



simply music piano

## Being a Simply Music Piano Student



## Welcome to a world of music

Part of the Simply Music family of music education programs, Simply Music Piano is a remarkable, Australian-developed piano and keyboard program that offers a breakthrough in music education. This unique method has children, teens, adults and seniors playing great sounding blues, classical, contemporary and accompaniment pieces—immediately—from their very first lessons.

The usual entry into learning piano is a 'reading-based' approach. In other words, students are first taught the fundamentals of music reading as the means of learning how to play. Although some students succeed with this approach, for many more the reading process can feel unnatural and slow, and end with the feeling that "music is not for me."

In contrast, let's consider how we learn language. We all talked for years before we learned how to read and spell.

Furthermore, we all learned to tie our shoelaces, brush our teeth, and button up our shirt by doing those things, by experiencing them directly, and never by studying the theory of the subject or referring to notes. In other words, we learn by doing.

Our 'playing-based' approach is founded on the premise that everybody, without exception, is musical. Life is musical, profoundly so. Our hearts beat a steady "thump"—that is rhythm, the foundation of all music. Walking is a highly rhythmical, graceful, musical act. Conversation is made up of spoken sentences and phrases of astonishing musical complexity, yet is easily and naturally available to us all.

Our innate connection to music is precisely what gives us the ability to talk. The Simply Music method both draws on and nurtures the natural sense of music we all possess; it teaches students to play the piano by immersing them in the actual process of playing.

The Simply Music method begins by translating pieces of music into a unique series of simple concepts that unfold directly onto the keyboard. Beginning students, with no attention on having to read music, are free to relate directly to the piano.

Within months, they easily and naturally establish a hands-on and personal feeling for the instrument and build a Playlist that includes contemporary, classical, gospel, blues and jazz styles. Students also explore, in a natural and non-threatening way, the possibilities of composition and improvisation.

The bottom line is that students get to experience the absolute joy that comes from being able to immediately play a broad repertoire of great-sounding music.

Typically, students in their second year of lessons (and with a repertoire of 35-50 pieces), go on to learn how to read music and understand more theory. Their ability to play piano so well provides a natural foundation.

Simply Music students—children, teenagers, adults and seniors alike—are discovering that they have an ability to learn piano more easily and naturally than they thought possible.

Please read on to find out more about how the Simply Music Piano curriculum works.

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## The structure of the Simply Music Piano program

### Our goals

Our overriding goal is to create a culture where people of all ages readily acquire and maintain music as a lifelong companion. To support this goal, we have four specific goals for our students. We aim for each student to:

- Master a huge repertoire that includes classical, contemporary, blues, jazz, accompaniments, etc.
- Experience playing as a natural self-expression.
- Enjoy music as a highly positive, self-affirming pursuit.
- Learn to “self-generate,” i.e., to progress independently as a musician. This includes developing a strong foundation in music reading and theory.

### Variables

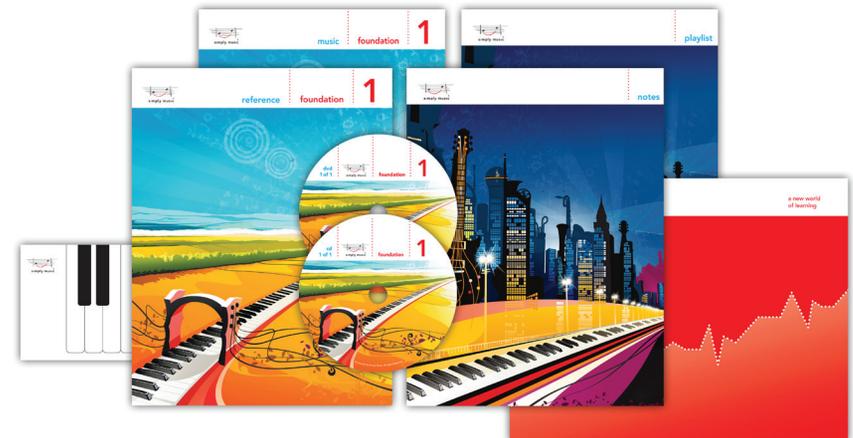
Musical growth will be influenced by many factors, such as:

- your age
- how often you have lessons—weekly, bi-weekly, monthly
- your access to a good-quality instrument
- your practice environment
- how you practice, including frequency and duration, as well as the way you utilize the program and materials

The Simply Music Piano curriculum unfolds over 6-10 years, depending on your individual rate of progress. Here is a broad outline of the Simply Music Piano Program:

### Year One

- 35-50 pieces in various musical genres
- Develop the basics of accompaniment performance.
- Establish a strong foundation of playing music.
- Build a foundation of improvisation and composition.
- Prepare to begin music writing and reading.



# 2

## The structure of the Simply Music Piano program

### Year two

- 25-40 pieces of various musical genres.
- Gain a foundation of music reading and writing.
- Build a stronger understanding of blues and jazz.
- Develop greater facility with classical and contemporary music.
- Gain broader experience with accompaniment performance.
- Develop improvisation and composition.

