

The Keyboard

A variety of keyboard instruments enjoy popularity today, including the piano, electronic keyboards, synthesizers, and barred instruments played with mallets. All of these instruments have in common a specific pattern of black and white keys (or bars), and all are excellent tools for visualizing and performing music. The following information pertains to the piano.

PLAYING POSITION

- Sit directly in front of the middle of the keyboard, far enough back so that your arms and elbows can move freely.
- Lean a bit forward at the waist, keeping your torso straight.
- Keep your hands, wrists, and forearms level with the keyboard.
- Curve fingers gently and slightly arch your hand.
- Strike the keys (don't press!) with the fleshy part of the fingers and keep your fingers close to the keys.

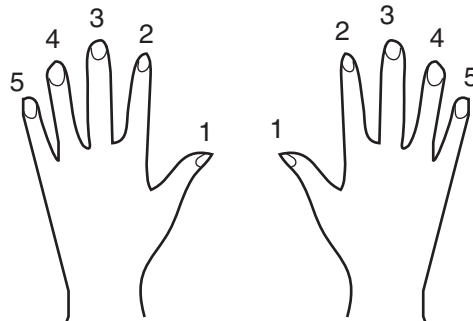


FINGERING

The numbers 1 through 5 are assigned to specific fingers of both hands. These same arabic numerals (usually written very small) appear above or below the notes in piano music to indicate the preferred fingering.

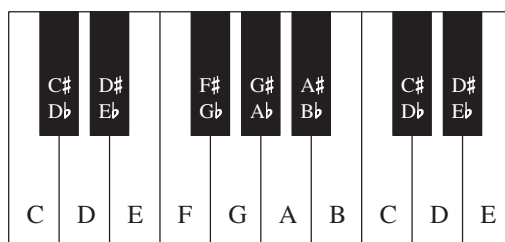
Left Hand (LH)

Right Hand (RH)



NAMES OF THE KEYS

The first seven letters of the alphabet—A, B, C, D, E, F, and G—are used to name the eighty-eight keys of the piano. The black keys use the same letter names as the white keys but with the addition of a # (sharp) or a b (flat). Notice that each black key has two names.



STAFF NOTATION

The *grand* or *great staff*—actually two staves—is used to notate piano music. The upper staff identifies the higher notes, usually played by the right hand (RH), and the lower staff specifies the lower notes, usually played by the left hand (LH). The *treble clef*, or *G clef*, encircles the second line (G) of the higher staff. The *bass clef*, or *F clef*, has dots above and below the fourth line (F) of the lower staff. Ledger lines (short lines) can be added above and below the staves to extend the pitch range. Notice that stems point up on notes below the middle line of the staff and point down on notes on and above the middle line.

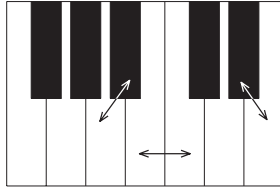
Grand Staff

A diagram illustrating the grand staff notation. At the top, a piano keyboard is shown with keys labeled C through C. Below the keyboard, a grand staff is shown with two staves. The upper staff is labeled 'Treble Clef' and the lower staff is labeled 'Bass Clef'. The notes on the grand staff are labeled C through C. The diagram also shows the 'Bass Clef F' and 'Treble Clef G' positions, and the 'Middle C' position. The grand staff is divided into two sections: LH (Left Hand) and RH (Right Hand).

PLAYING MELODIES WITH THE RIGHT HAND

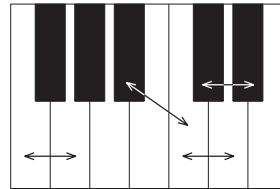
The right hand most often plays the melody line. For simple melodies that include the first five pitches of a scale, the thumb and fingers touch consecutive keys in what is known as the *five-finger pattern*. The two familiar patterns are *major* and *minor*. Both use a specific sequence of whole and half steps.

A *half step* is the distance from one key (black or white) to the very next key above or below.



half steps

A *whole step* includes two half steps or involves skipping one key in between (black or white.)



