

Helping Your Child Succeed at Piano

A Guide for Parents of Piano Students

By Cheryl Woodford

www.handstogetherpiano.com



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Introduction

There are so many compelling reasons for wanting your child to play the piano. Parents want their children to learn discipline, improve coordination, increase self-esteem, and have an artistic outlet for emotions. Children want to play songs they like and have fun learning to play an instrument. Whatever the reasons, piano lessons begin as an exciting adventure. Over the course of a few weeks or months, the novelty will inevitably fade. Following some of the suggestions in this guide will maximize the likelihood that learning to play the piano continues to be a satisfying, rewarding and enjoyable experience for you and your child.

Good Teachers and Supportive Parents are Equally Important

A good teacher can make lessons enjoyable by using appealing materials with great-sounding songs that children want to learn; employing a variety of stimulating activities during the lessons; teaching music in a variety of styles (blues, classical, popular, hymns, etc.); and encouraging creativity and improvisation. Teachers can motivate and inspire their students to want to work hard and keep learning.

Parents also have a major role in motivating and encouraging their children at home to be successful in piano study and practice. Being an active participant in your child's musical education is important to helping them succeed. Without a supportive parent or caregiver, the foundation for learning will be weak.

Being a "Life Coach" Who Supports the Learning Process

In regard to piano practice, a parent's job is to be the 'Life Coach' who will patiently support the student's learning process at home. Parents have the responsibility to teach their children how to be disciplined, how to set goals and how to persevere through feelings of resistance and frustration with practicing. Children, with limited life experience, do not have a long term view or the knowledge of how to persevere on their own.

To become skillful or accomplished players, children need the motivation provided by their parents in the early years of piano study. Children will rarely be able to generate or sustain enough motivation to practice consistently and correctly on their own. It would be helpful for parents to *think ahead and be prepared* for how they will handle their very important job as Life Coach. What will you say to your daughter when her enthusiasm is lagging? How will you handle the inevitable times when your son does not want to practice or even wants to quit? How will you sustain your own enthusiasm and patience?

“Struggle is not an option”

In the beginning, children may think learning to play the piano will come easily or always be fun. Eventually they come to realize it takes discipline and hard work if they want to get better. Learning a new skill is not all fun. No matter how successful a student is in academic subjects, learning to play the piano will be a challenge at times. In *The Talent Code*, Daniel Coyle writes “Struggle is not an option” and “To get good, it is helpful to be enthusiastic about being bad.” Children do not want to struggle. They forget how many times they fell down while learning to walk! However, to get good at something, it is necessary to struggle and to work at the edge of one’s ability where mistakes are likely to happen. It is not possible to get good at piano playing without making mistakes, overcoming the frustration of making mistakes, paying attention to those mistakes, and using mistakes as opportunities for improvement.

Who wants to practice anyway?

“It is normal for children not to want to practice. They are children. Everything is against the probability that they will enjoy practicing because of the complexity of the task and because of their immaturity. It is unfair to expect children to shoulder the entire burden themselves without the continual help and encouragement from an adult in the family.” How to Get Your Child to Practice without Resorting to Violence!! By Cynthia Richards, p. 28.

When children say they want to learn to play the piano, they usually don’t realize the amount of work necessary in learning a new instrument. I have often heard a parent say something like this to their child, “Now Suzy, you know you have to practice! Are you going to practice?” This reminds me of asking a child who is begging for a dog if they promise to walk the dog. Parents are wise enough to know their child will probably not be walking the dog all that much. When it comes to practicing a musical instrument, even professional musicians do not always want to practice. How can you expect a 10-year old to sustain a consistent practice schedule without being reminded, encouraged and supervised?

I recommend reading this book before or soon after your child begins lessons: How to Get Your Child to Practice without Resorting to Violence!! by Cynthia Richards (See the Bibliography).

