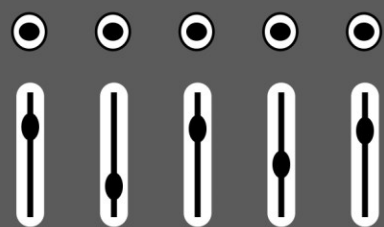
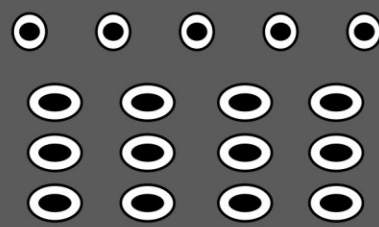


Learn How to Play Keyboard / Piano With Auto-Accompaniment

***A Self Tuition Book
For Absolute Beginners!***



STYLE - BOSSA - TEMPO 120
CHORD C - VARIATION 1 - GRAND



Martin Woodward

Copyright © 2022 Martin Woodward

All rights reserved. This book or any portion thereof may not be reproduced or used in any manner whatsoever without the express written permission of the publisher except for the use of brief quotations in a book review or scholarly journal.

ISBN: 978-1-716-03773-3

Enquiries: <http://learn-keyboard.co.uk>

Acknowledgements

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); Ralph Denyer (singer / songwriter); Phil Childs (bassist); Jim Smith (drums); George Lee (saxophonist); Ron Thomas (bassist); Emile Ford (UK No. 1 singer / songwriter).

To my early mentors: Alan Simonds (guitarist / vocalist); big bruv Steve (guitarist) and Mr. Henley (my inspirational music teacher at Warlingham School 1960 - 65).

And to Myriad Software: <http://www.myriad-online.com> for the Melody Assistant music notation software which was used for the production of this book. - *Thanks!*



Contents

Introduction	10
<i>Get the Best from this Book.....</i>	<i>12</i>
<i>Using the in-Book Links.....</i>	<i>12</i>
Buying Your First Piano / Keyboard.....	14
<i>Digital Pianos - Home Use.....</i>	<i>15</i>
<i>Digital Pianos - Stage / Studio.....</i>	<i>16</i>
<i>Organs</i>	<i>16</i>
<i>Arranger Keyboards</i>	<i>16</i>
<i>Workstations Keyboards</i>	<i>18</i>
<i>Synthesizers</i>	<i>18</i>
<i>Controller Keyboards</i>	<i>18</i>
<i>Modules.....</i>	<i>19</i>
<i>In Short.....</i>	<i>19</i>
<i>Sounds / Programs / Tones / Voices</i>	<i>19</i>
<i>Sequencers.....</i>	<i>20</i>
<i>Hammer Action or Semi Weighted?</i>	<i>20</i>
<i>Polyphony.....</i>	<i>20</i>
<i>Advantages / Disadvantages of Internal Amplification.....</i>	<i>21</i>
<i>Midi</i>	<i>22</i>
<i>Buying Second-hand or New?.....</i>	<i>23</i>
<i>Keyboard Stands.....</i>	<i>25</i>
<i>Keyboard Benches / Stools.....</i>	<i>25</i>
<i>Piano / Keyboard Pedals</i>	<i>26</i>
<i>Keyboard Cases.....</i>	<i>27</i>
<i>Headphones.....</i>	<i>28</i>
The Notes of the Keyboard.....	29
Music Notation.....	32
<i>The Grand Staff.....</i>	<i>34</i>
<i>How the Notes Relate to the Keyboard.....</i>	<i>37</i>

<i>Sharps & Flats</i>	39
Timing and Rhythm Part 1	41
<i>Time Signatures and Bars</i>	41
<i>Note Values</i>	<i>Error! Bookmark not defined.</i>
<i>Rests</i>	<i>Error! Bookmark not defined.</i>
<i>Lead in Notes</i>	<i>Error! Bookmark not defined.</i>
<i>4/4 Timing</i>	<i>Error! Bookmark not defined.</i>
<i>2/4 Timing</i>	<i>Error! Bookmark not defined.</i>
<i>3/4 Timing</i>	<i>Error! Bookmark not defined.</i>
<i>Using a Metronome</i>	<i>Error! Bookmark not defined.</i>
Let's Begin	<i>Error! Bookmark not defined.</i>
<i>Correct Hand and Seating Positioning</i>	<i>Error! Bookmark not defined.</i>
<i>Fingering</i>	<i>Error! Bookmark not defined.</i>
<i>Your First Exercises</i>	<i>Error! Bookmark not defined.</i>
<i>Exercise 1</i>	<i>Error! Bookmark not defined.</i>
<i>Exercise 2</i>	<i>Error! Bookmark not defined.</i>
<i>Exercise 3</i>	<i>Error! Bookmark not defined.</i>
<i>Exercise 4</i>	<i>Error! Bookmark not defined.</i>
<i>Exercise 5</i>	<i>Error! Bookmark not defined.</i>
<i>Creating Tunes with 5 Notes</i>	<i>Error! Bookmark not defined.</i>
<i>Example 1</i>	<i>Error! Bookmark not defined.</i>
<i>Example 2</i>	<i>Error! Bookmark not defined.</i>
<i>Example 3</i>	<i>Error! Bookmark not defined.</i>
<i>Example 4</i>	<i>Error! Bookmark not defined.</i>
<i>Example 5</i>	<i>Error! Bookmark not defined.</i>
<i>Example 6</i>	<i>Error! Bookmark not defined.</i>
<i>Exercise 6</i>	<i>Error! Bookmark not defined.</i>
<i>Stepping Stones</i>	<i>Error! Bookmark not defined.</i>
<i>Exercise 7</i>	<i>Error! Bookmark not defined.</i>
<i>The Gonk March</i>	<i>Error! Bookmark not defined.</i>
<i>Grubby Hands</i>	<i>Error! Bookmark not defined.</i>
Timing and Rhythm Part 2	<i>Error! Bookmark not defined.</i>