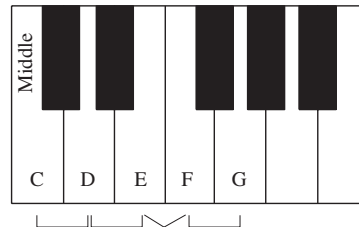
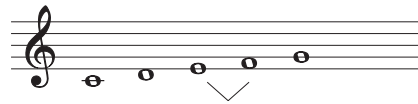
whole steps

Major Five-Finger Pattern

The major five-finger pattern includes five pitches with the following whole- and half-step distances between keys. All five notes in the pattern are identified by different letter names. Any key or pitch can be used as the first pitch (*tonic or home tone*).

1 ——— 2 ——— 3 ——— 4 ——— 5
 whole whole half whole

C Major

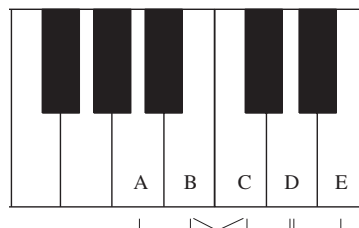


Minor Five-Finger Pattern

The minor five-finger pattern includes five pitches with the following whole- and half-step distances between keys:

1 ——— 2 ——— 3 ——— 4 ——— 5
 whole half whole whole

A minor

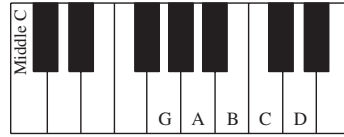


Selected Major Five-Finger Patterns

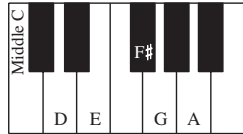
C Major five-finger pattern



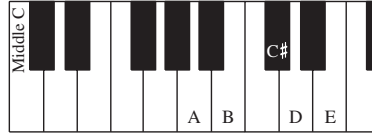
G Major five-finger pattern



D Major five-finger pattern



A Major five-finger pattern

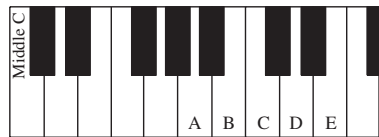


F Major five-finger pattern

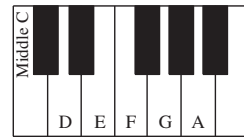


Selected Minor Five-Finger Patterns

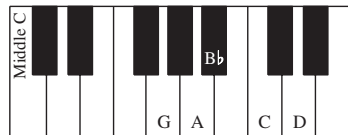
A minor five-finger pattern



D minor five-finger pattern



G minor five-finger pattern



E minor five-finger pattern



PLAYING CHORDS WITH THE LEFT HAND

In accompanying songs, the left hand often plays three or more pitches simultaneously (a *chord*) to accompany the melody. The chords are indicated by letter names written above the melody (called “lead sheet” notation).

Triads

A *triad* is a chord with three pitches with the interval of a third between each pitch. Combining the first, third, and fifth pitches of the major five-finger pattern forms a *major triad*, for example, a C Major triad includes the pitches C, E, and G. A *minor triad* can be formed by combining the first, third, and fifth pitches of the minor five-finger pattern; for example, an A minor triad includes the pitches, A, C, and E.



Seventh Chords

A *seventh chord* consists of four pitches again with the interval of a third between each. It is identified with a “7” following the letter name (for example, G7).



Chord Accompaniments

Many melodies are accompanied by more than one chord. The physical movement of changing from one chord to another needs to be as smooth and easy as possible. Therefore, pitches in a chord are often rearranged for ease in playing, as shown on the following chart “Piano Position Chords in Selected Major and Minor Keys.”

Pitches in a specific triad can be played in any arrangement (*inversion*) as long as the original pitches are retained. For example, the F Major chord can be rearranged as follows: F–A–C, A–C–F, or C–F–A.

To make the seventh chord easier to play, when the chord is inverted, a note is omitted. For example, the G7 chord (G–B–D–F) is frequently played B–F–G, with the D omitted.

Guidelines for Playing Chord Accompaniments

- Determine which chords are needed by locating the uppercase letters above the melody. These letters specify the chord name, whether it is major, minor, or a seventh and when each chord occurs.
- Find the needed chords on the charts that follow and practice the chords trying to move as smoothly as possible from one to the next.
- Try the chords with the melody continuing to play each chord (rhythmically) until a different one is indicated. For example, when a single chord name is shown only once at the beginning of a one-chord melody, repeat the chord throughout—usually on the first beat of each measure.