### Year three

- 15-30 pieces of various musical genres.
- Expand the foundation and understanding of music reading.
- Broaden accompaniment performance.
- Develop a more complex classical and contemporary repertoire.
- Cultivate a more complex blues and jazz foundation.
- Expand composition, improvisation and arrangement.
- Establish an understanding of music theory and its practical application.

“ Let me begin by saying just how thrilled I am with the Simply Music program. I’m playing better now than I did after years of traditional lessons. ”

– Steve Manuel

Executive Producer, Prime Time Discovery Channel, Washington, D.C.

### Year four and beyond

- Develop greater self-generative capacity in reading, composition and improvisation.
- Foster a high degree of responsibility for own learning.
- Explore individual musical interests.
- More deeply explore expression and technique in playing.
- Expand and broaden knowledge of music theory.

### How music reading is introduced

Our goal is to equip students with the ability to progress independently. This includes not only building a vast repertoire, but also being able to read and write music, compose, arrange, improvise, and understand music theory.

As with all aspects of the Simply Music Piano program, our approach to achieving this is unique, and built around the ‘playing-based’ principles that students have been learning since their very first lessons. The larger and more fluent the student’s repertoire, the easier it is to successfully move into music reading.

While there is no definitive point when students begin the reading process, it begins in the first year, with sight-reading the chord symbols used in contemporary accompaniment. It is then more formally introduced after building a solid repertoire of 35 to 50 pieces. The process moves logically and naturally, one skill at a time, as you continue to develop your playing-based repertoire.



### The Simply Music approach

Reading music is a receptive skill, whereby students receive instructions from the page. In contrast, writing music is a generative skill, whereby instructions are generated by the student and then reverse-engineered on to the written page.

The Simply Music Reading Program takes a generative approach. This means that the student's ability to read music is based on developing a comprehensive ability to write music. Within Simply Music, reading and writing are one and the same.

Our approach starts by discovering and connecting with the natural rhythms at the heart of our daily actions. We then quantify those rhythms and focus them into the hands. We translate those rhythms onto the keyboard, and subsequently reverse-engineer them on to the page—i.e., we learn to write these natural rhythms using standard notation.

In other words, we introduce music reading into areas where the student already has a highly developed, innate abilities.

After establishing a strong rhythm-reading foundation, we then introduce pitch reading, a second musical language, as and when appropriate. As part of this process, we draw on the vast repertoire of songs that the students already know and can play thoughtlessly.

Although we use an intervallic system of reading, which is becoming a more common and successful approach, our strategy and methodology is unique and remains consistent with our playing-based principles. Students learn first to re-interpret their repertoire as intervals (the distance between notes). They then learn how to map these intervals into their hands and onto the keyboard.

Only when students have a strong and clear ability with this do we then reverse-engineer intervals onto the page. The additional languages of music—dynamics, articulation, keys and accidentals, etc.—are gradually introduced at an appropriate time, and in a structured, easily digestible manner.

The entire process is very natural and easily assimilated, and being generative in nature, it also allows students to experience being responsible for their own development.

*“ This is a wonderful music program and the results are astounding! Even if you don't consider yourself musically talented, this program is designed for you! It is easy to understand and easy to play a full repertoire of beautiful songs from a variety of genres. I also think this program could be a major breakthrough for children with a variety of cognitive delays and learning disabilities. I love the Simply Music approach. ”*

**– Dr. Anne Margaret Wright (Psy.D.)**

Educational Consultant for: The Old Schoolhouse Magazine



## Moving forward

It is important to understand that as students venture into the reading process, they do not stop building their repertoire of great-sounding music. Reading becomes an additional stream that runs alongside their regular, playing-based projects.

With a strong foundation of playing, reading and writing music, students have a solid basis on which to move forward into more advanced musicianship.

The program can only be presented by a Certified Simply Music Piano Teacher. The standard arrangement is for students to attend one lesson each week, in either a shared or private lesson format, according to what is available and appropriate.

When the student is younger, and has not learned the tools needed to sustain long-term relationships, we explore the impact of having the parent or adult guardian present at the lessons. The role of this person is crucial, and goes far beyond the obvious.

Our first lesson, the Foundation Session, examines this, and provides parents with a much deeper insight into the extraordinary contribution they can make to their child's success.

The Foundation Session also explores the practical side of the learning process and the basics of common sense and professionalism, and how they apply to the learning environment.

## Choosing an instrument

You will need to have access to an instrument. When choosing a piano or keyboard, budget is often an important factor. Almost all acoustic pianos have 88 keys, and have all of the preferred benefits and features. A local piano technician or piano tuner can provide valuable advice when you're considering purchasing a second-hand instrument.

When choosing an electronic keyboard, there are certain features to look for. The more features, the higher the cost. Use the following guidelines (in order of importance):

- minimum of 61 regular-sized keys
- if affordable, an 88-key digital piano or keyboard would be ideal
- a sustain pedal (not a sustain button)
- touch sensitive keys
- weighted keys

Obviously there are numerous other features, many of which come as standard on many modern instruments. These, while potentially interesting and/or beneficial, are not a necessary part of a successful Simply Music experience.



