record and playback chord sequences, styles, fills and variations or even complete songs easily *once you've got your head around it!*

Out of the sequencers that I've used, I've found the Korgs to be most user friendly - or maybe it's just because I've had a few of them and I understand the Korg way of thinking best. Some incidentally are far more editable than others, which is another reason I prefer Korgs.

Another recording option is to use an external sequencer via your PC and a DAW (Digital Audio Workstation) such as Cakewalk or Cubase etc., which allows far more control, editing and mixing possibilities. To do this, in most cases you would also need an audio interface unless your keyboard has one built in which is becoming more the norm. See my website for more details about free DAWs.

Hammer Action or Semi Weighted?

If you conclude that you want a digital keyboard as against an acoustic instrument, then your next dilemma will be whether to buy one with fully weighted '*hammer action*' keys or to go for '*semi weighted*'.

Without doubt *hammer action* keys are far better for piano playing, while *semi weighted* are better for organ, electric piano, and synthesizer. Both types of keyboards incidentally tend to be '*velocity sensitive*', which means the harder you play the louder the sound - as on an acoustic piano. But there are times when you wouldn't necessarily want this (organs and harpsichords), in which case this feature can be turned off.

For my time '*on the road*' I only ever played the Hammond organ (which was *semi weighted*). The type of playing I did at that time would have been impossible on a weighted board. But now that I've calmed down somewhat, I'm finding that I play more piano type music. So, I have a conundrum - *I want both!* And not only that, I want top quality piano / organ sounds and I want to be able to move it easily without the risk of a heart attack. Clearly such an instrument has not yet been invented, but it can be done!

How?

By using a *two-tier combination* set-up, with a weighted action board at the bottom and a lightweight action at the top. There are numerous possible combinations.

Polyphony

When considering various keyboards, you will come across the words '*polyphonic*' and '*monophonic*'.

A *monophonic* keyboard will only allow you to play one note at a time as in the very early synths - if you play two notes together only one will sound. A keyboard which is *polyphonic* to 32 notes, will allow 32 notes to be played / sounded at once.

As you only have ten fingers (presumably) you may think that this is fine, but when you consider that using the sustain pedal and / or auto-accompaniment can drastically increase the need for *polyphony*, 32 notes soon becomes inadequate. So, the larger the *polyphony* the better!

Most quality keyboards have a *polyphony* of 120 notes or more.

Midi

What is 'Midi'?

'Midi' - *Musical Instrument Digital Interface* is basically a way of transferring musical information from one keyboard or recording device to another via a standard midi cable or via a USB cable (if supported). A single Midi link can carry up to sixteen channels of information.

The information that *midi* carries is basically everything except *audio*. For instance, a *midi* recording could consist of:

- The notes played and how long they are held on for
- How hard they are played (velocity)
- Timing
- Pedal on / off etc.

But it won't record the *audio*. So, if you made a *midi* recording on a particular keyboard, saved it to a *midi* '*smf*' file and then played it back on another keyboard or PC, it would use the sounds from the second keyboard or computer software for playback - which of course may be better or worse than the original.

A great advantage of recording in *midi* is the ability to correct mistakes (assuming the editing facilities are available in the keyboard or DAW). For instance:

- Timing mistake can be corrected by quantizing either at the time of recording or afterwards
- Bum notes can be corrected with the '*edit event*' feature
- Velocity and pedal errors can be corrected with the '*edit event*' feature
- Part of a recording can be corrected using the '*punch in*' feature

- Plus much more!

Another use for *midi* is to connect two keyboards which would enable you to play one board and use the sounds from the other.

So, what if I want to record in audio?

Many keyboards will have audio recording features which will record exactly what you play using the sounds of your instrument. But if you make an error, or something is not quite right you will need to record it again from the beginning.