PIANO POSITION CHORDS IN SELECTED MAJOR AND MINOR KEYS

Key of C Major

<p>C</p> <p>LH 5 3 1</p>	<p>F</p> <p>5 2 1</p>	<p>G7</p> <p>5 2 1</p>
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Key of G Major

<p>G</p> <p>LH 5 3 1</p>	<p>C</p> <p>5 2 1</p>	<p>D7</p> <p>5 2 1</p>
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Key of D Major

<p>D</p> <p>LH 5 3 1</p>	<p>G</p> <p>5 2 1</p>	<p>A7</p> <p>5 2 1</p>
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Key of A Major

A

LH 5 3 1

The diagram shows the A major chord on a piano keyboard with fingerings 5, 3, and 1 on the left hand. Below are the chord's representation in treble and bass clefs.

D

5 2 1

The diagram shows the D major chord on a piano keyboard with fingerings 5, 2, and 1. Below are the chord's representation in treble and bass clefs.

E7

5 2 1

The diagram shows the E7 chord on a piano keyboard with fingerings 5, 2, and 1. Below are the chord's representation in treble and bass clefs.

Key of E Major

E

LH 5 3 1

The diagram shows the E major chord on a piano keyboard with fingerings 5, 3, and 1 on the left hand. Below are the chord's representation in treble and bass clefs.

A

5 2 1

The diagram shows the A major chord on a piano keyboard with fingerings 5, 2, and 1. Below are the chord's representation in treble and bass clefs.

B7

5 2 1

The diagram shows the B7 chord on a piano keyboard with fingerings 5, 2, and 1. Below are the chord's representation in treble and bass clefs.

Key of F Major

F

LH 5 3 1

The diagram shows the F major chord on a piano keyboard with fingerings 5, 3, and 1 on the left hand. Below are the chord's representation in treble and bass clefs.

B \flat

5 2 1

The diagram shows the B \flat chord on a piano keyboard with fingerings 5, 2, and 1. Below are the chord's representation in treble and bass clefs.

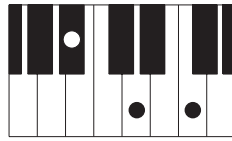
C7

5 2 1

The diagram shows the C7 chord on a piano keyboard with fingerings 5, 2, and 1. Below are the chord's representation in treble and bass clefs.

Key of B \flat Major

B \flat



LH 5 3 1


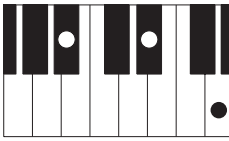


Diagram showing the B \flat chord in the left hand. The piano keyboard shows the notes B \flat (white), D \flat (black), and F \flat (black). Fingerings are 5, 3, and 1. Musical notation shows the chord in treble and bass clefs.

E \flat



5 2 1


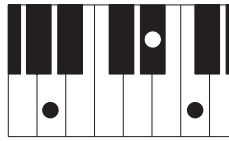


Diagram showing the E \flat chord in the left hand. The piano keyboard shows the notes E \flat (black), G \flat (black), and B \flat (white). Fingerings are 5, 2, and 1. Musical notation shows the chord in treble and bass clefs.

F7



5 2 1


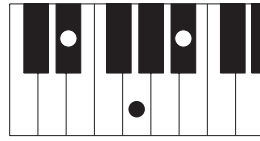


Diagram showing the F7 chord in the left hand. The piano keyboard shows the notes F \flat (black), A \flat (black), C \flat (white), and E \flat (black). Fingerings are 5, 2, and 1. Musical notation shows the chord in treble and bass clefs.

Key of E \flat Major

E \flat



LH 5 3 1


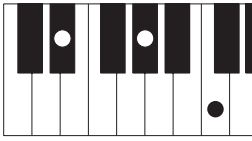


Diagram showing the E \flat chord in the left hand. The piano keyboard shows the notes E \flat (black), G \flat (black), and B \flat (white). Fingerings are 5, 3, and 1. Musical notation shows the chord in treble and bass clefs.

