

INSIGHTS & PIANO STUDY

LEARN 1A

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LEARN 1A

PREPARATION
MUSICIANSHIP
ARTISTRY

guide ▪ learn ▪ create

A Comprehensive Piano Course
Based on Aural Acculturation,
Adaptive Assimilation, and
Skill Reinforcement



TOMGEROUMUSIC ▪ COM®

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about the course

Concept Block

Insights is designed so that the left-facing page is a visual guide for students, and the right-facing page is a guide for teachers, parents, and students as appropriate and/or needed. Students should refer to the left-facing page especially if they possess a limited vocabulary or understanding of abstract concepts.

Lesson Objective

Many students may approach the piano lesson without yet possessing a broad vocabulary, or the association of words with objects or actions. The teacher should engage the student in conversation to determine their level of vocabulary and understanding. It is useful to ask students if they know what a word means, or if they need time to learn the word and what it means. Students sometimes say “yes” when they do not fully understand as they wish to please the teacher, avoid fear or anxiety generated by new concepts, or feel shame or guilt due to a lack of knowledge, or simply to avoid the process. Teachers may need to instruct the student that it is ok if they do not know something and that it will be fun to learn. If said with a warm tone of voice, open and smiling facial features, and positive reminders, students will become comfortable in expressing their lack of understanding. If encountering an avoidance tactic, teachers can gently insist on moving forward with the concept or perhaps asking the student if they need to learn it now or wait until later in the lesson. Waiting can allow the student time to get used to the idea of learning something new.

Use of Improvisation as a Tool

Improvisation at the piano provides the student the opportunity to focus on physical aspects of producing sound. It eliminates dynamic, melodic and rhythmic notation challenges, allowing the student to creatively explore while reinforcing basic concepts. One of the goals of the course is to build upon a basic foundation of aural and physical attributes but without extraneous challenges unnecessary at early stages of growth.

Order of Instruction

All students benefit from a detailed routine in learning whether they are neurodivergent or engaged in a traditional learning process. The Order of Instruction is provided for teachers who need it, for parents who are assisting with practice at home, and for students who might benefit from using it as a practice tool. The Order of Instruction can also benefit beginning teachers who are learning how to plan detailed step-by-step work for students with neurodiversities.

Presentation

Black circled numbers (❶) indicate concepts in the Order of Instruction and may collate with black circled numbers on a left-facing page. By pointing to the pictures when prompted, students are beginning to practice gross motor skills, learning to focus attention, and learning a process where they listen, look, point, and associate.

Modeling

Gray boxed numbers (❶) indicate teacher modeling examples and may collate with gray boxed numbers on a left-facing page. It is crucial for teachers to model the best instruction possible. The section also provides opportunities for the teacher to start modeling movements, hand positions, finger usage, etc. for the student. These non-verbal models will be observed by the student and replicated in their own motions. Effective and consistent use of these nonverbal motions will also serve as cues for focusing attention as the student learns the process of absorbing new knowledge.

Student Trial

Orange boxed numbers (❶) indicate student trial activities and may collate with orange boxed numbers on a left-facing page. The Student Trial allows time for the student to copy the teacher's model. It is also a time for the teacher to observe the student's understanding of the concepts, and their development of gross motor skills. Repetition also assures that the student will know what to do at home during practice.

Home Assignment

The Home Assignment will consist of the same activities used in the lesson. The accompanying Order of Instruction may be used by the parents at home as they assist their child in practicing. Students who are old enough to read the Order of Instruction will also benefit from this prewritten at-home instruction.

correlations

GUIDE

Contains valuable detailed insight for the teacher or parent to reference. Materials are correlated to matching page numbers in both LEARN 1A and CREATE 1A. Since the focus of the course is to custom tailor teaching styles to each individual student, the GUIDE book is a invaluable resource for lesson ideas and problem solving.