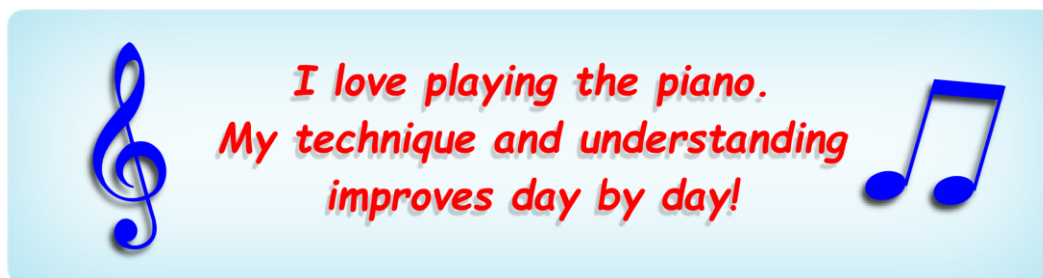
But if your keyboard or DAW has *midi and audio* recording features, you could first record in *midi*, make your corrections, then playback the corrected file *as* you record it in *audio* and *Bingo* - you will have an *audio* recording with the sounds and effects from your keyboard.

If recording *audio* into a DAW, you will need an external *audio interface* if the facility is not in your keyboard - many new keyboards have both *midi and audio* interfaces but do check before buying if this is your intention.

Other items that you will need include:

- A stool - preferably height adjustable
- A stand strong enough to accommodate the keyboard
- A good quality sustain pedal - preferably with a reverse polarity switch
- A music stand - included with some keyboards
- A dust cover for the keyboard - eBay
- Amplification and leads if not included
- A keyboard carrying bag or case if you intend gigging or moving it around
- Headphones - if you want your family to retain their sanity!

All of these are widely available from many physical and online outlets, but more details of these can again be seen in my website at https://learn-keyboard.co.uk/keyboard_reviews.html .



Now we'll begin learning to play!

← The Notes of the Keyboard →

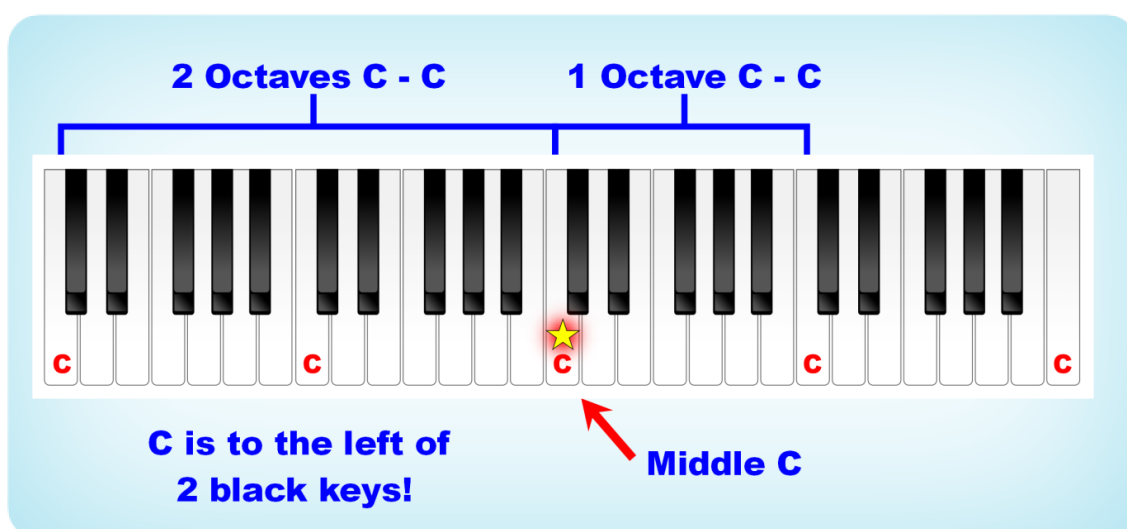
Firstly, we'll look at the notes of the keyboard and how to identify them.

As already shown, some keyboards / pianos have more keys than others, but this makes no difference in relation to understanding how to play them, as they all have the same basic arrangement of black and white keys.

If you look closely, you will see that the black keys are in groups of two then three.