Six Common Mistakes Parents Make that Hinder Your Child's Musical Progress

Some parents will do whatever is necessary to help their child with reading, math or other school subjects, but are not as supportive in piano studies. This is unfortunate, since piano study itself has been shown to improve academic performance. Here are six common mistakes you should avoid that can that hinder your child's musical progress:

Mistake #1: Believing that going to lessons once a week is enough to motivate your child to practice, and to practice the assignments correctly. Music teachers cannot magically instill children with the desire and motivation to follow through with practicing at home.

Mistake #2: Believing your child should not have to be reminded to practice. The same parents who will not hesitate to remind children to do their homework, feel they should not have to remind their child to practice.

Mistake #3: Believing you cannot be helpful because you never took piano or music lessons. Children require the direction of their parents to succeed at piano, whether or not the parents have ever played a musical instrument. Being enthusiastic and providing your child positive encouragement can be just as important.

Mistake #4: Having little patience or time for listening to your child practice. It is very motivating and will help your child's confidence to have an appreciative audience. Likewise, it is discouraging to children when a parent has little interest or time.

Mistake #5: Taking your child's word for it when they tell you they practiced. What does a child mean when they use the word 'practice'? Playing through their songs once or twice is not practicing.

Mistake #6: Not taking the time to learn what makes for good practice. If you don't know what good practice entails, you will not know whether your child is practicing, even if you are listening.

Keep reading for lots of specific ideas on improving your child's musical progress!

20 Simple Strategies Parents Can Follow to Dramatically Improve Your Child's Musical Progress

Not a "Drop-Your-Kid-Off" Activity

#1. **Attend your child's lessons.** Traditionally, piano lessons have been a 'drop-your-kid-off' activity. The student gets dropped off at the lesson while the parent runs a quick errand or relaxes in the car. I believe it is better that a parent stay at lessons *at least until their child is mature enough and experienced enough to know how to practice independently and effectively.* The mere presence of a parent at lessons communicates that learning to play the piano is valued and important. By attending lessons, you will learn what and how your child needs to practice for the best results. By paying attention during lessons you will learn how to guide your child at home, whether or not you have ever taken lessons. To gain an even better understanding, try learning some songs yourself 😊

#2. **Establish a practice agreement: how much, how often.** Establishing a practice agreement includes setting a time for practice at least five days a week and making it a priority, just like schoolwork. Ideally, practice should be about the same time each day in order to establish a routine. No doubt this is hard to achieve with homework, school activities and a family's busy schedule. If practice cannot be scheduled at around the same time every day, decide when practice will be done for each day of the week. Put it into a written schedule. Creating an organized schedule will help your child stay on task and help you remember the importance of practicing in their weekly activities.

As an extra-curricular activity, piano lessons compete with sports, drama, boy and girl scouting, not to mention television and video games. If students want to participate in team sports or drama activities, they have no choice but to be on time for team practice and rehearsals. This should also be the goal for piano practice.

There is only so much time in the day. Students should not be over-scheduled. Whatever activities they pursue, they need enough time to learn them well.

#3. **Focus on goal-oriented practice rather than minute-oriented practice.** Practice is most effective when it is goal-oriented rather than minute-oriented. Piano practice takes focus and concentration. Five minutes of concentrated practice is better than 30 minutes of mindless or careless playing. Several short sessions can be better for concentration than one long session. If your child walks past the piano and feels like playing, that may be the best time to practice, even for a few minutes or just a few measures.

#4. **Become familiar with effective practice strategies.** To become an accomplished player, a student must learn *how* to practice and parents of young students must also become familiar with these strategies. The strategies below are beginning steps, but you can refer to the reading material in the Bibliography for comprehensive practice strategies. I love this quote by Anthony Glise because it is so true: “Practicing doesn’t have to be unpleasant work. In fact, if practicing is approached methodically, the sense of immediate accomplishment is *extremely* high, the work is more fun and the student will make more progress.” (from Help! My Kid is Taking Music Lessons! By Anthony Glise, p. 45)

a. **Understand that practice makes permanent.** There used to be a well-known saying ‘Practice makes perfect’. Now music teachers more accurately say ‘Practice makes permanent’. If you ‘practice’ a song too quickly or carelessly with lots of mistakes, you will learn those mistakes very quickly. Slow careful practice takes lots of discipline but produces much better results.