<i>Dotted Notes</i>	Error! Bookmark not defined.
<i>Triplets</i>	Error! Bookmark not defined.
<i>Tied Notes</i>	Error! Bookmark not defined.
<i>Grace Notes</i>	Error! Bookmark not defined.
<i>2/4 Timing with Triplets</i>	Error! Bookmark not defined.
<i>3/4 Timing with Triplets</i>	Error! Bookmark not defined.
<i>4/4 Timing with Triplets</i>	Error! Bookmark not defined.
<i>6/8 Timing</i>	Error! Bookmark not defined.
<i>Triplet Exercise</i>	Error! Bookmark not defined.
Important Musical Terms	Error! Bookmark not defined.
<i>Staccato</i>	Error! Bookmark not defined.
<i>Marcato</i>	Error! Bookmark not defined.
<i>Fermata</i>	Error! Bookmark not defined.
<i>Repeat Last Measure</i>	Error! Bookmark not defined.
<i>Navigational Symbols</i>	Error! Bookmark not defined.
<i>Segno</i>	Error! Bookmark not defined.
<i>Coda & Da Coda</i>	Error! Bookmark not defined.
<i>Fine</i>	Error! Bookmark not defined.
<i>Da Segno</i>	Error! Bookmark not defined.
<i>Da Capo</i>	Error! Bookmark not defined.
<i>Loop Section</i>	Error! Bookmark not defined.
<i>Dynamic Symbols</i>	Error! Bookmark not defined.
<i>Embellishments</i>	Error! Bookmark not defined.
<i>Trill</i>	Error! Bookmark not defined.
<i>High Mordent</i>	Error! Bookmark not defined.
<i>Low Mordent</i>	Error! Bookmark not defined.
<i>Arpeggio</i>	Error! Bookmark not defined.
<i>Turn</i>	Error! Bookmark not defined.
<i>Inverted Turn</i>	Error! Bookmark not defined.
<i>Phrase Marks</i>	Error! Bookmark not defined.
<i>Sustain Pedal Symbols & Use</i>	Error! Bookmark not defined.
More Exercises & Tunes	Error! Bookmark not defined.

<i>Exercise 8</i>	Error! Bookmark not defined.
<i>Exercise 9</i>	Error! Bookmark not defined.
<i>Exercise 10</i>	Error! Bookmark not defined.
<i>Exercise 11</i>	Error! Bookmark not defined.
<i>Exercise 12</i>	Error! Bookmark not defined.
<i>Exercise 13</i>	Error! Bookmark not defined.
<i>Exercise 14</i>	Error! Bookmark not defined.
<i>Exercise 15</i>	Error! Bookmark not defined.
<i>Exercise 16</i>	Error! Bookmark not defined.
<i>Exercise 17</i>	Error! Bookmark not defined.
<i>Exercise 18</i>	Error! Bookmark not defined.
<i>Exercise 19</i>	Error! Bookmark not defined.
<i>The Jolly Farmer</i>	Error! Bookmark not defined.
<i>The Jolly Milkmaid</i>	Error! Bookmark not defined.
<i>The Clown Waltz</i>	Error! Bookmark not defined.
Intervals	Error! Bookmark not defined.
Keys, Key Signatures & Transposition	Error! Bookmark not defined.
<i>Relative Minors</i>	Error! Bookmark not defined.
Your First Scales	Error! Bookmark not defined.
<i>Pre-Scale Exercises</i>	Error! Bookmark not defined.
<i>Passing the Thumb under (ascending)</i>	Error! Bookmark not defined.
<i>Passing the 3rd Finger over (descending)</i>	Error! Bookmark not defined.
<i>The Major Scale</i>	Error! Bookmark not defined.
<i>C Major Scale</i>	Error! Bookmark not defined.
<i>G Major Scale</i>	Error! Bookmark not defined.
<i>F Major Scale</i>	Error! Bookmark not defined.
<i>D Major Scale</i>	Error! Bookmark not defined.
<i>B\flat Major Scale</i>	Error! Bookmark not defined.
<i>Chromatic Scale</i>	Error! Bookmark not defined.
<i>The Harmonic Minor Scale</i>	Error! Bookmark not defined.
<i>A Minor (Harmonic) Scale</i>	Error! Bookmark not defined.
<i>E Minor (Harmonic) Scale</i>	Error! Bookmark not defined.

<i>D Minor (Harmonic) Scale</i>	<i>Error! Bookmark not defined.</i>
<i>B Minor (Harmonic) Scale.....</i>	<i>Error! Bookmark not defined.</i>
<i>G Minor (Harmonic) Scale</i>	<i>Error! Bookmark not defined.</i>
Chord Construction.....	Error! Bookmark not defined.
<i>A Few Important points about 7th Chords</i>	<i>Error! Bookmark not defined.</i>
<i>Suspended 2nd and 4th Chords.....</i>	<i>Error! Bookmark not defined.</i>
<i>Diminished 7th Chords</i>	<i>Error! Bookmark not defined.</i>
<i>Augmented Chords</i>	<i>Error! Bookmark not defined.</i>
<i>Inversions</i>	<i>Error! Bookmark not defined.</i>
<i>Chord Substitution.....</i>	<i>Error! Bookmark not defined.</i>
Chord Fingering	Error! Bookmark not defined.
<i>Left-Hand Chord Fingering</i>	<i>Error! Bookmark not defined.</i>
Chords in Keyboard View.....	Error! Bookmark not defined.
Arpeggios	Error! Bookmark not defined.
<i>C Major Arpeggio.....</i>	<i>Error! Bookmark not defined.</i>
<i>G Major Arpeggio</i>	<i>Error! Bookmark not defined.</i>
<i>F Major Arpeggio.....</i>	<i>Error! Bookmark not defined.</i>
<i>D Major Arpeggio</i>	<i>Error! Bookmark not defined.</i>
<i>B^b Major Arpeggio.....</i>	<i>Error! Bookmark not defined.</i>
<i>A Minor Arpeggio.....</i>	<i>Error! Bookmark not defined.</i>
<i>E Minor Arpeggio.....</i>	<i>Error! Bookmark not defined.</i>
<i>D Minor Arpeggio</i>	<i>Error! Bookmark not defined.</i>
<i>B Minor Arpeggio.....</i>	<i>Error! Bookmark not defined.</i>
<i>G Minor Arpeggio</i>	<i>Error! Bookmark not defined.</i>
Playing from a Fake Book.....	Error! Bookmark not defined.
<i>Using Auto-Accompaniment</i>	<i>Error! Bookmark not defined.</i>
<i>What if there's No Chord Line?</i>	<i>Error! Bookmark not defined.</i>
<i>Acquiring Free Sheet Music.....</i>	<i>Error! Bookmark not defined.</i>
More Tunes to Play.....	Error! Bookmark not defined.
<i>Oh! Susanna</i>	<i>Error! Bookmark not defined.</i>
<i>Campdown Races</i>	<i>Error! Bookmark not defined.</i>
<i>Aura Lea - aka Love me Tender</i>	<i>Error! Bookmark not defined.</i>