LEARN

Introduces all concepts to the student. The facing pages work together in tandem with the left-side page being the focus for the student and the right-side page introducing the presentation, modeling, student trial, and home assignment instructions. One musical example is provided as an introduction to each concept. Further reinforcement and activities are provided in the coordinating CREATE book.

CREATE

Reinforces all concepts introduced in the LEARN book through a variety of activities and additional music examples. All examples are improvisation exercises for the student. The first musical example repeats the LEARN book accompaniment, for familiarity and comfort. Some rhythmic values are limited in the first few musical examples, then added to in subsequent examples.

RECITAL

Separate solos with duet accompaniments provide patterned performance opportunities and challenges for the student. Includes instructions based on correlated concepts.

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Black Key Group of Two

Concept Block

LEARN

BLACK key groups of TWO

- How to touch and play TWO keys at the same time.
- How to hold them for different amounts of time (aural and physical acculturation of rhythm in preparation for counting).

CREATE

Identification of BLACK key groups of TWO. Visual identification and physical adjustment.

Insights for Teachers

Not all students will approach the learning process with the same amount of knowledge. It is always helpful to review and make sure that the student knows that...

- ...colors (white and black).
- ...saying labels (i.e. LH 2, RH 4).
- ...hand labels (LH and RH).
- ...finger number labels.

Playing Black Key Groups of Two

The student should be made aware of **gross motor skill movements** (arm movements) and execute the skill using a movement that "travels forward." The **fine motor skill** of moving the fingers should be executed as "moving down, yet forward." Again, this allows for proper body alignment and a slower key descent.

Like the single finger gesture, the student must prepare the hand and finger for TWO keys to descend (touch).

touch push hold release
prepare movement relax early or late (as needed)

- Touch/Push the key to make a sound.** The student should use a movement that travels down, yet forward. This allows for proper body alignment and a slower key descent.
- Hold the keys down while relaxing.** The student learns how to keep the key down allowing the tone to sound for a certain length of time that will later support rhythm and counting.
- Release the keys and prepare for the next.** The student learns how to release the key as the end of the process allowing them to prepare for repeating or moving to the next group of two.

The slower key descent produces a tone that has a longer and more even decay, with no oscillation of the pitch.

Game Activity

For the circle activity on p. 22 in CREATE 1A teacher coaching may be required to help the student identify colors, count to find and notice different key groups.

Make sure the student can coordinate all of these concepts and apply them.

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Black Key Group of Two

Activity

Circle all BLACK key groups of TWO on this page. Which row is in the SAME ORDER of black key groups as the piano? _____

- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5

Activity

Circle all BLACK key groups of TWO on this page. Which row is in the SAME ORDER of black key groups as the piano? _____

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Black Key Group of Two

Activity

Circle all BLACK key groups of TWO on this page. Which row is in the SAME ORDER of black key groups as the piano? _____

- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5

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Teacher Duets

The teacher duets supporting the student improvisations are designed to immerse and acculturate the student to different music elements, styles, and sounds.

Acculturation: Rhythm is introduced, using quarter, half, dotted-half, then whole values. (♩) (♫) (♫) (♫) Tonic, subdominant, dominant, chord progressions, and modal harmonies are heard (♩) (♫) (♫) (♫) are introduced indirectly, along with rhythmic groupings, phrases, dynamics, and pedaling.

Dynamics are avoided, and are identified as "strongly" or "gently," without labels (f) or (p).

Repetition is crucial to the process. Teachers should choose and begin with a slow tempo to help the student enter the process at the appropriate level of fine motor skill development of the student.

Facilitation of the improvisation part requires careful planning until the student learns the procedure. The following may prove helpful in **varying dynamics** and **tempo** while facilitating the improvisation exercise:

- Introduce **strongly** (instead of loudly) once the exercise has been introduced.
- Tempo can vary, but should be appropriately chosen to best achieve success.
- Introduce **variations** in tempo and dynamics, at the appropriate level to further acculturate the student to different sounds.