b. **Pay attention to mistakes and learn from them.** First you must listen and pay attention to what you are playing; otherwise you will not even know you made a mistake! If you are aware of a mistake, figure out *what* was wrong: a note, finger number, rhythm? Then if possible figure out *why* the mistake was made. The passage must then be replayed several times - slowly, carefully and correctly.

c. **Split the piece into small segments.** No matter what piece a student is learning, there will always be a part that is more difficult or challenging. Break the piece into small manageable segments and work on one challenging part at a time, even if it is only a few notes. Practice the hard parts first and after a while you will play them better than the ‘easier’ parts.

d. **Start at the end of a piece and work backwards, phrase by phrase.** This is a well-known practice technique that works very well. Each time you add a phrase (working backwards), you still play to the end of the section you are working on.

e. **Save the fun stuff for last.** Do the serious practicing at the beginning of practice time, after an initial warm-up. Take a 5-minute break. Play the fun stuff or review old pieces at the end of the practice session.

THERE ARE MANY WAYS YOU CAN ENCOURAGE YOUR CHILD TO PRACTICE

#5. **Piano practice is a solitary activity.** Many children do not like to practice alone. If this is the case, you may need to sit with your child to encourage them to practice. If you are not in the same room, let them know you are close by and listening. By sitting with them or listening close by, your child will know that learning to play the piano is valued and important, and not feel so alone.

On the other hand, some children may not want an audience and will prefer to practice by themselves. For children who prefer to practice alone, interruptions or unwanted comments by parents or other family members may discourage them from practicing.

See how they respond to one style or the other. Note if their need changes.

#6. **Praise your child for effort, not for being intelligent or talented.** If your daughter plays a piece well, praise her effort and hard work rather than her intelligence or talent. False praise or too much praise is counterproductive. According to Mindset: The New Psychology of Success by Carol Dweck, children who frequently hear they are smart or talented may develop a 'fixed' mindset, believing they can do well only in pursuits where they are naturally talented. If these children try something new which does not come easily, they immediately judge themselves to be not smart enough or talented enough, and give up prematurely.

By praising your child's effort rather than their inborn talent, they will be more likely to develop a 'growth' mindset. Children with a 'growth' mindset believe that talent is not fixed, but can be developed through hard work and effort.

#7. **Review the lesson assignment with your child, including all of the teacher's instructions.** However, also make sure your child can read the assignments by herself so she becomes responsible for her own learning. It can be helpful to check off each part of the assignment each day to make sure nothing is overlooked. If there is something in the assignment that you and your child do not understand, call or email the teacher as soon as possible. The teacher will be glad you asked, because it is better than practicing something incorrectly all week.

Parents need to put in time and energy to review assignments and to supervise practice. Left on their own, children will often goof off and play only the songs they like or what comes easily. They will not read the assignments carefully. They will not follow the teacher's instructions for how to practice. Do not expect your child to make good progress if she is practicing every day on her own.

#8. **No distractions.** There should be no distractions when practicing. Get away from the TV, video games, noisy brothers, sisters and other family members, including pets! Otherwise, it will be difficult to concentrate and less will be accomplished.

#9. **Mini-recitals.** Having occasional mini-recitals at home is a positive short-term goal and creates motivation to practice. Students practice more the week before a recital than at other times of the year. Invite family and friends to a mini-recital at home. Perhaps some of them are also able to play an instrument or sing. It doesn't have to be perfect performance! You could print up a program on the computer and serve a special dessert! Make a CD or video! In a couple of years, it will be fun to see the progress your child has made.