<i>The Yellow Rose of Texas</i>	<i>Error! Bookmark not defined.</i>
<i>Home on the Range.....</i>	<i>Error! Bookmark not defined.</i>
<i>Clementine.....</i>	<i>Error! Bookmark not defined.</i>
<i>On the Banks of the Ohio.....</i>	<i>Error! Bookmark not defined.</i>
<i>Floral Dance</i>	<i>Error! Bookmark not defined.</i>
<i>Morning Has Broken</i>	<i>Error! Bookmark not defined.</i>
<i>Early One Morning.....</i>	<i>Error! Bookmark not defined.</i>
<i>Knees Up Mother Brown</i>	<i>Error! Bookmark not defined.</i>
<i>Yankee Doodle.....</i>	<i>Error! Bookmark not defined.</i>
<i>Scarborough Fair</i>	<i>Error! Bookmark not defined.</i>
<i>Silent Night.....</i>	<i>Error! Bookmark not defined.</i>
<i>On Top of Old Smokey.....</i>	<i>Error! Bookmark not defined.</i>
<i>Polly Wolly Doodle.....</i>	<i>Error! Bookmark not defined.</i>
<i>Irish Melody</i>	<i>Error! Bookmark not defined.</i>
<i>Santa Lucia.....</i>	<i>Error! Bookmark not defined.</i>
<i>Amazing Grace</i>	<i>Error! Bookmark not defined.</i>
<i>Lord of the Dance.....</i>	<i>Error! Bookmark not defined.</i>
<i>I Saw Three Ships</i>	<i>Error! Bookmark not defined.</i>
<i>Silver Threads Among the Gold</i>	<i>Error! Bookmark not defined.</i>
Thank You	<i>Error! Bookmark not defined.</i>
<i>Download Link</i>	<i>Error! Bookmark not defined.</i>
<i>What Next?</i>	<i>Error! Bookmark not defined.</i>
<i>Further Reading</i>	<i>Error! Bookmark not defined.</i>

Introduction

As the title suggests, this book has been written for absolute beginners who wish to play keyboard using auto-accompaniment and assumes no prior musical knowledge - *just the desire to do it!*

So, what exactly is auto-accompaniment and is it right for me?

Well, basically it depends on your ultimate intentions. If you wish to play conventional classical music, then using auto-accompaniment is certainly not the way to go. For serious classical music you really need to purchase a conventional piano or a digital one with a hammer action keybed and learn to read music for both treble and bass clefs. In classical music the left hand could be just as active as the right hand, making it necessary to learn and practice scales and exercises for both hands to achieve equal strength, flexibility, and independence, whereas with most other styles of playing the right hand is usually far more predominant.

All arranger keyboards and some digital 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 note 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 pre-determined split point. As the chord is changed, the instrumentation will follow automatically.

In most cases there will be:

- An intro - one or more
- Variations - often 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.

When using auto-accompaniment, the left hand is used *only* to play chords in the lower half of the keyboard to trigger the auto-accompaniment, so, playing conventional classical music would be impossible this way. But just about all *non-classical* sheet music is written with a chord line above the staves and may or may not have the bass clef included - if the bass clef is there, this can simply be ignored. Don't worry, I'll explain all about the clefs and staves as we go along.

Consequently, to play from sheet music with a chord line you would only really need to learn the treble clef (for the right hand) and of course you would need to learn how to play chords with your left hand. Therefore, in this book we will mainly be dealing with left-hand chords and the treble clef, although I will also briefly explain about the bass clef.

So, would learning this way make me a substandard musician?

No, not really, just different, but you could of course learn both! Many superb jazz and rock keyboard players do very little with their left hands. Even though they may not be using auto-accompaniment, very often their left hands are used mainly for playing chords as was the case for me during my soul and prog rock days on the Hammond organ. In fact, many great jazz and rock musicians can't even read music. And to be honest during my touring days I never needed to read music once. But some musicians are totally superb at everything - for instance, Rick Wakeman can play any piece of classical music as well as being a manic rock improviser, but the likes of him are few and far between.

I suppose you could compare using auto-accompaniment to driving an automatic car as against a manual - it's a *lot* easier to start with, but both can get complicated as you progress to advanced levels.

In short, auto-accompaniment keyboards are brilliant for one-man entertainers be it for home amusement or even to a professional level. In fact, I used one of these as a solo performer in Cyprus a few years ago. And of course, another great advantage is that there is only one person to get paid, making it very much more profitable in this event! Note that if you are playing with a band, auto-accompaniment would never be used.

In the next chapter we'll discuss the different types of keyboards available, and which one will be best for you. Also, throughout the book you will see pictures of various arranger keyboards. These are not advertisements *per se*, they are just to fill space and to briefly show you a few of the many boards available - all of which have auto-accompaniment.

I have no allegiance to any particular manufacturer; they all have their good and bad points!

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 herein on [page 164](#). 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.

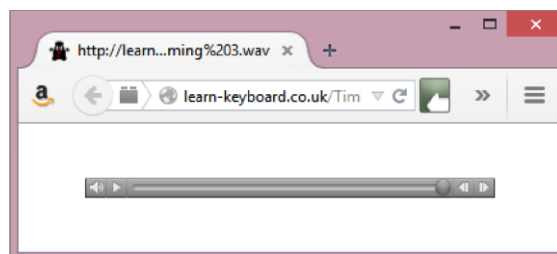
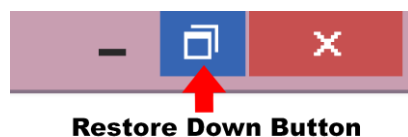
The audio links throughout the book can be accessed two ways:

- by using the free external links at http://learn-keyboard.co.uk/auto_links.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

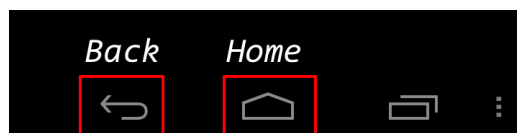
Quite probably you may only need to listen to some of the audio links, but all are included for your convenience.

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).



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 that the links may not work if you are viewing this in a Google or Amazon sample. Please go to <https://learn-keyboard.co.uk/auto.html> for a free *working* pdf sample.

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!*

Buying Your First Piano / Keyboard

There are many different types of electronic pianos / keyboards available which include:

- Digital pianos (home and stage)
- Synthesizers
- Workstations
- Controller Keyboards
- Arrangers
- Organs

On the surface all the above look very similar in the fact that they all have black and white keys, but they are very different. Prices can vary from as little as £50 to many thousands. Which one will be right for you will be determined by:

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

I will briefly explain the differences here which should give you a good idea of what you need to look for, if you haven't already purchased one.

Firstly, just in case you're wondering, there is no such thing as a '*left-handed*' keyboard and if you ever come across one, it will have been created by an idiot just for a laugh! It makes no difference whether you are right or left-handed for playing the keyboard as both are equally important - *more or less*! On all keyboards of every type, the high-pitched notes are to the right and generally played with the right hand and the low notes are to the left and generally played with the left hand. For auto-accompaniment the keyboard is split at a chosen point for the left hand to play chords in the lower portion which trigger the accompaniment.

All digital keyboards will have a headphone socket for personal practice which is a very good idea.

Ok, so let's look at what all these keyboards do. But please also see my web page at https://learn-keyboard.co.uk/keyboard_reviews.html for the latest *unbiased* up to date information.

Digital Pianos - Home Use

Home use digital pianos in general tend to be less feature filled than the stage alternatives. All 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.

If you are perhaps considering learning conventional playing *and* auto-accompaniment, then a digital piano (with auto-accompaniment) could be a great choice and would be my first recommendation.

Currently for a comparatively low-cost starter piano the Casio PX S3100 is hard to beat. This has quality piano sounds, built-in speakers, quality hammer action keybed and many other useful functions including the all-important auto-accompaniment.