This enables us to find every single note easily. And the first one that you must learn is 'C' which can be found just to the left of two black keys.

The diagram below shows a four-octave span revealing five C's each of which are eight notes apart - hence octave - as in octagon and octopus - *eight!*



Probably the most important note on the keyboard is **middle C** which is the 'C' that is more or less in the middle of the keyboard and because it is so important, we are going to put a star on ours as shown.

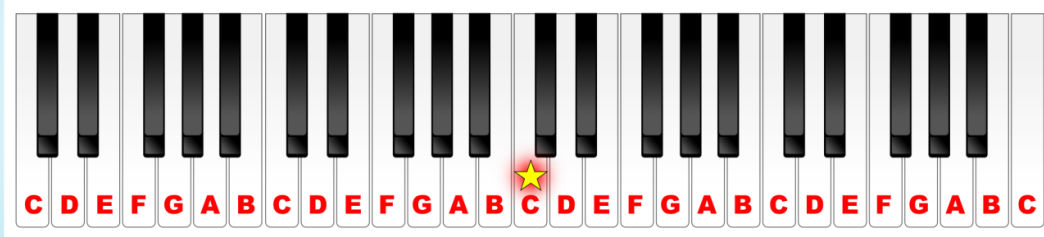
Now all the notes to the left of **middle C** get gradually lower in pitch and all the notes to the right gradually get higher. And usually, you will use your right hand for the higher notes and your left hand for the lower notes.

*So which hand plays **middle C**?*

That's a good question and the answer is that it could be either, but I will explain more shortly.

Now I'll show you what all the other notes are called, but I don't want you to get too confused about all this at the moment. We will be taking it all slowly step by step.

Here's the other notes!



This is mind boggling, how am I going to remember this lot?

Easy, if you split them up into two main groups according to the number of black notes as shown below:

Notes around the Two Black Keys!



Notes around the Three Black Keys!



And if you can't remember which comes first **G** or **A**, you're probably going Gaga - get it? - GA - GA!!

What about the black ones, what are they called?

Don't worry I've not forgotten them, we'll be dealing with them shortly, but first we'll look at how the keys of the keyboard relate to music notation.

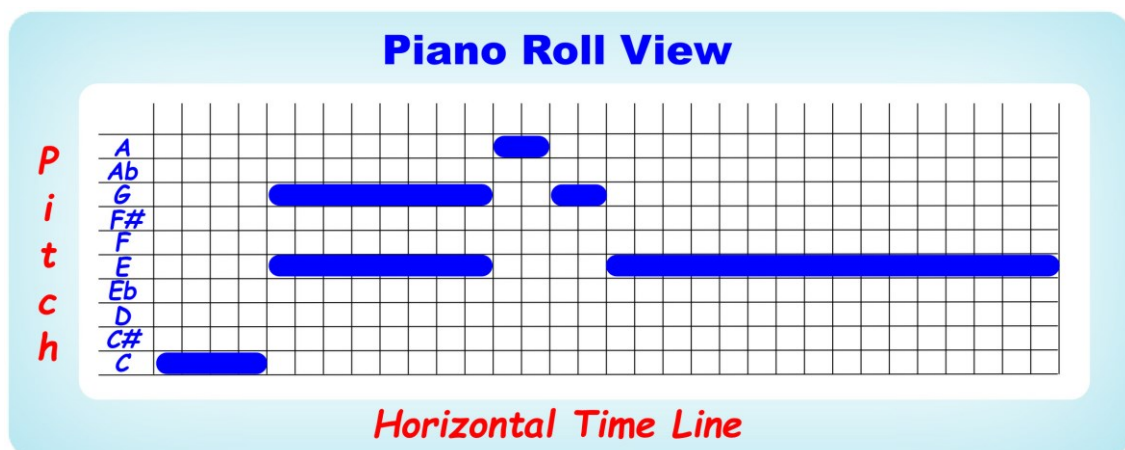
← Music Notation →

Music notation is basically a glorified *graph* using groups of lines called 'staves' or 'staves', with the 'time-line' being the horizontal axis from left to right and the 'pitch' being the vertical axis. How long a note is played for is determined by the time element of the note i.e. crotchet, quaver, minim etc. When it is played is determined by how far along the timeline it's placed. The pitch of the note is determined by how high or low it's placed on the vertical axis (the staff). Simple - easy peasy - *in theory!*