#10. **Performance opportunities.** Take advantage of performance opportunities held by elementary schools and music teacher organizations. Elementary school music teachers often allow students to play piano pieces for the class. Schools also hold yearly talent shows where children may love to show off their skills. These talent shows are popular and lots of fun.

Outside of school, students have opportunities to perform in non-competitive piano festivals held by local music teacher organizations. Some of these performance festivals include encouraging written evaluations and theory tests. Other types of recitals held by music teacher organizations are just for performing with no evaluations or tests.

Students who attend performance classes or piano parties at their teacher's studio have the chance to play for other students in a low-key, fun atmosphere. Even students who are afraid of playing for others soon overcome their shyness when they hear others playing less than perfectly. Students who attend group classes regularly develop confidence and poise in performance. Group classes are good preparation for year-end recitals where there may be a large audience.

#11. **Rewards.** Some children can be encouraged to practice by enticing them with occasional short-term or long-term rewards. Examples would be seeing a movie, purchasing a song from iTunes, getting a better instrument, or stickers on a chart. For a young child, even getting a hug is good encouragement. The following website has many good ideas for motivating a young student to practice: <http://www.pianodiscoveries.com/html/motivate.html>

#12. **Listen to good music and attend live concerts.** Children cannot know or appreciate good music if they are not familiar with it. It is helpful to attend live concerts and listen to good music as much as possible. Many music books have accompanying CD's. Let the CD of the assigned pieces play in the background during dinner or while driving in the car. Better yet, listen to the entire CD, not only the piece being studied. Take your child to music recitals, dance recitals and musical theater. If you are unfamiliar with classical music, look online for sites like '100 best classical piano pieces of all time'. A really fun site to visit is:

<http://www.kickassclassical.com/classical-music-popular-famous-best-top-100-list.html>.

There are similar sites for jazz, blues, world music and other styles.

#13. **Sing and dance.** Some children are not familiar with nursery rhyme tunes or kid's songs like *Bingo* or *Oh Susanna*. Teach this type of song to your children. Sing to them often when they are very young and encourage them to sing as much as possible.

When children are learning to play a song with lyrics, encourage them to sing. Singing is important for a budding musician because it helps train the ear to recognize pitch as well as rhythm. In addition to singing, it is important to clap to the beat, move to a beat and to dance.

#14. **Play musical games.** Below are some mostly free musical game sites which are not strictly related to piano. Playing high-quality educational games will help sustain an interest in piano while increasing musical knowledge and skills.

<http://trainer.thetamusic.com/>

<http://www.musictechteacher.com/musicquizzes.htm>

<http://www.classicsforkids.com/games/>

<http://www.dsokids.com/default.aspx>

<http://www.sfskids.org/templates/home.asp?pageid=1>

<http://www.philtulga.com/patternblock.html>

<http://www.musiccards.net/>

<http://pbskids.org/mayaandmiguel/english/games/globalgroovin/game.html>

#15. **Play popular as well as classical music.** Students love to play songs they know and love – popular music, and music from movies or musicals. When I was young, my parents played recordings of all the well-known musicals of the day and took me to see live performances as well. I knew the lyrics to most of the popular musicals by heart, and still remember many of them. Hearing this type of music at home increased my desire to play the piano because I was able to learn simplified versions of these songs.

There is a wealth of good piano tutorials on www.YouTube.com and www.PianoZap.com. You can find several tutorials for almost any popular song. Online tutorials are a lot of fun and a great supplement to formal lessons.

If you like classical music and want your child to enjoy playing it, they must hear classical music at home. Even if young students prefer to play popular music, this is still a good start. Once students enjoy playing songs they know and love, and gain confidence in their ability, they will be more open to learning different kinds of music, including classical.