Casio PX S3100 (88 Keys)



At the other end of the price spectrum, if you want the convenience of all the gadgetry on an electronic digital piano and a nice piece of furniture, then there are many instruments available such as the Yamaha Clavinovas.

Yamaha Clavinova CVP-809GP (88 Keys)



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

Digital Pianos - Stage / Studio

In contrast to the home use digital pianos, the ones 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 but will generally not have auto-accompaniment. I say generally because the Casio PX S3100 mentioned previously could be described as for home *or* stage use and does of course have auto-accompaniment.

Organs

Organs for home use are nowhere near as popular as they were a few years ago. This is mainly because the arranger keyboards have somewhat taken over. But having said that there are still organs available with auto-accompaniment. The downside is that as well as being expensive, they are space greedy.

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 also learn classical or jazz piano, one of these would not be a good choice. Although piano pieces can be played on them, fully 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 PA 4X 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.

Most importantly for us here, all arranger keyboards have the all-important auto-accompaniment feature mentioned previously.

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.

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.

For the more expensive keyboards 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 auto-accompaniment effectively you will need to understand chords and inversions 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.

Korg PA 700 (61 Keys)



Many of these instruments 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!* Auto-accompaniment can be used live or incorporated into recordings where plenty of manipulation is possible.

Arranger keyboards are available from as little as £50 up to more than £4,000. Two good entry models are the Yamaha PSR E463 or the Korg EK 50. The current top professional model (in my opinion) is the Korg PA 4X - *many would argue that the Yamaha Genos is better!*

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. The more expensive models are ideal for solo gigging, or music production by more experienced musicians. At the entry level of the market, the Casio's are excellent value and hard to beat, but do also look at the Korg's, Yamaha's, Roland's and Ketron's.

Yamaha PSR E473 - 61 Keys



Workstations Keyboards

There is often a fair bit of confusion about the definition of a '*workstation*' as against an '*arranger*'. This isn't helped by some of the manufacturers using conflicting definitions. Both '*workstations*' and '*arrangers*' can be used for music production, but *my* understanding of the difference between the two is as follows:

- An '*arranger*' primarily uses auto-accompaniment with pre-recorded styles. On the more expensive models these can be recorded along with additional parts if required to create a finished product
- By contrast a '*workstation*' will *not* have auto-accompaniment but is more likely to have better quality sounds and effects and better, more advanced recording and editing features which make them capable of high quality *totally original* music production

'*Arrangers*' tend to only be available with 61 or 76 semi-weighted keys, whereas '*workstations*' tend to also be available with an 88 weighted keyboard option.

In short '*arrangers*' are more suitable for solo stage work and '*workstations*' are more suitable for studio music production, but both could be used for either. I wouldn't recommend a workstation for beginners, mainly due to the huge learning curve - *learn to play first!* Sorry if all this sounds confusing!

Synthesizers

Synthesizers are basically used for sound creation and can be capable of producing some truly remarkable original sounds which are used for all types of music. As such they are not suitable for your needs.

But other suitable keyboards such as arrangers and digital pianos may also have fairly basic synthesizer features included.

Controller Keyboards

A basic controller keyboard will make no sounds of its own but can be connected via '*[midi](#)*' to other keyboards and use the sounds from the connected board. Or could be connected to a PC via midi cables or USB (if supported). As such, these are not suitable for your needs, but again many suitable pianos or keyboards may include controller functions, making it possible to record directly into your computer should you so wish.

Note that if this is your intention, I would advise buying a keyboard with an '*audio interface*' built in, otherwise you will need to spend £100 plus for an additional device. You would also need a DAW (digital audio workstation) program for your computer, but there are many good free ones available - see my website for details of these or search '*free DAW*'. Personally, I recommend '*Cakewalk*' for midi and audio, or '*Audacity*' if you just want audio.

Modules

Should you be in the situation where you have a good quality keyboard *without* auto-accompaniment but want this feature *and* want to keep the keyboard, there is an option open to you by using an external module connected via *midi* cables. The only ones that I know of are the Roland BK-7m, the Korg i4m (brilliant but now longer available) and a few by Ketron - SD90, SD3, SD40 and the Audya 4 - *all very expensive!*

Roland BK-7m Module



To be honest I wouldn't really recommend this option for beginners, but at least you now know about it.

In Short

If you *only* want to learn to play using auto-accompaniment, then get an arranger keyboard (61 keys is fine). If you are *also* wanting to play piano music, then you will need at least 73 keys (6 octaves) and ideally a digital piano with a hammer action keybed *and* auto-accompaniment. Personally, the latter would be my choice, which gives you the very best of both worlds - *your choice!*

For your convenience I've listed most of the major manufacturers in the links page of my website at <http://learn-keyboard.co.uk/links.html>.

Now we'll look at a few other important items that you may need to consider before buying.

Sounds / Programs / Tones / Voices

Most electronic pianos / keyboards will have an abundance of different available sounds to choose from. Nearly always the best piano sound will be the default setting. Generally, the more expensive keyboards will have more and better sounds. The sounds are often called '*tones*', '*patches*', '*programs*', or '*voices*'. Usually, the sounds are stored in various '*banks*' according to type, i.e., '*guitars*', '*strings*', '*keys*' etc.

You will need to consult your keyboard's reference guide to discover how to select them - although generally this is straightforward. Many keyboards will allow you to choose more than one sound at once to '*layer*' them. For instance, a piano sound on top with a pad sound underneath. The more expensive boards will allow you to alter the volume (and possibly other features) of both layers.

Sequencers

Many 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 - but 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.

Hammer Action or 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 mainly 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, for me personally I now prefer weighted keys.

But even if you decide that you want a hammer action board, note that the quality variations are huge. The better boards have '*graduated hammer action*' where the keys are heavier in the lower octaves as on an acoustic piano. Similarly, the quality issue applies to '*semi weighted*' boards. Some may have great sounds but atrociously horrible keybeds. I can see that this could be a problem for a beginner as you would have no real way of judging. All I can advise here is to be guided by someone with experience - *but ideally not a salesperson!*

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 say 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.

Advantages / Disadvantages of Internal Amplification

Most of the lower priced portable keyboards and most home digital pianos have internal speakers / amplification. If you intend using the instrument for *home use* only, then this can be ideal. The only possible disadvantage of this is that it may make the instrument physically heavier than it might have been without them, but if you don't intend moving it around too much then this should not cause a problem.

Peavey KB2 Keyboard Amp / Roland KC150 Keyboard Amp



The more expensive portable keyboards tend not to have internal amplification. You may think this odd as it appears that you are paying more and getting less. But as these instruments are primarily produced for the professional *gigging* musician, keeping the weight down to the minimum is useful (something that was unheard of when I was gigging); and also, this leaves the way clear to purchase the right amplification for the musician's individual needs which could vary considerably, governed by the type and size of venue.

