



P_R Why is the order important?

- Builds strong foundations from the beginning
- Avoids build-up of bad habits
- Saves time in the long run
- Good preparation for pieces - avoids overload
- Keeps students engaged and gives them confidence

P_R Questions to consider at elementary level

- Legato or detached?
- Finger touch or whole arm movements?
- Middle C position or explore the whole keyboard?
- White notes or black notes? How to reconcile this with note learning?
- Hands together or hands separately?
- Solo or duet?
- When to introduce chords?

P_R Main aims for elementary students

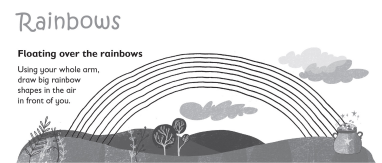
- Establish sound foundations from the beginning and avoid problems in the future.
- Introduce each technique in an orderly step-by-step progression so the pianist develops naturally without mental or physical strain.
- Teach techniques that can be learnt quickly and easily
- Most importantly - keep it musically-focussed and enjoyable!

P_R Technical aims for beginners

- Not only scales and arpeggios!
- Beautiful sound and expressive playing
- Well-coordinated arm-hand-finger movements and good alignment
- Establish a natural hand shape
- Finger independence
- Supple wrist, elbow and shoulder
- Freedom of movement in all five directions: sideways, up-down; forward and back; rotation and rounded

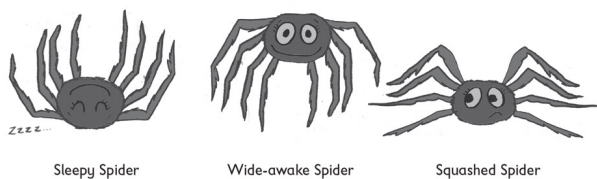
P_R Lateral movements

Warm-ups
 ↓
 Rainbows
 ↓
 Over the hills
 ↓
 Later: Leaps



Teaches:
 Freedom of movement
 Light arm and dropping with gravity
 Continuous flow

P_R Establishing a natural hand shape



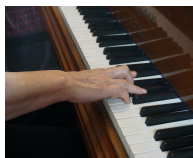
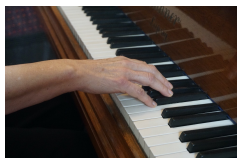
P_R The advantages of a neutral piano hand

- Keeps the muscles in balance
- Transmits strength from the arm directly through the hand arch into the keys
- The natural hand shape becomes the midpoint of movement
- Is less effortful and makes playing easier, allowing greater agility and speed
- Creates less tension and less potential for injury in the future

P_R The 'Chopin hand position'

Natural hand shape and evenly curved fingers
Teach initially off-stave or by rote

↓
Then shift to C major while retaining the evenly curved fingers.



P_R Detached 'bobbing technique'

Detached bobbing on one finger

↓
Eagle beak

↓
Introducing fingers one-by-one

Teaches:

- Time to focus on playing each finger firmly
- No pressure on fingers - good hand shape
- Coordinating the arm and hand to support the playing finger
- Supple wrist and freedom of movement
- Small fingers can reach black notes and larger intervals



P_R Forward and back

Warm up

↓
Chromatic scale with one finger

↓
Shifting between hand positions

↓
C major to G major scale

Teaches:

- Freedom in the elbow
- Whole hand moves forward and back
- Maintains evenly curved fingers



P_R Strengthening the hand and finger

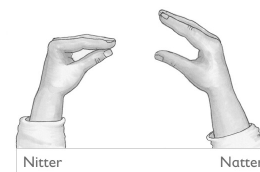
Nitter Natter

Strengthens the intrinsic hand muscles in preparation for:

- independent finger action
- legato finger touch
- strong hand arch

Itchy knee

Strengthens the end (DIP) joint for natural finger curvature



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Parachute touch



Parachute touch for cantabile
↓
The cat landing
↓
Pachelbel's canon
↓
Slurs

Teaches:
Coordinated arm-hand-wrist
Rounded hand shape
Supple wrist on landing
Arm weight for cantabile



Cat splats flat!

