

Piano Practice Chart

Composition:
Composer:
Period:
Style:
Date started to practice:
Date finished:

Preparatory Tasks

- ☐ Listen to a video or recording of the piece, at least 2 times with the score in front of you.
- ☐ Highlight or mark any places in the score that you notice more than others. Where it's extra interesting/beautiful/seems difficult for example.
- ☐ Divide the piece in the large parts that makes the "form" of the composition, like A B A for example.
- ☐ Divide each of these large parts in medium part, in phrases of 4-8 measures.
- ☐ Divide each medium part in small parts of 2-4 measures each.

Start Practicing in Parts

Small Parts:

Play each small part (2-4 measures) very slowly each hand separately until the notes, fingering, rhythm (slow), dynamics and articulation is smooth and correct. Then repeat the small part 4 times in a row correctly.

After repeating this process with all the small parts of the whole piece (or 1 large part if working with a very long piece), practice in the same way each small part again, but this time with both hands together. But you must play even slower; about half tempo if possible. After playing absolutely correctly, repeat each part very slowly 4 times.

- ☐ Learn each small part and repeat 4 times correctly, hands separately.
- ☐ Learn each small part and repeat 4 times correctly, hands together.

Medium Parts:

Repeat the same procedure with the medium parts; hands separately 4 repeats, and hands together 4 repeats. This time practice with a metronome, but still in a very slow tempo.

- ☐ Learn each medium part and repeat 4 times correctly, hands separately.
- ☐ Learn each medium part and repeat 4 times correctly, hands together with metronome.

Larger Parts:

Now, do the same as above with the larger parts. This time you'll increase the metronome count with one step for each correct playing.

- ☐ Learn each large part and repeat 4 times correctly, hands separately with metronome. Increase 1 step for each repeat.
- ☐ Learn each large part and repeat 4 times correctly, hands together with metronome. Start slow and then increase 1 step for each repeat.

Working with the Whole Piece

- ☐ Practice each hand separately the whole piece in a medium tempo.
- ☐ Focus first on the basics, like correct notes, fingering, rhythm and dynamics. But also on phrasing and expression.
- ☐ Once you can play correctly and without trouble in a comfortable tempo, repeat 4 times in a row correctly. Do not allow mistakes!
- ☐ Next, repeat the process in half tempo (extremely slow) with both hands, all the piece.

Polish the Parts

- ☐ Play only the melody/ies in the whole piece. Sometimes this is in only one hand, sometimes the melody moves from one hand to the other. Pick only one melody line each and work until perfect. Use correct fingers even though it might be awkward if you omit other parts.
- ☐ In the same manner, play only the baseline until perfect.
- ☐ Practice the full accompaniment without melody.
- ☐ Play the baseline and the melody only. Adjust dynamics and expression.
- ☐ Combine all parts and practice slowly.

Increase Speed

After learning the piece securely in a slow tempo, it's time to speed it up to full tempo gradually. Sometimes this is easy, but sometimes this may take some time.

- ☐ Go back to the first tasks and do them again, but this time with a metronome.
- ☐ For each correct repeat, increase the speed. If possible, learn to play the piece slightly above the full tempo. This gives you a “margin” and makes the piece feel so much more comfortable when performing.

Memorization

Different people have different ease for memorization. Although memorization is a skill that can be trained and greatly improved- some pianists don't have to “train” it at all!

But, instead of getting stuck pondering the unfairness of that- just get on with it!

Go back to the first tasks. This time, for each repeat:

1. Look only at the notes,
2. Look only at your hand/s with the music in front of you.
3. Look only at your hands without the music in front of you.
4. Same as 3.

Repeat with each of the medium and larger parts, as above.

Maintenance

To maintain the pieces you love to keep on your repertoire, you need to maintain them.

- ☐ After first learning a piece of music you obviously want to play it as much as possible.
- ☐ The first week after, once daily.
- ☐ The second week after once every 2-3 days.
- ☐ After that, play 2 times a week as long as you'd like to keep the piece on your repertoire.