KRK Rokit 5 G4 Studio Monitor Speakers



If using one of these instruments for home use, there are many suitable small amps on the market. In this instance I would advise purchasing dedicated keyboard equipment as against a guitar amp *which would work, but not as well*. A pair of *studio monitors* or a single or pair of *powered PA speakers* could also be ideal.

But whatever speakers you end up with external or internal, you will also almost certainly need a pair of reasonable quality headphones.

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.

Buying Second-hand or New?

Like just about anything, if you buy *second-hand* you will save a huge amount on the *new* purchase price and lose a great deal less when you come to sell *which is inevitable!*

Over the years I've bought several new instruments, and inevitably have lost money on all of them whereas many of the *second-hand* instruments I've bought, I've used for a few years and sometimes even sold for a profit - something I've never got anywhere near doing with a car! And as against cars, musical instruments tend to be very reliable. In fact, I have to say that since 1966 when I bought my Vox Continental organ, I have **never** had an instrument fail on me - *I'm hanging onto a tree as I'm writing this!* The only parts that I've ever needed were a few keys that got physically broken on my Hammond due to a slightly '*over enthusiastic*' playing technique and some valves which were consumables on the Hammonds. But in those days, I always kept a supply of what I knew I was going to destroy.

Common sense dictates that you should use caution if buying on eBay etc., although I have bought and sold this way successfully numerous times. But my advice would be to always view before bidding and check out the seller's ratings in detail.

But also, you need to know exactly what you are looking for and have a good idea of what is a fair price. This of course can be difficult for a beginner unless you have a knowledgeable friend to guide you.

Due to the massive increase of internet selling, it's a sad fact that many of the local music stores have closed down. In Sheffield where I live, there isn't a single keyboard shop left, whereas there used to be several. I consider myself fortunate in the fact that I am within a fairly easy drive of York where the large online seller <https://www.gear4music.com> (who are great incidentally) have their main UK showroom; so at least I can get there to try out new instruments, but I would much rather have a local establishment!

But make no mistake, the internet is here to stay, and our shopping habits must adapt to these modern times.

The two main *plus* points of purchasing on the internet are:

1. In most countries you have the legal right to return goods for a full refund if you decide that you're not happy for any reason - *or no reason!* I'll be honest, I've done this a couple of times myself for keyboards that seemed perfect for me after watching all the online videos, but when I've got '*hands on*' I've hated them. In both cases I received no hassle from the dealers, so full credit to them! Of course, you need to make sure that any returned goods are sent back in pristine condition with all the original packaging. I always take photos of the goods before and during packing in case of damage during transit

2. It's not difficult to search out the best prices which do tend to change up or down *almost daily!*

Finally, if you're not sure what to buy, my advice is to buy the best second-hand instrument that you can afford (preferably 6 octaves or more). Some of the older top name keyboards are excellent. But always check new prices first, and then at least you will minimize your losses if you get it wrong - *which you probably will!*

It can also be a good idea to download the pdf user manuals from the manufacturers' websites. These are generally freely available from the 'support' section even for older models.

Korg SP-500 Stage Piano (88 keys) - with auto-accompaniment



*I used one of these in Cyprus a few years ago.
Certainly one of my favourite keyboards!*

Recently I noticed a couple of great *second-hand* deals on the 'Cash Converters' website. One was a Korg SP-500 for £250 and the other was a Korg PA2X for £499 - both very good deals assuming they are working ok. I've owned both and can confirm that they are great keyboards - *even by today's standards!* A few scratches would make no difference to the value of an older board! But you must be sure that they are working correctly.

Incidentally, I've also noticed some shockingly overpriced items on 'Cash Converters' so beware!

Other items that you may 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 keyboard carrying bag or case if you intend gigging or moving it around
- A dust cover - *essential*
- Headphones - if you want your family to retain their sanity

Very often you can get many of the above in a bundle when buying a keyboard and curiously sometimes it's cheaper to buy with the bundle than without!

Keyboard Stands

If your chosen keyboard doesn't come with a dedicated stand included which most don't, then it's most important that you buy one which is suitable for your needs, i.e., strong enough to accommodate the weight of the keyboard and also height adjustable.

The three main types are shown below and are:

- Table frame
- Z frame
- X frame

In most cases there will be an option to add a further *tier* if required but do check this out before buying if you think you might need this.

I personally prefer the 'table frames' as they are more stable, but if you intend gigging, you may find one of the others quicker and easier - *or buy two!*

Some manufacturers make tailor made stands for their keyboards, which tend to be excellent quality but also very expensive.

Keyboard Stands - 'Table', 'Z' & 'X'



Keyboard Benches / Stools

Back in my gigging days I used a drum stool which suited me fine and of course packed away quickly into almost nothing. But now that the rear end has expanded somewhat, this option for me is a complete *no-no!* So now I use a fixed piano bench which just happens to be the correct height for me, and it stores music.

If I was buying one again now, I would go for the height adjustable option as shown in the first picture below. The second option shown, would no doubt be ideal for gigging. But I would strongly advise against buying a cheap nasty one.

Piano / Keyboard Bench Stools



Piano / Keyboard Pedals

Most upright pianos *acoustic and digital* have two pedals. The right-hand one is the '*damper*' pedal also called the '*sustain*' pedal and the left one is the '*una corda*' pedal also called the '*soft*' pedal. More recently many grand pianos and even uprights are now fitted with a third pedal in the middle called the '*sostenuto*' pedal.

Pedals on a modern Grand



Very simply the '*damper*' pedal sustains all keys played for the time the pedal is depressed. The '*una corda*' pedal basically mutes the sound to a degree and also modifies the tones somewhat. The '*sostenuto*' pedal enables the pianist to sustain selected keys, while other keys remain unaffected. On digital pianos the middle *sostenuto* pedal can often be assignable.

When purchasing most portable keyboards, pedals are rarely included, but for an arranger keyboard at the very least you would need a '*sustain*' pedal. Ideally this should be dual polarity to be suitable for all keyboards, although very often the polarity can be changed in the '*global*' settings of the keyboard. One note of caution - do not depress the sustain pedal while the keyboard is booting up as this could alter the polarity.

Single, double, and triple pedals as shown below are widely available. The twin or triple units may not be supported by all keyboards and would not be needed with auto-accompaniment but could be very useful in full piano mode.

Add on Pedals for Digital Instruments



In addition to the '*sustain*' pedal you may also find a '*swell*' pedal useful if you want to use organ sounds. This just simply increases and decreases the volume and is a fixture on all organs. Always check compatibility before purchasing.

Swell Pedal for Organ Sounds



Finally, a simple on / off foot switch could be useful if supported by your keyboard. This could be assigned to perform various functions such as:

- Changing variations
- Turning rotary speaker on / off
- Starting / stopping accompaniment
- Changing voices

You will of course need to study the reference manual for details of how to do all the above.

Keyboard Cases

If you ultimately intend moving your keyboard around for gigging etc., then a suitable case or soft bag would be essential. These come in varying qualities and prices.

