

PIANO

Guide book for piano students and their
parents at Vantaa Music Institute





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(PianoSoi! 2020 event's rewarded works)

Contents of the manual: Vantaa Music Institute's piano instructors

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THE PIANO AS AN INSTRUMENT

Why does it sound the way it does?

The piano is a magnificent instrument; at its best, it plays like a big orchestra. A piano has a unique voice, since the instrument is built of wood, which is a material that lives and breathes constantly. If well cared for, a piano will live a long life and delight its player for decades.

The instrument has an interesting mechanism: sound arises when felt-covered hammers hit the metal strings inside the instrument. The strings vibrate in the wooden echo basis that strengthens and tones the sound. The player affects the tone and volume by myriad different touches and uses of the pedals. The end result is also affected by the acoustics on the premises: the same instrument will sound totally different in different spaces and in the hands of different players.

Creating sound—that is, how to make an instrument resonate—is one of the most magic and wonderful things about playing as a hobby! The player uses different tones to create atmospheres and stories that are channeled into feelings. As a whole, creating sound is a most delicate and manifold process. But, above all, it is a great experience!



WHAT KIND OF AN INSTRUMENT SHOULD I ACQUIRE?

A student must have a “real” piano with 88 keys and fixed pedals. Electronic, keyboard-type instruments are not suitable for studying music at the music institute.

You can buy either a new or a used acoustic piano. To begin with, you can also lease it. Usually, stores will compensate for the rent paid, if you end up buying the instrument.

The best upright piano make, as regards its quality-price ratio and retail value, is most often Yamaha. A well-kept piano of a famous trademark known for its high quality handiwork is an investment that will keep its value.

A decent instrument usually costs at least €1,000, but sometimes used pianos are donated for free. When you are acquiring a used instrument, be sure to check that all the keys and pedals are intact and that the keyboard is equally balanced. You should also check that there are no rifts on the instrument’s sounding board and that there are no major abrasions on the hammers’ felt surfaces. Ask your piano teacher for advice, when you are acquiring a used instrument.

If you live in an apartment building, a good option for you could be an acoustic piano with silent technique, which allows you to play the piano while wearing a headset. It is possible to install the technique in any acoustic piano also afterwards.

The sound of digital instruments is electronic and pre-recorded. Therefore, you cannot explore how different touches affect the tones. We recommend that you acquire an acoustic instrument already at the beginning of your studies.

Browse instruments on sale:

- Töölön Pianokeskus:
<https://www.pianokeskus.fi>
- Laatusoitin:
<https://www.laatusoitin.fi/pianot/>
- F-musiikki:
https://www.f-musiikki.fi/yhteystiedot/f-musiikki_vantaa

MAINTENANCE AND TUNING

An acoustic piano should be tuned at least once a year. Regular tuning and maintenance will keep the instrument in good condition, which helps to maintain its retail value. It is a joy to play a well-tuned piano: so, keep your piano tuned!

It is best to tune the piano in the fall, between the beginning of the heating season and Christmas, or in the spring after the hard frost. Placement of the instrument is also important: you should place the piano as far as possible from windows and radiators. The Piano Life Saver humidifier also helps to keep the instrument in tune. The system keeps the indoor-air humidity balanced.

- Suomen pianonvirittäjät ry's website:
<https://pianonvirittajat.fi/jasenet/>



PIANO BENCH

In addition to the instrument itself, you will also need a sturdy piano bench. The bench should be adjustable, so that you can adjust its height as you grow. You will learn how to keep the bench at a suitable distance from the piano; not too far and not too near.



FOOTREST

Small players can acquire a footrest that will help them find body balance. There are different kinds of footrests: for example, those equipped with a pedal and those whose height can be adjusted. Discuss the best option for your child with the piano teacher.

- Pianistin Tukijalka:
<https://sites.google.com/site/tukijalka/>

PLAYING POSITION

Practicing a good playing position begins at the first piano lesson. From the start, it is important to find a natural, relaxed playing position that prevents muscle tension. The pictures below show how an adjustable bench and footrest help you find a good playing position.





PLAYING PREMISES

The child should practice on premises where there are no other activities going on. It is easier to concentrate, when nobody watches TV or listens to other music as the child practices. You should also pay attention to the lighting on the premises: you can place a separate light fixture beside the piano, if the room is dark.