As an example, in the diagram below, the first note to be played is **C** which is the lowest pitched note of the phrase and is a 'crotchet' (don't worry I'll explain all this shortly), followed by **E** and **G** which are higher pitched and played together. They are both 'minims' which are sustained for twice as long as a 'crotchet'. Then we have **A** which is the highest note of the phrase followed by **G** again both of which are 'quavers' being timed half the value of a crotchet. And finally, the last note of the phrase is **E** which is a 'semibreve' (notice that it has no stem) which is four times the time value of a crotchet.



The next diagram shows exactly the same phrase in graph form or *Piano Roll* form as used in music recording software. Click on either to hear the phrase if you want to.



Can you recognise the similarities between the two diagrams?

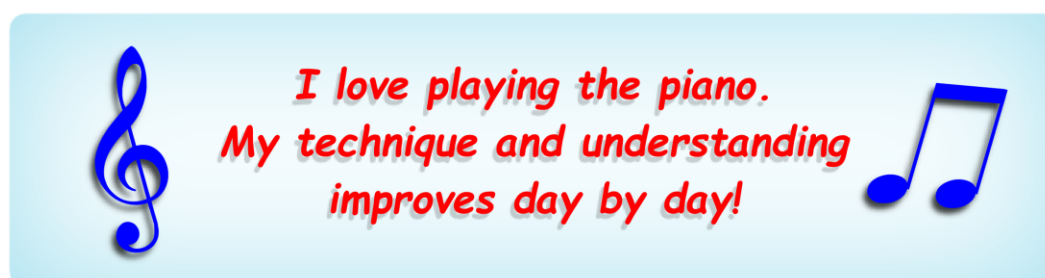
Undoubtedly any untrained musician would find the piano roll view simpler to understand, and it certainly has its uses when editing recorded music. But look at how much space it takes up compared to the first diagram. And remember this is a very short, one hand phrase. So clearly, learning conventional music notation has to be to every musician's advantage.

In order to extend the vertical axis (in conventional notation) and potentially accommodate more notes, this is split into 'clefs'. The two clefs used in piano music are the 'treble' and 'bass' clefs as shown next and these forms the 'grand staff' (or 'stave').



Saying: "the two clefs used in Piano music" implies that there are other clefs.

Yes, there are several other clefs used by other instruments and singers, the most common being the 'alto' and 'tenor' clefs, but from the piano / keyboard point of view, you can completely put them out of mind, just simply know that they exist and forget about them!

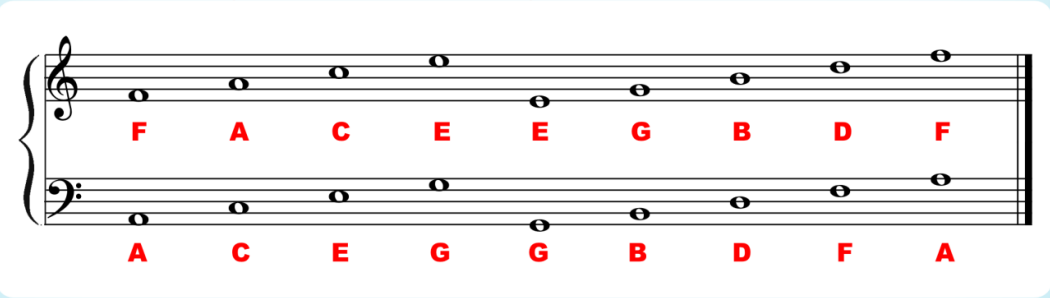


The Grand Staff

The 'Grand staff' is made up of two 'staves' or 'staves' of five lines each, the top one being the 'treble clef' which is mainly used for the higher notes by the right hand and the 'bass clef' mainly used for the lower notes by the left hand.