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Introducing legato

Only introduce legato once each finger has sufficient strength to support the hand

Drop and Walk
↓
Legato phrases
↓
Breathing wrist

Teaches:
Supple wrist softens the impact of the hand on the keyboard
Smooth transfer of weight from one finger to the next
Avoids tension and keybedding
Introduces rotation
The coordinated arm and hand support the playing finger

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Introducing cantabile chords

Parachute onto open fifths
↓
'Nodding bird'
↓
Triads
↓
Broken chords
↓
Inversions (later)



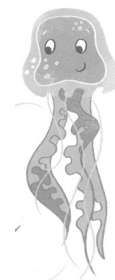
Teaches:
Supple wrist and arm weight
for cantabile sound
Good hand shape

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Staccato chords

Jellyfish jumps in fifths
↓
Triads

Teaches:
A natural energetic rebound.
Neutral hand shape
Relax the hand between the chords

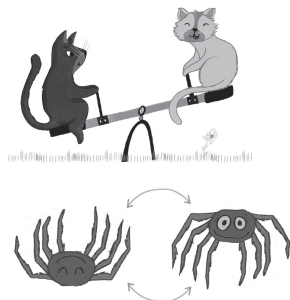


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Rotation

Rolling slow rotation for:
Melodies
↓
Accompaniments
↓
Alberti bass.

Teaches:
Soft arm for rotational freedom



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Scales

Jump rope technique for thumb under
Slow one-octave scales in B major, C major followed by other keys
Two octave scales

Teaches:
Nimble thumb action
Flowing arm movements around the keyboard
Takes students away from the five-finger position (pentascales)



P_R From hands separately to hands together

Train each hand equally in every technique:

hands separately



contrary motion



parallel motion



simple counterpoint

Avoids mental overload and musical compromise

Add accompaniment or backing track for a rich musical experience

P_R Rounded movements

Combines up-down and sideways movements for elegant musical shaping

Warm-ups



Scoops



Circles



Accompaniments



Rounded scales and melodies

Teaches:

Supple wrist and arm

Shapely gestures

P_R Arpeggios

Much larger intervals than scales!

One-octave with swinging wrist:

Supple wrist – avoiding the stretch
The arm takes the finger into position

Two-octave arpeggios with jump rope technique:

Nimble thumb action
Flowing arm movements

P_R Balancing sounds

Don't expect too much too soon!

Listening and singing



Emphasising RH melodies



Emphasising LH melodies

Teaches:

Awareness of the beauty of the whole piano sound

P_R All techniques have been prepared in advance

SONATINA. 3

Spiritoso. Op. 36, N^o 1. M. CLEMENTI.

P_R Combining with a method book

This, or a similar progression, can be combined with most modern method books

Supplement any method book with new technical resources – by rote, as improvisation tasks or from the Essential Piano Technique series

Repeat middle-register melodies at a different octave

Where necessary, rearrange slightly the order of the exercises in the technique or method book

PR Transfer students

What are the student's current technical limitations? Where are the gaps?

Work patiently at those one at a time, starting with the most urgent

Get the student on your side - explain and demonstrate the musical purpose

Don't overload - keep it light-hearted and musically focused

PR Intermediate and advanced techniques

Techniques develop naturally from the fundamental movements already learnt at elementary level - they are now just more refined and complex

Students with good technical foundations progress quickly because no bad habits hold them back

New technical demands and increased practice time may put additional pressure on the hands, so relaxation techniques and injury-preventive technique will benefit the advancing student

PR Wider intervals

Respect the student's natural hand shape and size.

Revise Parachute chords and Jellyfish jumps at the interval of the fifth then extend to larger intervals and more extended chords (The Splay)

Teaches:

Releasing the stretch between each chord

Playing chords with soft wrist

Arm release - no pressure

PR More complex textures and voicing

These are aural challenges! They need sensitive listening and awareness of the relationship of touch and sound:

Balancing RH and LH - now becoming instinctive

↓
Contrapuntal writing: Simple dances - Bach Little Preludes - Two-part and three-part inventions - Fugues

↓
Two voices in one hand - contrasting heavy notes (arm weight) and light notes (finger touch) in more complex textures

PR Ornaments

Intermediate

- Grace notes
- Mordents and inverted mordents
- Turns
- Simple steady trills.

Advanced

- More complex and refined ornaments
- Longer trills
- Elegant endings
- Different fingering
- Combining within a flowing phrase

Light fluid arm and 'twiddling fingers'

PR Thank you for listening!

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