

How to Gain Speed With Your Scales



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PURPOSE.

The purpose of this technique is to help you develop speed and evenness in your playing.

CAUTION

It is fairly common for pianists to injure their hands when they get to this level. Please do not injure yourself through bad technique or repetition beyond your capacity. Use good technique and build up strength gradually. How do you know when you are approaching injury? It is a tricky question and only YOU can diagnose it because nobody feels what you can feel in your body. It is not bad to get tired or worn out. This is how we build muscle and strength. If you suspect you are getting an injury, play it safe and ease off. Tightness is the enemy of speed and the ally to injury. Learn good relaxed techniques to prevent injury and pick up speed.

PREREQUISITE

You should know your scale inside and out before you start to work on these exercises designed for speed. It is recommended that you first master the [1 Octave Scales](#) and [2 Octaves Scales](#) correctly. I recommend that you first become a ninja in both **Scale Ninja - Beginner** and **Scale Ninja - Advanced** in the Piano Marvel library, and then come back to these exercises to develop your speed. You should be intimately familiar with groupings, crossing and thumbs together advice on each of the scales in the [2 Octaves Scales](#) videos.



<https://youtu.be/hJlzVMRhTGI>

STEP 1 - Assess Your Speed

I recommend that you first assess your speed to see where you are currently. You can do this with a metronome or in **Scale Ninja - PRO** in the Piano Marvel library.

Speed Chart

Tempo	Time	%	Belt
♪ =100 bpm	8.40 seconds	80%	Blue Belt
♪ =120 bpm	7.00 seconds	85%	
♪ =130 bpm	6.50 seconds	88%	
♪ =140 bpm	6.00 seconds	92%	Brown Belt
♪ =150 bpm	5.60 seconds	95%	
♪ =160 bpm	5.25 seconds	97%	Black Belt
♪ =170 bpm	4.95 seconds	100%	Ninja
♪ =180 bpm	4.65 seconds	100%	
♪ =190 bpm	4.4 seconds	100%	
♪ =200 bpm	4.2 seconds	100%	
♪ =210 bpm	4.0 seconds	100%	

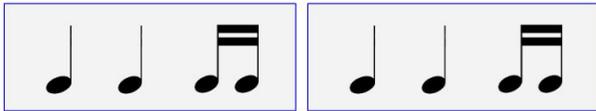
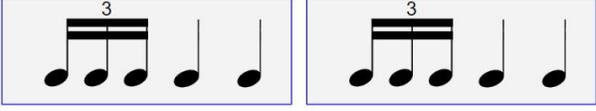
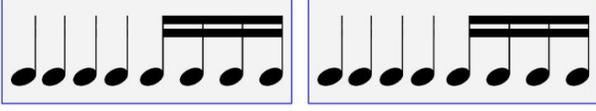
Now it's time to work on increasing your speed, accuracy, evenness, alignment and fluidity. The two major factors to consider are: Muscle Memory and Speed Through Technique.

STEP 2 - Muscle Memory Practice

90% of your speed comes from practicing muscle memory. The first thing that will help you get speed is to build a solid muscle memory of the scale. The result of muscle memory is that your muscles take over because they know how the scale feels. You play so fast that your eyes and brain cannot keep up, so the only way to get this kind of speed is through muscle memory.. Consider the following advice:

1. Practice SLOWLY!!! - If you practice correctly slowly, the speed will come naturally.
2. Never play a wrong fingering pattern - Unlearning takes longer than learning. It confuses your muscle memory to learn two patterns, drastically extending the time it takes to learn.
3. Relax! - Tension causes your muscles and tissues to rub excessively, increasing your chance of injury.
4. Don't injure yourself - Work until you are tired, take a break as needed.

Here are 8 exercises that you can do to increase your muscle memory. Play the scale, hands together in the following rhythmic patterns. Just think of them as long - short patterns, don't worry so much about the rhythm.

1. <input type="checkbox"/>	
2. <input type="checkbox"/>	
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8. <input type="checkbox"/>	

STEP 3 - Speed Technique Practice

Speed Through Technique (10% faster with Speed techniques)

The fastest, most relaxed, and most even technique comes through rolling your wrist with the fingers as relaxed as possible while maintaining a clean and even sound. You can practice this technique with the following exercises.

All the scales can be divided into groups of 3 and 4 without the finger crossing. (At top and bottom of the scale you will sometimes have a group of five.) Find the groups of three and four and roll the notes as fast as possible with a wrist roll, making sure your hand is relaxed and your notes are clean and even. Do the following patterns with each hand separately.

1. Roll 4x each group of 3 and 4. Each hand separately.
2. Roll 1x each group of 3 and 4. Each hand separately.

The next step is to work on making your crossings smooth. Each hand separately, do the same exercises above with the addition of the next note in the pattern, which contains the crossing. Roll the notes as fast as possible, making sure your hand is relaxed and your notes are clean and even. The crossing is the hardest part to keep clean and even.

CAUTION

This is the most likely exercise to get wrong and injure your hand. Injury most often comes from repetition on the crossing the thumb under, especially with scales that have an augmented 2nd, such as the B Minor scale. To prevent injury, do not overwork your hand. If you feel tightness or pain, ease off or stop. The best technique for crossing is not to stretch the finger under so much as to throw your hand quickly into the next position. There is of course some crossing, because as soon as your thumb plays its note, it begins to cross under towards its next note. What is really happening is that your hand is lifting upward, then if your hand is relaxed, the thumb naturally follows under, collapsing into the hand's relaxed state. Three techniques are combined almost simultaneously. 1) The wrist is rolled, 2) the thumb collapses inward, 3) the hand is thrown into the next position.

3. Roll 4x each group of 3 and 4 with the first note after the crossing. Each hand separately.
4. Roll 1x each group of 3 and 4 with the first note after the crossing. . Each hand separately.

STEP 4 - Muscle Memory Enhancement

The last step is to reinforce the muscle memory with one final exercise. Start by playing the first two notes of the scale up then back down. Go up the scales again, but add one more note, then come back down. Repeat the process, adding one additional note each time until you have added all 29 notes in the 4 octave scale, up and down. Then repeat the process by removing one note of the scale until you are back where you started with just two notes in the scale. Make sure to never play a wrong fingering.

STEP 5 - Assess Your Speed

This is what you have been waiting for. Did it work? Can you play your scales faster? There is a very good chance that if you went through each of the exercises above correctly, your speed has increased. Sometimes you need to let it settle into your hands a few days and repeat the exercises. Take a break, relax your hands, if you are cold, run your hands, wrists and forearms under hot water then let's see if your speed has increased.

Here are a couple of tips for you.

If you are having trouble getting your hands aligned so that the right and left hands sound together, try the following: Think of your left hand pushing the right hand up the scale and your right hand pushing your left hand down the scale. The right hand should not pull the left hand up the scale, it makes the left hand lag behind for some reason. Push! Don't pull.