The Grand Staff

Notes of the Treble Clef



Notes of the Bass Clef

What's the difference between a staff and a stave?

Actually, no-one seems to know for sure - *not even Google or Wikipedia!* But clearly a *staff* is a *stave* and a *stave* is a *staff*, although generally the plural for both is 'staves' not 'staves' - *but don't worry about it, it's just a word - well two words!*

The important thing that you need to learn is that the 'staves' or 'staves' are split into the two 'clefs' (for piano music) - these are what you need to learn and remember.

An easy way to remember the notes of each clef is to think of them in sections like:

- Treble Clef *space* notes **F A C E** - the word *FACE!*
- Treble Clef *line* notes **E G B D F** - *Every Good Boy Deserves Favours!*
- Bass Clef *space* notes **A C E G** - *All Cows Eat Grass!*
- Bass Clef *line* notes **G B D F A** - *Giant Bears Don't Fly Aeroplanes!*

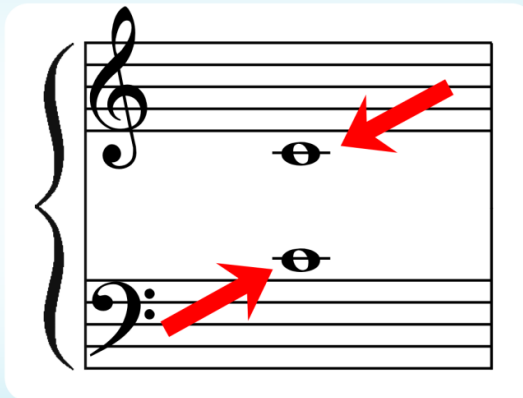
So, which one is 'middle C'?

Well actually '**middle C**' is not in the above illustration, because it falls below the lines of the treble clef and above the lines of the bass clef. In fact, it's exactly mid-way between both clefs.

The next illustration will show you where it is! Although it is shown in both the treble and bass clefs it is the same note.

Middle C

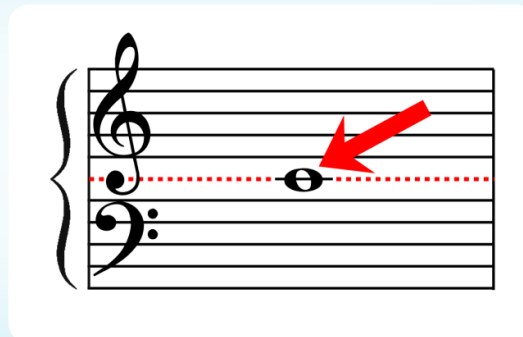
Middle C is below the lines of the Treble Clef and above the lines of the Bass Clef



If we bring the two clefs closer together, you will see that there is an imaginary line exactly midway between the two clefs and this is where *'middle C'* lives.

Middle C

If we bring the two clefs closer together and draw an imaginary line between them, this is where we find Middle C



And this is why *'middle C'* has a line drawn through the middle of it. This is called a *'ledger line'* and happens with some other notes as well, in fact any time a note goes above or below the clef staff lines.

Now the notes both sides of middle C (**B** and **D**) also fall either above or below the clef staff lines which can be seen next.

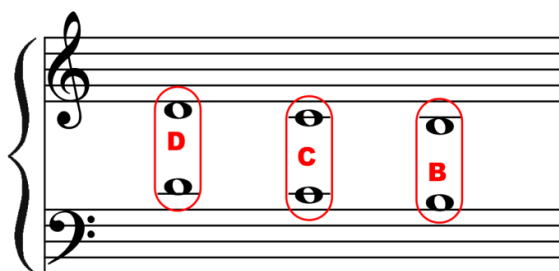


*I love playing the piano.
My technique and understanding
improves day by day!*



Notes Between the Clefs

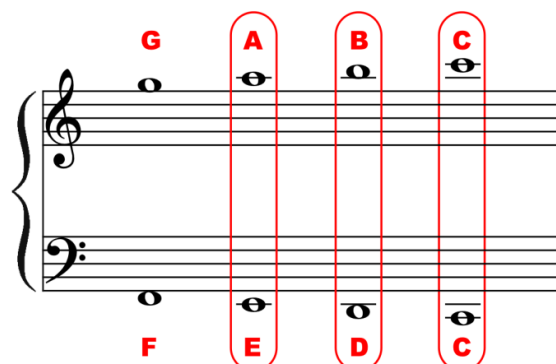
The notes shown here are the same notes written in different clefs