A \flat



5 2 1

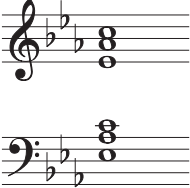
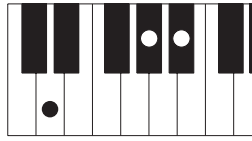


Diagram showing the A \flat chord in the left hand. The piano keyboard shows the notes A \flat (black), C \flat (white), and E \flat (black). Fingerings are 5, 2, and 1. Musical notation shows the chord in treble and bass clefs.

B \flat 7



5 2 1





Diagram showing the B \flat 7 chord in the left hand. The piano keyboard shows the notes B \flat (white), D \flat (black), F \flat (black), and A \flat (black). Fingerings are 5, 2, and 1. Musical notation shows the chord in treble and bass clefs.

Key of A Minor

Am



LH 5 3 1





Diagram showing the A minor chord in the left hand. The piano keyboard shows the notes A (white), C (white), and E (white). Fingerings are 5, 3, and 1. Musical notation shows the chord in treble and bass clefs.

Dm



5 2 1





Diagram showing the D minor chord in the left hand. The piano keyboard shows the notes D (white), F (black), and A (white). Fingerings are 5, 2, and 1. Musical notation shows the chord in treble and bass clefs.

E7



5 2 1




Diagram showing the E7 chord in the left hand. The piano keyboard shows the notes E (white), G \sharp (black), B (white), and D (white). Fingerings are 5, 2, and 1. Musical notation shows the chord in treble and bass clefs.

Key of E Minor

Em

LH 5 3 1

Am

5 2 1

B7

5 2 1

Key of D Minor

Dm

LH 5 3 1

Gm

5 2 1

A7

5 2 1

Key of G Minor

Gm

LH 5 3 1

Cm

5 2 1

D7

5 2 1

MELODIES USING THE FIVE-FINGER PATTERNS

The following songs are found in Section Three. Refer to the preceding chart for specific five-finger patterns and to the “Piano Position Chords in Selected Major and Minor Keys” for specific chords.

<i>C Major Five-Finger Pattern</i>	<i>Chords</i>
“Eena, Deena”	C
“Pease Porridge Hot”	C
“Swing a Lady”	C
“Love Somebody”	C, G7
“Jim-Along, Josie”	C, G7
“Hey, Lidee”	C, G7
“Riding in the Buggy”	C, G7
“My Dreydl”	C, G7
“Wishy Washy Wee”	C, G7
“When the Saints Go Marching In”	C, F, G7

<i>G Major Five-Finger Pattern</i>	
“Down Came a Lady”	G
“Suo Gan”	G
“Who’s That Yonder?”	G
“Hot Cross Buns”	G, D7
“Mary Had a Little Lamb”	G, D7
“Lightly Row”	G, D7
“Go Tell Aunt Rhody”	G, D7

<i>D Major Five-Finger Pattern</i>	
“Matarile”	D, A7
“Duerme Pronto”	D, A7

<i>F Major Five-Finger Pattern</i>	
“Fais Do Do”	F, C7
“Long-Legged Sailor”	F, C7

<i>D Minor Five-Finger Pattern</i>	
“Candles of Hanukkah”	Dm, Gm, A7

PLAYING MELODIES BEYOND THE FIVE-FINGER PATTERN

Many melodies extend above and below the five-finger pattern. Some require expanding the hand to cover the additional pitches. For example, “Five Angels” (see Section Three) spans six pitches (C to A), requiring the *expanded hand position*.

Musical notation for the melody of "Five Angels" in 2/4 time. The melody consists of eight notes: C4, D4, E4, F4, G4, A4, G4, F4. The notes are grouped into two phrases of four notes each. The first phrase has fingerings 1, 4, 2, 5. The second phrase has fingerings 4, 2, 1. The notes are written on a treble clef staff with a key signature of one flat (Bb).

Five an - gels ring a - round my bed. “Get

Other melodies require *crossover* or *crossunder fingering* or both. The first part of “Joy to the World” descends eight pitches and needs crossover fingering.