Personally, I wouldn't take my Korg Kronos out of the house without a tailor-made quality hard case which could cost over £200. But a soft case for a lightweight board could be as little as £25.

Gator Hard Keyboard Case



Whether you need a case or not, you will most certainly need a dust cover for your keyboard. These essential items are widely available for a very low cost. Having a keyboard without a dust cover would be like having an expensive camera without a lens cover - *you just wouldn't do it!*

Headphones

All digital keyboards have the facility for using headphones. These range in price from £5 to several thousands. Most of the cheap headphones are totally horrible. If you are serious about what you are doing it's worth shelling out at least £50.

Basically, there are two types of headphones - '*closed back*' and '*open back*'.

The *closed* back type will keep out all outside noise whereas the *open* back type will allow in a certain amount of outside noise but would also *leak* out a certain amount of sound from the phones.

Which would be best for you would depend on your environment. Personally, I use Sennheiser HD 599 open back with a detachable cable which are incredibly comfortable and sound amazing (approx. £130). I also have a pair of closed back M-Audio which I rarely use.

Sennheiser HD 599 Open Back Headphones



Whichever you choose, I would strongly advise detachable cables otherwise they will be done for as soon as you trip over the cable - *which you will!*

Now we'll begin learning to play!

Yamaha PSR SX700 - 61 Keys



*Nice arranger. Not as fully loaded as the SX900,
but also less expensive!*

← The Notes of the Keyboard →

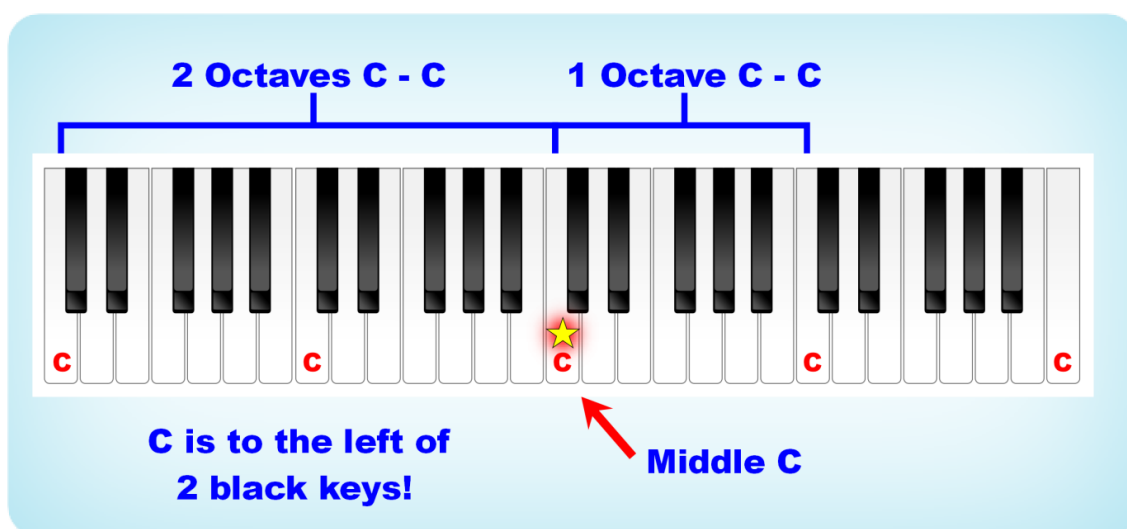
Firstly, we'll look at the notes of the keyboard and how to identify them.

As already stated, 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*!



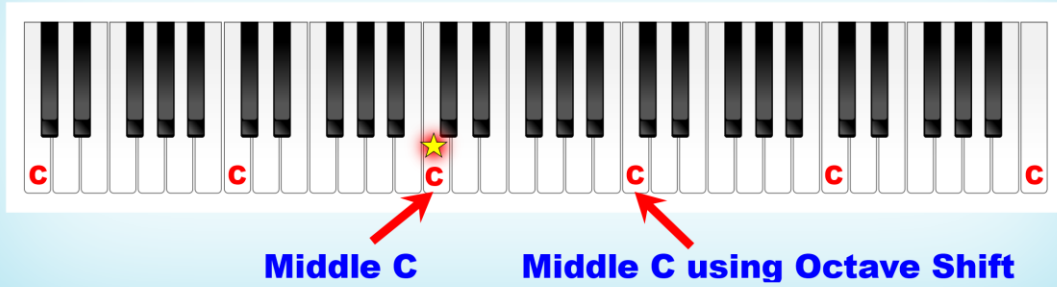
Probably the most important note on the keyboard is **middle C** which is the 'C' that is *more or less* in the middle of the keyboard and because it is so important, we are going to put a star on ours as shown above.

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.

I appreciate that many of you will have a keyboard with 61 keys which is the most common for arranger keyboards, and in this case the **middle C** could be one of two, but it would normally be the lower one as shown next. But using the 'octave shift' feature, this could be easily moved an octave higher (or lower) if required.

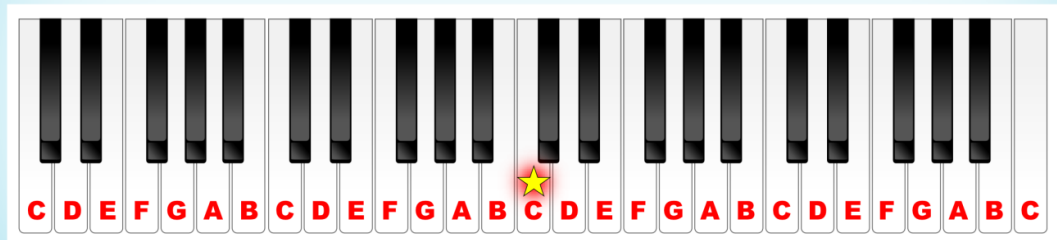
Just about all keyboards have the octave shift feature which is particularly useful on the shorter boards.

Middle C on a 61 Keyboard



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 now. 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.

Yamaha DGX 670 - 88 Keys



*Very reasonably priced and available with or without the dedicated stand.
Great choice if you want a piano action and auto-accompaniment!
But also look at the Casio PX S3100 and Korg XE 20.*

Roland BK-5 - 61 Keys

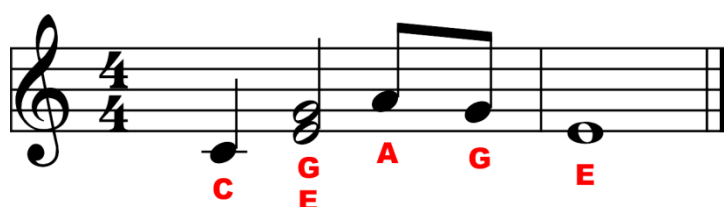


Roland's mid-range arranger - Great sounds!