It is sometimes a good idea to place the piano in the child's room so that they can practice undisturbed.

HOME SUPPORT FOR PRACTICE

Guardians' support is important for players of all ages. The younger the child, the more guardians' support is needed as regards practice.

You do not have to be a teacher: it's enough that you are interested in your child's playing and support them in home practice according to the teacher's instructions. The majority of teachers use a homework notebook that the student brings to the piano lesson and takes home afterward. Practice instructions, goals and other issues related to the piano lessons are written down in the notebook. You can check the teacher's instructions in the notebook together with the child.

After practice, the child and the guardian can talk about how the goals were achieved, what was deemed to be challenging or easy, and what things could be practiced more. It is good to praise and encourage your child when they have practiced and tried even challenging tasks.

As the child grows, you can give them the responsibility for their own practice. Remember however to be always interested in your child's hobby.



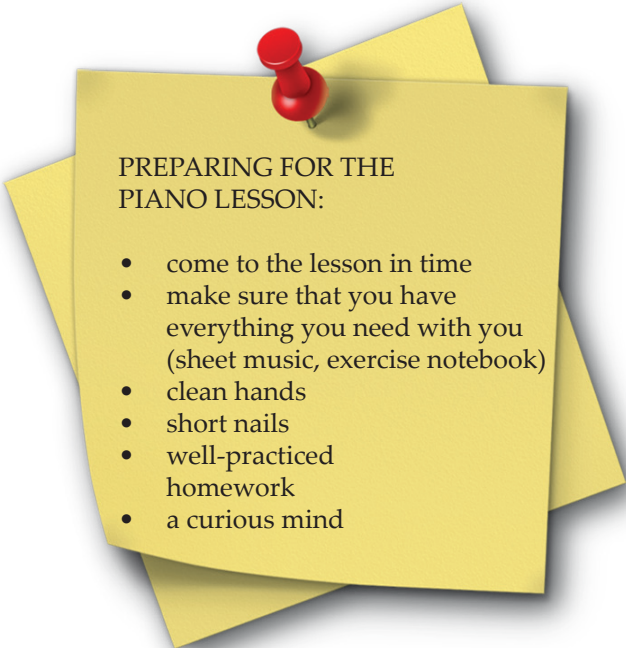
PRACTICE MAKES PERFECT

Regular practice is of the utmost importance. In order for the child to progress in their studies, they are recommended to practice on five days per week.

It is recommended to turn practice into routine: decide on the time of day for practice and hold on to the schedule. The best time to practice is when the player is alert.

Playing the piano does not have to be constant exact practice: children and the young also play for their own amusement and to relax. Small children may “stop by” the piano and grope for songs or make up their own stuff. Older students enjoy the pieces they have already learned and may improvise or play by the ear.

It is important to consciously practice according to the teacher’s instructions from the very beginning. In other words, make a distinction between playing and practice.



PREPARING FOR THE PIANO LESSON:

- come to the lesson in time
- make sure that you have everything you need with you (sheet music, exercise notebook)
- clean hands
- short nails
- well-practiced homework
- a curious mind

MOTIVATION

Accounting for motivation is important: you should regularly offer experiences supporting the music hobby to the child. It is worthwhile to listen to music at home and elsewhere by going to concerts to listen to different kinds of music (piano concerts, orchestras, opera and ballet performances, musicals, as well as pop and jazz gigs). Do not forget about summer courses: they are immensely exhilarating!

Besides Vantaa Music Institute, you can also go to Musiikkitalo to listen to concerts. The University of the Arts Helsinki's Sibelius Academy arranges around 600 annual concerts, the majority of which are free of charge for the audience. Yle Areena also has an incredible number of concert recordings that you can listen to for free.

Links:

- Musiikkitalo's event calendar:
<https://www.musiikkitalo.fi/fi/events/calendar>
- The University of the Arts Helsinki's event calendar:
<https://www.uniarts.fi/tapahtumakalenteri/>
- Yle Areena's concert recordings:
<https://areena.yle.fi/tv/ohjelmat/30-240>



Practice with joy!

**PIANO TEACHERS OF
VANTAA MUSIC INSTITUTE**



Vantaan musiikkiopisto - Vanda musikinstitut



vantaanmusiikkiopisto



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