Challenges

Coordinating finger numbers: If students have trouble coordinating finger numbers with the stipulated keys, have them draw lines from the fingers to the black keys on p. 22 in LEARN 1A. This visually processes them to see how their hands approach and mold to the keyboard.

Coordinating fine motor skills: Students may have trouble coordinating their fine motor skills to play TWO keys at the same time. If this occurs, allow the keys to be played slightly out of sync with the fingers until the student gains mastery of the skill.

- If encountering difficulty, it is helpful to coordinate their fine motor skill away from the keyboard by tracing fingers 2, 3 together and practicing **pushing down, yet forward** onto a flat surface.
- Playing a BLACK key group of TWO at the same time requires that the **fingers be slightly spread** and this exercise will help prepare for feeling how to maintain good hand and finger movements.
- Rolling the BLACK key group of TWO is an option if the student is not able to play them simultaneously.
- Different meters require different directive counting words to help the student know how to hold the keys down for different amounts of time.
- Half note pulse (♩) is introduced first in the student improvisations as it is often easier for the student to apply the skills of key recognition, hand and finger position, and fine motor skill coordination.
- Quarter note pulse (♩) is introduced after the student feels comfortable with the exercise (CREATE 1A).
- Whole note pulse (♩) is introduced last (CREATE 1A).

TEMPO: as needed, **Slowly then Faster**
DYNAMICS: **Strongly**
SAY: "get - ready - and - play"

SAV: "keep going" (on repeat)
SAY: "bring it to an end" (to finish)

OR

SAV: "push - hold - push - hold" (on repeat)
SAY: "bring it to an end" (to finish)

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INSIGHTS

Concept Block

BLACK key group of TWO.

Lesson Objective

Identify a BLACK key group of TWO. Play with a STEADY pulse or beat.

Order of Instruction

Presentation

We can learn about BLACK key groups of TWO. All you need to do is...

- raise a hand.
- show fingers 2 and 3.
- touch a BLACK key group of TWO with fingers 2 and 3.
- push on the key to make a sound.

Modeling

To play BLACK key groups of TWO, watch and listen while I...

- raise my RH.
- show my RH fingers 2 and 3.
- touch a BLACK key group of TWO with RH fingers 2 and 3.
- push on the keys to make a sound.
- play over and over with a STEADY PULSE or BEAT, saying "push - hold" Each push is held the SAME amount of time.
- I will play again using LH fingers 2 and 3.

Student Trial

Would you like to create some music using a BLACK key group of TWO? You will...

- raise your RH.
- show your RH fingers 2 and 3.
- touch a BLACK key group of TWO with RH fingers 2 and 3.
- push on the key to make a sound.
- play over and over with a STEADY PULSE or BEAT, saying "push - hold" Each push is held the SAME amount of time.

Excellent! Please repeat this step-by-step 8-10 using LH fingers 2 and 3.

Activity

Let's make some music TOGETHER.

We will do the same thing again but playing the BLACK key group of TWO again and again using a STEADY PULSE or BEAT. It will sound like this (Teacher demonstrates student part)

I will play some different music along with you. It will sound something like this: (Teacher demonstrates the duet part)

Now WE can play TOGETHER. I will say "get-ready-and-play" and WE will start to play.

WE will play three times: LH alone, RH alone, LH then RH without stopping.

Student can improvise CLUSTERS STRONGLY in the ranges:

Student rhythm: push - hold - push - hold

Duet part: Tempo as needed keep going bring it to an end

23

We can play together using BLACK key groups of TWO. I will say "get - ready - and - play" and WE will start to play.

Student can improvise CLUSTERS STRONGLY in the ranges:

Student rhythm choices: push - hold - push - hold or push push push push

Duet Part: Tempo as needed keep going bring it to an end

Student rhythm choices: push - hold - push - hold or push push push push or push - and - hold - it

Duet Part: Tempo as needed keep going bring it to an end

Student rhythm choices: push - hold - push - hold or push push push push or push - and - hold - it

Duet Part: Tempo as needed keep going bring it to an end