When I was young, I became familiar with lots of great classical music by watching cartoons. Check out these fun cartoons on YouTube:

An Awesome Tom and Jerry's Piano Piece: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KNE5COX7Fzs>

Bugs Bunny Franz Liszt: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QC_nypfbZLQ&feature=related

Mickey Mouse Piano Solo – the Opry House: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=o5zdHAspBAQ>

Woody Woodpecker – Musical Moments from Chopin:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6N7FIVw0FDk&list=FLFqDz12UdHq3HXdfOwexakg&index=2>

#16. **Let your child teach you how to play a song.** Let your son or daughter explain melodic and rhythmic patterns, finger numbers, chords, and how to put hands together. This will reinforce their learning and make clear the parts they don't understand.

#17. **Be creative.** Encourage your child to be creative and to think musically by making up his own variations of a piece. Don't always stick to the written music. Change the order of the notes, add extra notes, change the chords, play the song in a different key or position, change the dynamics (loud/soft) or the rhythm, or make up lyrics. Many children also enjoy making up their own simple songs.

#18. **Play by ear.** Trying to play familiar melodies by ear is excellent ear-training. For some students, playing by ear comes more naturally than learning to read notes. Recently I attended a seminar given by Robert Vandall, a popular and well-known composer of piano music for students. He heard a teacher's story of a teenage student who was very resistant to learning to read music - he only wanted to play by ear. This frustrated her because she felt she wasn't doing her job of teaching him to read music. To her surprise, Mr. Vandall advised her to let him continue playing by ear, and to not worry about note reading. It was more important to keep him interested in music; the reading could come later, or not.

For most music students, playing by ear is a tough challenge. However, it is worthwhile to spend time developing a better ear for music. With a good 'inner' ear you are able to improvise, compose and read music more easily.

There are some websites devoted to ear training. This is an especially good one:
<http://trainer.thetamusic.com/en>

#19. **Social activities.** There can be a tremendous social aspect to playing an instrument. Piano playing doesn't always have to be a solitary activity. Teenage students can be highly motivated by playing with other instrumentalists in an ensemble or band. When students can play piano or keyboard with friends who play drums and guitar, they will enjoy getting to share their musical talents with friends.

#20. **Get a keyboard.** In addition to playing on a real piano, it is fun and stimulating to play on an electric keyboard which is able to simulate the sounds of many different instruments. Students can experiment by playing the same piece using different sounds to see which ones they like the best or which instrument best conveys the mood of the piece. Another advantage to having a keyboard is that it can be kept in a child's bedroom, available to play at any time.

Is a keyboard good enough for a beginner?

Many parents of beginning piano students hold off on the purchase of a real piano until they are sure their child will be continuing with lessons. In the meantime they are only willing to purchase a small keyboard with 61 keys (pianos have 88 keys). The cost of a small keyboard is usually between \$100 and \$150.

There are disadvantages to practicing *only* on a small keyboard. A major disadvantage is that you cannot learn to play expressively because the keys are not 'touch sensitive'. No matter how you depress the keys, you cannot play louder or softer unless you turn the volume control knob. You cannot evoke different moods or sounds, because keyboards lack any subtleties of touch.

Furthermore, the keys are not 'weighted'. There will be a lack of finger muscle development or control because there is almost no resistance to depressing the keys. This is not the case with piano keys which have considerably more resistance.

Eventually, there will not be enough keys on a 61-key keyboard to play the pieces you want to learn.

The next step up from a 61-key keyboard is a keyboard with 76 keys. Although there is the advantage of having 15 more keys, there is no difference in the feel or the sound. Prices average in the range of \$150 to \$300.

The closest to a piano is a digital piano. Digital pianos have a complete set of 88 keys. The better digital pianos have touch sensitive and weighted keys. To me, it doesn't make sense to invest the money in a digital piano unless it does have touch sensitive and weighted keys. Digital pianos sound and feel more like acoustic pianos, but the 'action' is not the same as on a real piano, and they don't *feel* the same, no matter what the salesperson tells you. Digital pianos have these advantages over a piano: they can produce an orchestral palette of different sounds; you can use headphones and not disturb anyone with your practicing; some digital pianos are portable; and they have built-in recording capabilities. The cost of a digital piano starts at about \$550 and can run as high as ten thousand dollars. Many bands and school orchestras use digital keyboards instead of 'real' pianos because they are more transportable, don't need tuning, and are able to simulate many different instruments.

