

Making Everything Easier!™

3rd Edition

# Piano

FOR  
**DUMMIES**®  
A Wiley Brand

## Learn to:

- Master the basics of piano
- Read music notation and understand notes and rhythms
- Play melodies, create harmonies, and hone your techniques
- Explore different styles and perform popular pieces and songs



View video demonstrations and listen to audio tracks online

 **HAL•LEONARD®**  
**Adam Perlmutter**



# Get More and Do More at Dummies.com®



Start with **FREE** Cheat Sheets

Cheat Sheets include

- Checklists
- Charts
- Common Instructions
- And Other Good Stuff!

To access the Cheat Sheet created specifically for this book, go to  
[www.dummies.com/cheatsheet/piano](http://www.dummies.com/cheatsheet/piano)

## Get Smart at Dummies.com

Dummies.com makes your life easier with 1,000s of answers on everything from removing wallpaper to using the latest version of Windows.

Check out our

- Videos
- Illustrated Articles
- Step-by-Step Instructions

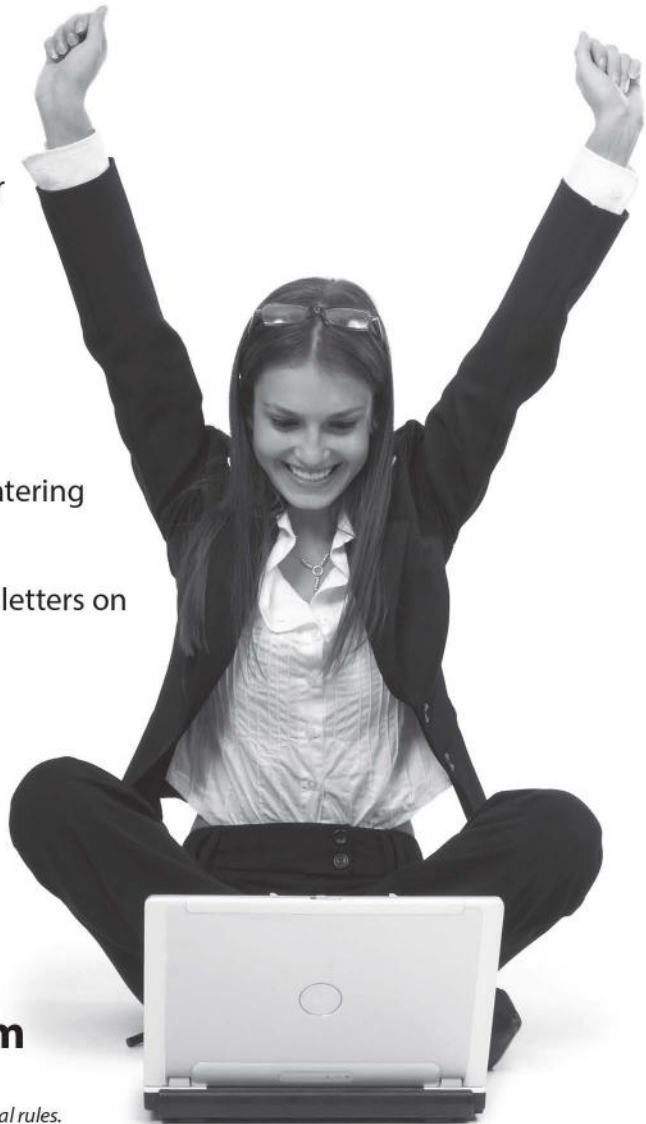
Plus, each month you can win valuable prizes by entering our Dummies.com sweepstakes.\*

Want a weekly dose of Dummies? Sign up for Newsletters on

- Digital Photography
- Microsoft Windows & Office
- Personal Finance & Investing
- Health & Wellness
- Computing, iPods & Cell Phones
- eBay
- Internet
- Food, Home & Garden

## Find out "HOW" at Dummies.com

\*Sweepstakes not currently available in all countries; visit Dummies.com for official rules.