Now there are also notes that fall both above the treble clef and below the bass clef and these in fact would be the top four and the bottom four white notes of a four-octave spread.

Notes Above or Below the Clefs

Some notes fall above or below the clef staff lines as shown here!



The two C's shown here are 4 octaves apart!

Wow this is getting heavy; I don't think I'll ever understand all this!

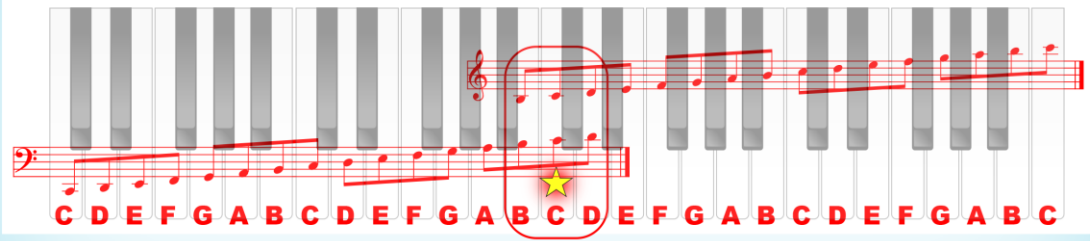
Please don't distress yourself, we will be dealing with everything one step at a time and it will all become clear as you progress. But you may occasionally need to review various sections to gain a complete understanding. - *Just read on!*

How the Notes Relate to the Keyboard

Now we'll look at how the musical notes relate to the keyboard.

This next diagram may at first look a little confusing and difficult to read; and if you are reading this on a tablet, it may not be clear. If you haven't already done so, please go to the rear of the book to get the pdf download link and you will be able to see this much more clearly, even more so in landscape view!

Notes of Both Clefs Together



Middle C and its neighbours are shown in both clefs!

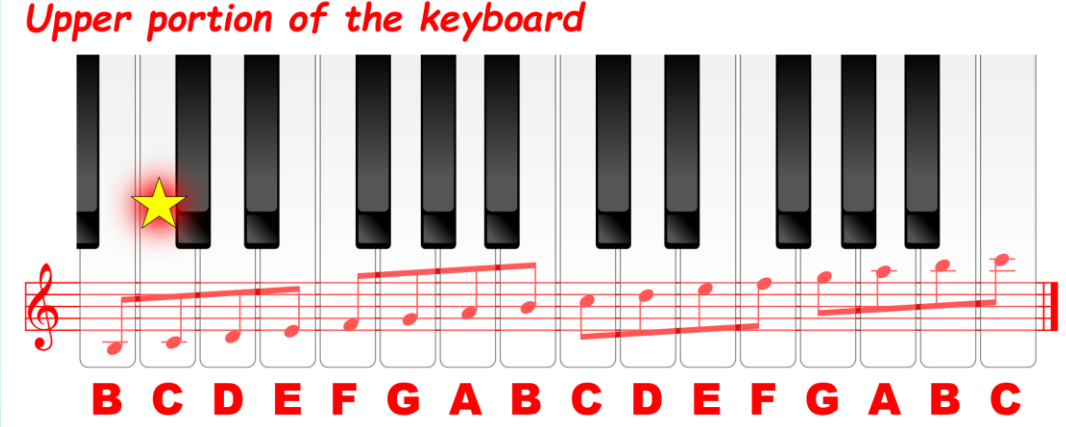
To make this easier to see, below I have split the keyboard into two 2-octave sections, one for each clef, but remember that we have put a star on *'middle C'* so that you can always find it!