While it is true that digital pianos need no tuning, they don't last forever and may still need expensive repairs. Keys can break, some notes might play too loudly or not play at all. Recently, I paid \$80 to replace just one broken key on my digital piano.

Creative Ways to Acquire a Real Piano

I believe it is more motivating to play on a good quality instrument, even (especially) for a beginner. Thankfully, most parents soon acquire an acoustic piano or a full-sized digital piano for their child who has a sustained interest in playing.

One relatively inexpensive way to *immediately* have the use of a piano is through a piano store's rental program. You gain the benefits of a brand new entry-level piano without committing to the purchase. Usually there is a trial period of four to six months. After the trial period, depending on the store, you may be required to return the rented piano, purchase the rented piano, or purchase a different piano. Some piano stores will allow you to continue with a month-to-month rental after a minimum trial period. In addition to the rental price, you will have to pay for delivery. However, if you decide to return the rented piano, you can apply almost the entire cost of rental and delivery towards the purchase of the new piano. The advantage of a rental program is the low up-front cost.

Some piano stores have a buy-back program. You must purchase a piano, but within a certain period of time, usually one year, you can return it and receive back most of the purchase price. The advantages to a buy-back program are that you can buy exactly the piano you want from the very beginning, as well as have a fairly long time to decide whether you want to keep the piano or not. The disadvantage to a buy-back program is that you must commit to the purchase of a piano.

Most new pianos start at about \$4000. The most expensive pianos sell for over \$100,000. You can also look for a used piano, which is much less expensive. It is advisable to take along a piano tuner or someone who can determine whether the used piano is worth getting, even if it is free! Most decent used pianos sold by piano stores start at about \$2000.

Before buying a new or used piano, acoustic or digital, go online to <http://www.pianobuyer.com>. This is the definitive reference guide for purchasing a piano.

Adjustable Benches and Foot Rests

The height of a standard piano bench is fixed. However, not everyone's body is suited to the height of a standard bench. For proper alignment, a piano player's elbows will be in line with the top of the white keys. The correct height of a piano bench is determined by the length of a person's upper arm in relation to their torso, not by how tall or short they are. If you have very long upper arms, the bench will need to be higher; with shorter arms the bench needs to be lower. Standard height piano benches are more suited to people with shorter arms.

An adjustable padded piano bench is called an "artist bench". They come in a range of qualities and prices between \$200 and \$1000 for an exquisitely custom-made model. Even though they are the Rolls Royce of benches, standard size artist benches are cumbersome and heavy. Furthermore, the knob which adjusts the height of a standard size artist bench is not so easy to turn.

An alternative to a standard size artist bench is a 'petite' artist bench which is a bit smaller, less cumbersome, less expensive and perfectly suitable for children and average size adults.



Standard Artist Bench



Petite Artist Bench

The most inexpensive adjustable benches have crossed legs like ironing boards and cost less than \$50. They are usually sold to use with keyboards rather than pianos (see below).



Be advised: Sitting your child on a stack of telephone books does not work! The phone books shift around and are too unstable to be helpful.

When children sit on a piano bench, their feet are too short to touch the floor, so a footrest is needed for balance. Piano footrests sell for about \$50 to \$150. The footrest in the photo below was available, as of September 20, 2011, for \$99 plus \$20 shipping, or unfinished for \$30 less from: <http://www.pianofootrest.com>.



You and Your Child's Success

I hope this parent's guide has given you many good ideas for supporting your child in learning to play the piano. The more of these ideas you try, the more likely your child is to become an accomplished piano player and pleased to be one! You will be proud of their accomplishments and gratified that you contributed in no small way to their success.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Practice Guides for Students and Parents

Help! My Kid is Taking Music Lessons! (A sympathetic handbook for the confused parents of young musicians) By Anthony Glise. Available from Amazon.