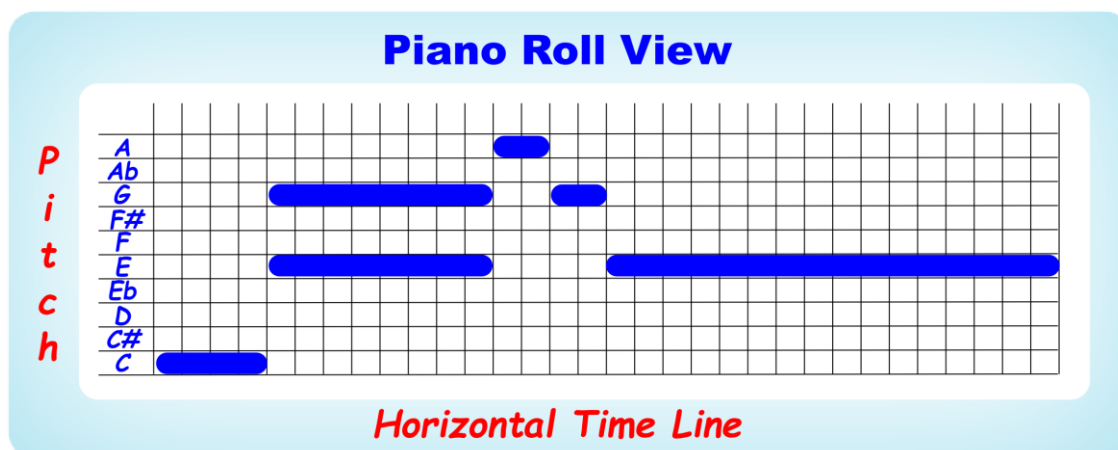
← Music Notation →

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 diagram 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 must 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!

When using auto-accompaniment you will generally only need the treble clef (for the right hand), but I shall also be showing you the bass clef briefly.

Yamaha Genos - 76 Keys



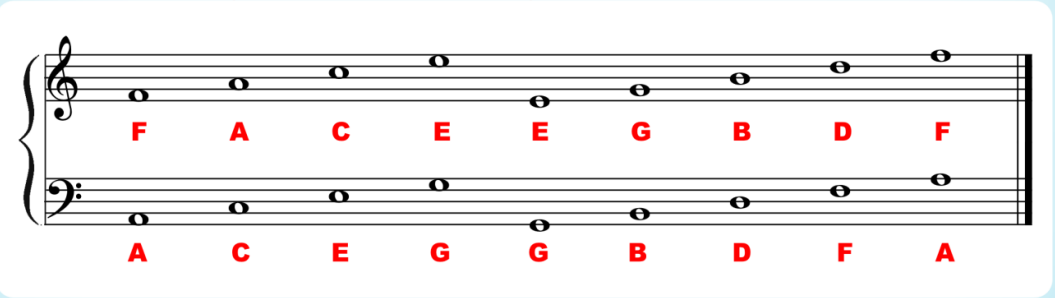
*Without doubt a fantastic instrument,
also the most expensive arranger keyboard available!*

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



The diagram shows a Grand Staff with two staves. The top staff is a Treble Clef and the bottom staff is a Bass Clef. The notes are written on the lines and spaces of both staves. The Treble Clef notes are F, A, C, E, E, G, B, D, F. The Bass Clef notes are A, C, E, G, G, B, D, F, A.

Notes of the Bass Clef

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

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 'stoffs' - *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 'stoffs' 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!*

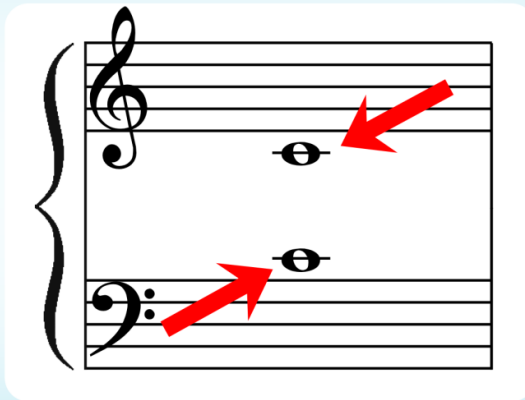
So, which one is 'middle C'?

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

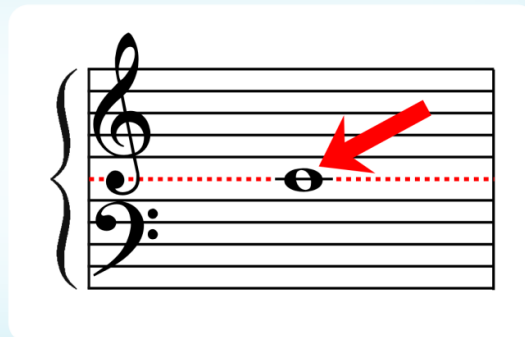
Middle C is below the lines of the Treble Clef and above the lines of the Bass Clef



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

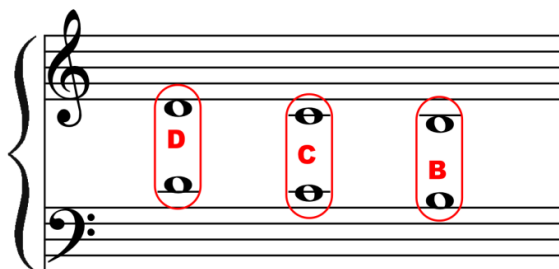


And this is why *'middle C'* has a line drawn through the middle of it. This is called a *'ledger line'* and happens with some other notes as well, in fact any time a note goes above or below the clef staff lines.

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.

Notes Between the Clefs

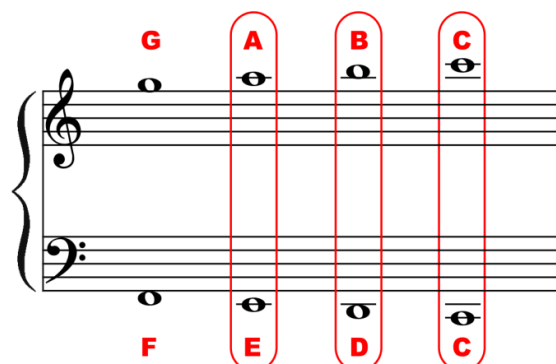
The notes shown here are the same notes written in different clefs



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!