So, notice that the next two diagrams are actually the same as the above diagram split into two.

It may be useful for you to print out these three diagrams and look at them in detail.

Notes of the Treble Clef

Upper portion of the keyboard



Notes of the Bass Clef

Lower portion of the keyboard



Ok so this shows a four-octave spread, but what happens when the notes are higher or lower than these as on larger keyboards?

Good question! And the answer is that up to a certain point more ledger lines are added, but when there are too many they become impossible to read quickly, so instead the music is written an octave (or more) lower or higher to keep within the clefs and then the *8va*, *8vb*, *15ma* or *15mb* symbols are used.

As an example, the following two phrases are exactly the same, but on the second one the *8va* symbol is used indicating that the notes should be played an octave higher than written.



- *8va* = play the bracketed notes one octave higher
- *8vb* = play the bracketed notes one octave lower
- *15ma* = play the bracketed notes two octaves higher
- *15mb* = play the bracketed notes two octaves lower

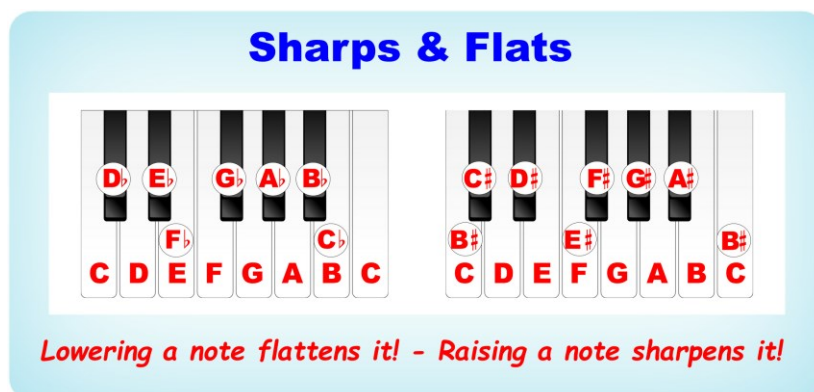
You will see a few examples of these as we progress.

Sharps & Flats

We've already learnt that the interval from one **C** to the next is an '*octave*'. And indeed, this is the same interval from **B - B** or **G - G** etc.

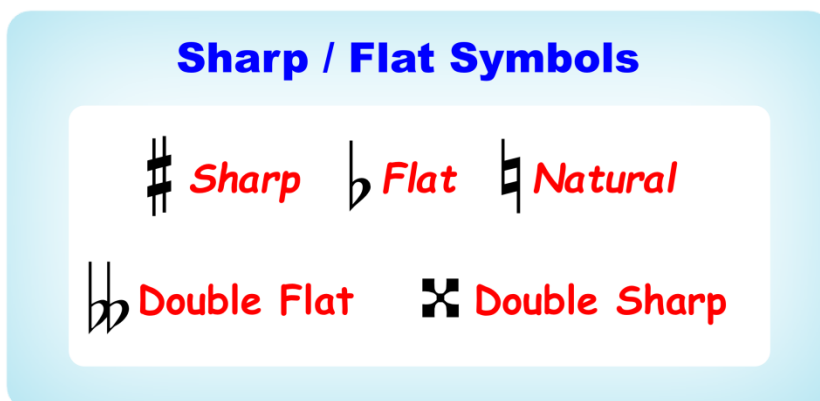
Now the smallest interval in Western music is a '*semitone*' which is the interval from any note on the keyboard to its nearest neighbour be it black or white up or down.

So, the interval between **C** and **B** is a semitone, and also the interval between **E** and **F** as in both cases there are no black notes in-between. In all the other cases there *are* black notes in-between, so the semitone interval will be to the black note above or below. And as you can see by the diagram below the first black note after **C** is called **C sharp** or **D flat**. Note that in some circumstances **B** could also be known as **C flat** (as there are no black notes in between) and **C** could also be known as **B sharp** - but actually this is very rare.