Musical notation for the melody of "Joy to the World" in 2/4 time. The melody consists of eight notes: G4, F4, E4, D4, C4, B3, A3, G3. The notes are written on a treble clef staff with a key signature of one flat (Bb). The notes are grouped into two phrases of four notes each. The first phrase has fingerings 5, 4, 3, 2. The second phrase has fingerings 1, *3, 2, 1. The notes are written on a treble clef staff with a key signature of one flat (Bb).

Joy to the world, the Lord is come:

Fingering for melodies must fit the shape and scope of the melody. Choose a fingering that requires as little motion as possible and is consistent. Avoid placing the same thumb or finger on two consecutive notes, and try not to use the thumb on a black key. For most piano playing, unless otherwise indicated, move from one pitch to another in a smooth, connected style (*legato*) by lifting one finger just as the next finger strikes.

MELODIES BEYOND THE FIVE-FINGER PATTERNS

The following melodies extend beyond the five-finger patterns and often require two, three, or more chords for an accompaniment. Songs are found in Section Three.

	<i>Chords</i>
“Sally, Go 'Round the Sun”	C, G7
“Looby Loo”	C, G7
“Ode to Joy” (Beethoven)	G, D7
“London Bridge”	D, A7
“Kum Ba Yah”	C, F, G7
“Five Angels”	C, F, G7
“Ebenezer Sneezer”	C, F, G7
“America”	C, F, G7
“Michael, Row the Boat Ashore”	C, F, G7
“America the Beautiful”	A, D, E7
“This is Halloween”	Gm, D7
“He’s Got the Whole World”	D, A7
“Up on the Housetop”	D, G, A7
“Oh, Susanna”	F, B ^b , C7
“You’re a Grand Old Flag”	F, B ^b , C7, G7, Gm, D7

Frequently Used Major Scales (with Piano Fingerings)

C Major (1) *G Major* (1) *D Major* (1)

RH 1 2 3 1 2 3 4 5 1 2 3 1 2 3 4 5 1 2 3 1 2 3 4 5

LH 5 4 3 2 1 3 2 1 5 4 3 2 1 3 2 1 5 4 3 2 1 3 2 1

(1) (1) (1)

A Major (1) *E Major* (1) *B Major* (1) *F Major* (1)

1 2 3 1 2 3 4 5 1 2 3 1 2 3 4 5 1 2 3 1 2 3 4 5 1 2 3 4 1 2 3 4

5 4 3 2 1 3 2 1 5 4 3 2 1 3 2 1 4 3 2 1 4 3 2 1 5 4 3 2 1 3 2 1

(1) (1) (1) (1)

Bb Major *Eb Major* *Ab Major* *Db Major*

4 1 2 3 1 2 3 4 3 1 2 3 4 1 2 3 3 4 1 2 3 1 2 3 2 3 1 2 3 4 1 2

3 2 1 4 3 2 1 3 3 2 1 4 3 2 1 3 3 2 1 4 3 2 1 3 3 2 1 4 3 2 1 3

Frequently Used Minor Scales (with Piano Fingerings)

A Natural Minor (1) *A Harmonic Minor* (1) *E Natural Minor* (1)

RH 1 2 3 1 2 3 4 5 1 2 3 1 2 3 4 5 1 2 3 1 2 3 4 5

LH 5 4 3 2 1 3 2 1 5 4 3 2 1 3 2 1 5 4 3 2 1 3 2 1

(1) (1) (1)

E Harmonic Minor (1) *B Natural Minor* (1) *B Harmonic Minor* (1)

1 2 3 1 2 3 4 5 1 2 3 1 2 3 4 5 1 2 3 1 2 3 4 5

5 4 3 2 1 3 2 1 4 3 2 1 4 3 2 1 4 3 2 1 4 3 2 1

(1) (1) (1)

D Natural Minor (1) *D Harmonic Minor* (1) *G Natural Minor* (1) *G Harmonic Minor* (1)

1 2 3 1 2 3 4 5 1 2 3 1 2 3 4 5 1 2 3 1 2 3 4 5 1 2 3 1 2 3 4 5

5 4 3 2 1 3 2 1 5 4 3 2 1 3 2 1 5 4 3 2 1 3 2 1 5 4 3 2 1 3 2 1

(1) (1) (1) (1)