## The practice structure

We request that you practice 15-20 minutes, 5 or 6 days each week, most importantly, at a specific time. We will discuss this in the Foundation Session.

We have found that doing smaller, more regular practice sessions is more effective than longer, less frequent sessions. Practice time is separate from any time where you may be sitting down and playing for fun and pleasure. Students often wish to practice more than this, and we encourage that.

Your Simply Music Certified Teacher is required to regularly provide each student with their own high-quality Student Home Materials, which utilize video, audio and text to support learning. Students are required to use these materials, as they are integral part of the learning experience and crucial to their successful progress.

During the Foundation Session (Lesson One), we will explore this remarkable range of materials, which essentially allow students to review every lesson, at home, as many times during the week as they wish. They form an extraordinary support system.

“ My daughter is seven and had no prior music knowledge. This has absolutely surpassed our expectations. Recently she played for a hundred people and brought the house down. ”

– **Marsha Goodstein**  
Parent

## Managing success

The Simply Music Piano program has come about as a result of tens of thousands of hours of development and implementation. Throughout this time we have learned that certain things are vital to students' success. The following is a list of the most important factors:

- adhering precisely to all the teacher's requirements
- following the Simply Music program exactly
- consistently attending lesson and practicing
- fully utilizing the Student Home Materials
- being willing to progress at a steady pace, without rushing
- creating a positive learning environment:
- using a good-quality instrument
- keeping the instrument in a room that is readily accessible and free of significant distractions
- receiving strong, consistent parental support
- acknowledging responsibility for all of the above

As stated earlier, a successful result can only occur when a student is willing to learn, allows themselves to be supported in this, and receives that necessary support.

Our commitment is that each student has a highly successful Simply Music experience. If, at any time, you have a suggestion, comment or communication that you believe would improve our service and/or results, please feel free to discuss this with your teacher, or contact Simply Music directly at: [info@simplymusic.com](mailto:info@simplymusic.com)

## About the founder

Neil Moore, the creator of the Simply Music program, was born in 1957 in Melbourne, Australia, and began studying piano at the age of seven. He moved to the United States in 1994 and currently lives in Sacramento with his wife and three children.

He has spent most of his life actively involved in developing 'playing-based' music principles. He composes and arranges much of the music used throughout the various Simply Music programs, and his experience includes teaching in schools, leading seminars and workshops, as well as owning and operating a network of music teaching studios. He regularly leads presentations in Australia, New Zealand, the United States and Canada.

Neil is the Executive Director of and spokesperson for the Simply Music organization. He oversees its executive and administrative operations, as well as the introduction and development of new programs.

“ After a year of traditional lessons our son was only playing one hand and one note at a time. He was discouraged and ready to quit. We then switched him to Simply Music and he now plays blues, jazz and classical pieces. He LOVES piano now. ”

– **Rebecca Bolin**  
Parent

## Introductory sessions

If you would like to find out more about how the Simply Music method would work for you, call about the possibility of a free Introductory Session in your area. At these sessions we describe how the program was developed, discuss how Simply Music differs from other methods, demonstrate the results our beginning students are achieving, and address any questions.

“ I have seen a lot of music programs over the years. Some were fun. Some were clever. Some were thorough. Here's one that has it all. In terms of presentation, effectiveness, philosophy—you name it—there's nothing out there that compares at all. ”

– **Mary Pride**  
Publisher, Practical Homeschool Magazine

## Visit us online

If you would like additional information, or would like to find the teacher nearest you, please visit our website at: [simplymusic.com](http://simplymusic.com)



# 4 Learning more

## The Simply Music Piano Curriculum

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### The Simply Music Piano Curriculum

Foundation Programs	L1	L2	L3	L4	L5	L6	L7	L8	L9										
Development Programs										L10	L11	L12	L13	L14	L15	L16	L17	L18	
<b>Special Programs*</b>																			
- Composition & Improvisation	→																		
- Arrangements 1	→																		
- Accompaniment 1	→																		
- Accompaniment 1 Variations	→																		
- Blues & Improvisation	→																		
- Reading Rhythm 1	→																		
- Arrangements 2	→																		
- Arrangements 3	→																		
- Reading Notes 1	→																		
- Time for More Music	→																		
- Jazz 1	→																		
- Accompaniment 2	→																		
<b>Supplemental Programs**</b>																			
- Songs for Children 1	→																		
- Songs for Children 2	→																		
- Foundation Duets & Variations	→																		
- Foundation Duets & Variations 2	→																		
- Songs for Christmas	→																		

\* **Special Programs** - These programs can sometimes be introduced earlier than outlined above, depending on the student's experience, motivation and rate of progress. The timing and manner of their implementation can vary from student to student or group to group.

\*\* **Supplemental Programs** - These optional programs may be suggested by the teacher depending on the student's needs and interests.

Simply Music is a revolutionary, Australian-developed piano learning method that offers a breakthrough in Music education. This remarkable approach has students of all ages playing great-sounding contemporary, classical, gospel, blues and accompaniment pieces – immediately – from their very first lessons!

Simply Music

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