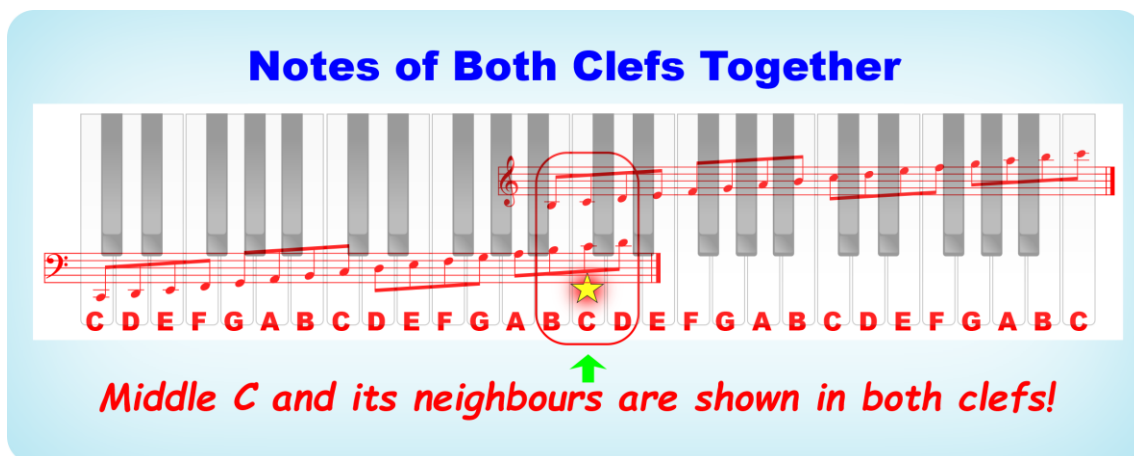
Wow this is getting heavy; I don't think I'll ever understand all this!

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.

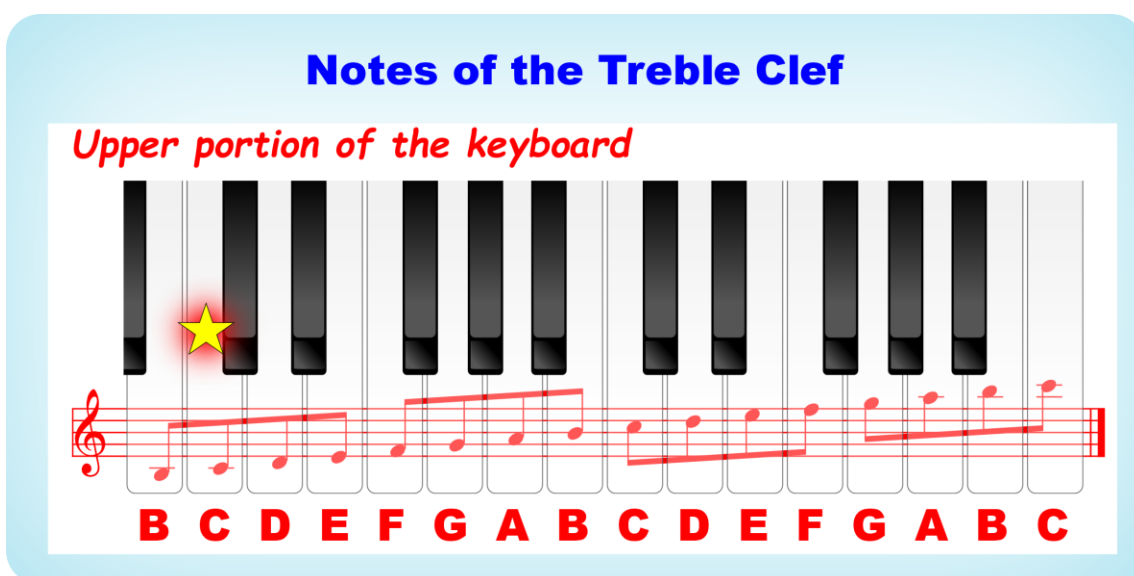
This next diagram may at first look a little confusing and difficult to read; and if you are reading this on a tablet, it may not be clear. If you haven't already done so, please go to the rear of the book to get the pdf download link and you will be able to see this much more clearly, even more so in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



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 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

To be honest it will probably be a while before you'll need these.

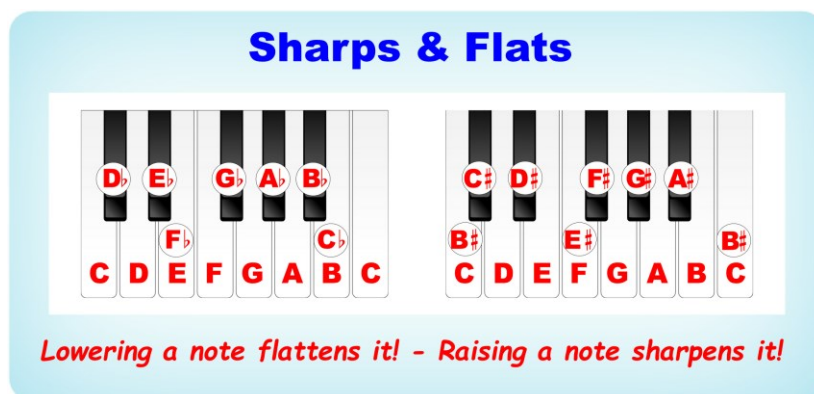
And before you get too confused, remember that we are mainly concerned with the *treble* clef for our purposes here - you don't need to learn the *bass* clef for anything that follows in this book. From here on after there'll be no more mention of it.

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.

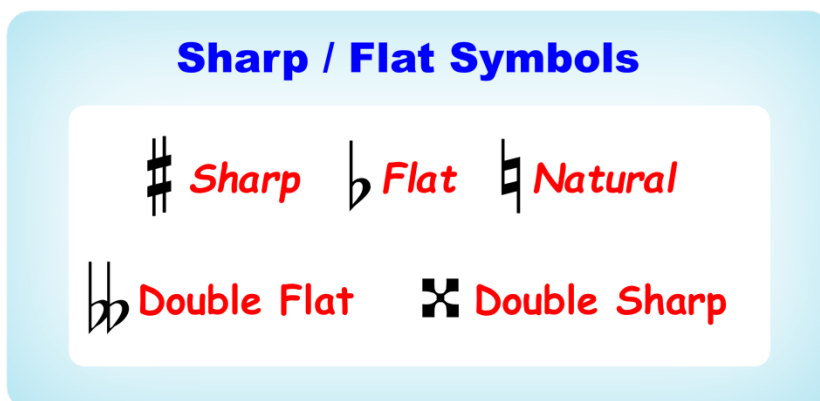
Now the smallest interval in Western music is a '*semitone*' which is the interval from any note on the keyboard to its nearest neighbour be it black or white.

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.

Yamaha PSR EW425 - 76 Keys



*Superb value for money. This is basically the same as the E473 but with 76 keys
Great for starter piano as well as auto-accompaniment!
But note that the keys are not hammer action!*

← 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

The time signature is always given at the beginning of each piece and will remain the same throughout unless information is given to the contrary.


The most common time signature without doubt is 4/4 which is also known as '*common time*', and this also has an alternative symbol as shown below as does the 2/2 time signature which is known as '*cut common time*' or '*alla breve*'.

Time Signatures


Common Time




Alla Breve



Quarter Note Time Signatures



Eighth Note Time Signatures



There are other time signatures which we're not going to deal with here, but by the time you come to need them you will understand them perfectly.

Yamaha PSR E473 - 61 Keys



*Without doubt one of the best starter arranger keyboards
Incredible value for money!*

END OF PREVIEW

Thanks for your interest