To '*sharpen*' a note is to raise the pitch and to '*flatten*' one is to lower the pitch.

There are also '*double sharps*' and '*double flats*' where the pitch of a note is raised or lowered twice as much (2 semi-tones). But as these only occur occasionally in keys heavily endowed in sharps or flats, we're not going to get involved with these here; and it may be years before you come across any.



Whether a particular note is known as a sharp or a flat depends on the key signature which will be dealt with later.

Sharps and flats occur in music in two different ways:

- as '*accidentals*' or
- within key signatures (which could also include accidentals)

When they are *accidentals*, they are simply added to the music as and where they occur as shown below.



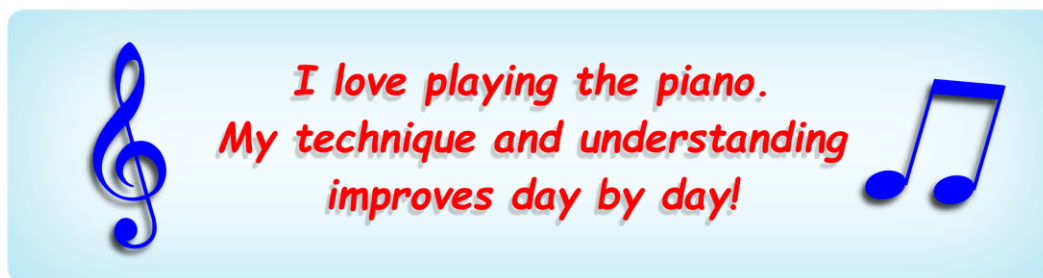
In this case any repeats of notes that are '*sharpened*' or '*flattened*' this way remains so for the duration of the bar unless '*naturalised*' using the '*natural*' symbol.

If you look carefully at the last diagrams you will see that both examples are identical. The first one uses **F sharp** and the second uses **G flat** (same notes) to produce the same result.

Why do the black notes have two names? Why not just call them 'flats' or 'sharps' but not both?

Yes, I can see the confusion, but this is because there are '*flat keys*' and '*sharp keys*' which we'll be learning about later, along with '*key signatures*'.

But first we'll deal with the timing.



Roland RD 88 Stage Piano (88 Keys)



← Timing and Rhythm Part 1 →

Hopefully you've understood a little about the vertical axis of the musical graph (stave). Now we'll start looking at the horizontal axis - the '*time-line*', which consists of time signatures, bars and note values.

Time Signatures and Bars

Each group of notes is separated into '*bars*' or '*measures*', identified by the vertical '*bar lines*' separating the various notes or groups of notes. The time signature determines how many notes of what length are to be played to each bar, the first beat of which is often slightly or heavily accented.



The most common time signatures are:

- **4/4** - four quarter notes to each bar. Think or repeat '1 & 2 & 3 & 4 & 1 & 2 & 3 & 4' etc., and with your right hand tap with the '1 2 3 4' beats but not the '*ands*'. With your left hand tap on the '1 and 3' beats
- **3/4** - three quarter notes to each bar (Waltz time). Think or repeat '1 & 2 & 3 & 1 & 2 & 3' etc., and with your left hand tap on the '1' beats and with your right hand on the '2 / 3' beats
- **2/4** - two quarter notes to each bar (March time). Think or repeat '1 & 2 & 1 & 2' etc., and with your left hand tap on the '1' beats and with your right hand on the '2' beats
- **6/8** - six eighth notes to each bar (two set of three - Jazz Waltz). Think or repeat '1 2 3, 2 2 3 - 1 2 3, 2 2 3' etc., (no '*ands*' this time) and tap all the beats with your right hand and the '1' and '2' beats with your left hand but giving more emphasis on the first '1' beat of each pattern. This may seem similar to 3/4 time, but it's generally much faster

END OF PREVIEW

**PLEASE CONTINUE YOUR KINDLE
PURCHASE**

OR GO TO

https://learn-keyboard.co.uk/abso_se.html