** How to Get Your Child to Practice Without Resorting to Violence!! by Cynthia Richards. Purchase this from Young-Musicians.com:

<https://www.young-musicians.com/how-to-get-your-child-to-practicewithout-resorting-to-violence-c.-richards.html>

Not Until You've Done Your Practice! (The classic survival guide for kids who are learning a musical instrument, but hate practicing) by Philip Johnston and David Sutton. Available from Amazon.

The Student's Guide to Effective Practicing (Hal Leonard Student Piano Library) by Nancy O'Neill Breth. Available from Amazon. This is not a book but a 3-page folder which explains about 60 different practice strategies. This is an excellent easy-to-use reference guide. Available from Amazon.

** I recommend reading this first.

The Psychology of Talent and Success

Mindset: The New Psychology of Success by Carol Dweck. Available from Amazon.

The Talent Code: Greatness Isn't Born. It's Grown. Here's How by Daniel Coyle. Available from Amazon.

Blog

The Truth About Piano Lessons, by Karen Berger. This is an excellent blog, straight to the point: <http://musicalresources.blogspot.com/2011/07/truth-about-piano-lessons.html>. Available online.

A Book about Simply Music Piano Lessons

A World Where Everyone Plays by Bernadette Ashby. Available from Amazon or www.simplymusic.com

"This book is a collection of inspirational breakthrough stories and impossible dreams that have come true through the medium of music and piano playing." (Bernadette Ashby)



“Simply Music is a remarkable, Australian-developed, piano and keyboard program that offers a breakthrough in music education. This unique, playing-based approach produces unprecedented results and has students of all ages, playing pop, classical, blues and accompaniment pieces – immediately – from their very first lessons. Simply Music teaches students to play the piano by immersing them in the actual process of playing, and providing a subtle balance between guidance, discovery and direct ‘hands-on’ experience. This program uses an entirely new and far more natural approach which transforms the entire music learning process.”

If you are interested in piano lessons with Cheryl Woodford

Hear what some parents are saying:

“The Simply Music approach to playing the piano has inspired our daughter to incredible heights! Instead of begging her to practice, we can’t get her away from the piano. She has learned to play at a remarkable speed, and has gained confidence, not only at the keyboard, but in life in general. What began as an interest for her in now a passion!

- Margo Raube

“I am amazed at how this style of teaching results in such advanced playing by the student. Ms. Woodford has a real love of music and an understanding way with her students, so they love it too.”

- Diane Voghel

“My son has been taking piano lessons with Cheryl for almost a year and a half and I am so impressed with his progress. Cheryl uses the Simply Music method, which starts with learning to play actual songs, then moving on to learning about rhythm and reading notes. What works for us is that the teaching method is not rigid – my son gets the opportunity to be creative. He already knows how to play dozens of songs and is still so enthused about going to his lesson each week. I also like that Cheryl expects him to work hard, which makes him strive to do his best. The key is that from the very start, you are playing actual songs, not just scales. Also, the books, CDs and DVDs put all the pieces together – you build this great foundation and hear progress each week. I would recommend learning to play the piano using Simply Music at Hands Together Piano Studio.”

- Vanessa Wilkinson

About Cheryl Woodford, NCTM

Cheryl Woodford has been teaching piano since 1993. She holds a degree in music from the University of Pittsburgh and an MBA in Accounting from Temple University. Cheryl is a **Nationally Certified Teacher of Music** and Associate Simply Music Teacher. She is past president of the Northern Delaware Valley Chapter of the Pennsylvania Music Teachers Association.

Cheryl teaches approximately 35 students each week at her home-based Hands Together Piano Studio in Willow Grove, Pa. Since 2002, Cheryl has taught piano using the Australian-developed Simply Music piano and keyboard program. For more information, go to www.handstogetherpiano.com or www.simplymusic.com.

To schedule a free information session, contact Cheryl at 215-657-8494 or by email at cheryl@handstogether.net

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