**Revised by Adam Perlmutter**

FOR  
DUMMIES®  
A Wiley Brand

---

## **Piano For Dummies® 3rd Edition**

Published by: **John Wiley & Sons, Inc.**, 111 River Street, Hoboken, NJ 07030-5774, [www.wiley.com](http://www.wiley.com)

Copyright © 2014 by John Wiley & Sons, Inc., Hoboken, New Jersey

Published simultaneously in Canada

No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording, scanning or otherwise, except as permitted under Sections 107 or 108 of the 1976 United States Copyright Act, without the prior written permission of the Publisher. Requests to the Publisher for permission should be addressed to the Permissions Department, John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 111 River Street, Hoboken, NJ 07030, (201) 748-6011, fax (201) 748-6008, or online at <http://www.wiley.com/go/permissions>.

**Trademarks:** Wiley, For Dummies, the Dummies Man logo, Dummies.com, Making Everything Easier, and related trade dress are trademarks or registered trademarks of John Wiley & Sons, Inc., and may not be used without written permission. All other trademarks are the property of their respective owners. John Wiley & Sons, Inc., is not associated with any product or vendor mentioned in this book.

**LIMIT OF LIABILITY/DISCLAIMER OF WARRANTY: WHILE THE PUBLISHER AND AUTHOR HAVE USED THEIR BEST EFFORTS IN PREPARING THIS BOOK, THEY MAKE NO REPRESENTATIONS OR WARRANTIES WITH RESPECT TO THE ACCURACY OR COMPLETENESS OF THE CONTENTS OF THIS BOOK AND SPECIFICALLY DISCLAIM ANY IMPLIED WARRANTIES OF MERCHANTABILITY OR FITNESS FOR A PARTICULAR PURPOSE. NO WARRANTY MAY BE CREATED OR EXTENDED BY SALES REPRESENTATIVES OR WRITTEN SALES MATERIALS. THE ADVISE AND STRATEGIES CONTAINED HEREIN MAY NOT BE SUITABLE FOR YOUR SITUATION. YOU SHOULD CONSULT WITH A PROFESSIONAL WHERE APPROPRIATE. NEITHER THE PUBLISHER NOR THE AUTHOR SHALL BE LIABLE FOR DAMAGES ARISING HEREFROM.**

For general information on our other products and services, please contact our Customer Care Department within the U.S. at 877-762-2974, outside the U.S. at 317-572-3993, or fax 317-572-4002. For technical support, please visit [www.wiley.com/techsupport](http://www.wiley.com/techsupport).

Wiley publishes in a variety of print and electronic formats and by print-on-demand. Some material included with standard print versions of this book may not be included in e-books or in print-on-demand. If this book refers to media such as a CD or DVD that is not included in the version you purchased, you may download this material at <http://booksupport.wiley.com>. For more information about Wiley products, visit [www.wiley.com](http://www.wiley.com). All music engravings and illustrations © John Wiley and Sons, Inc.

Library of Congress Control Number: 2014936393

ISBN: 978-1-118-90005-5 (pbk); ISBN 978-1-118-90006-2 (ebk); ISBN 978-1-118-90007-9 (ebk);

Manufactured in the United States of America

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

---

# Contents at a Glance

.....

<b><i>Introduction</i></b> .....	<b>1</b>
<b><i>Part I: Getting Started with Piano</i></b> .....	<b>5</b>
Chapter 1: Preparing to Play a Piano .....	7
Chapter 2: Meeting the Keyboard Family .....	17
Chapter 3: Finding the Perfect Keyboard .....	29
Chapter 4: Taking Good Care of Your Keyboard .....	51
Chapter 5: Eighty-Eight Keys, Three Pedals, Ten Fingers, and Two Feet.....	59
<b><i>Part II: Deciphering Squiggles on Paper to Create Sound</i></b> .....	<b>75</b>
Chapter 6: Reading Lines and Spaces .....	77
Chapter 7: Joining the Rhythm Nation.....	91
Chapter 8: Changing the Beaten Path .....	113
<b><i>Part III: One Hand at a Time</i></b> .....	<b>133</b>
Chapter 9: Playing a Melody.....	135
Chapter 10: Scaling to New Heights.....	153
Chapter 11: Hey, Don't Forget Lefty!.....	169
<b><i>Part IV: Living in Perfect Harmony</i></b> .....	<b>193</b>
Chapter 12: The Building Blocks of Harmony .....	195
Chapter 13: Understanding Keys .....	215
Chapter 14: Filling Out Your Sound with Chords .....	229
<b><i>Part V: Technique Counts for Everything</i></b> .....	<b>249</b>
Chapter 15: Dressing Up Your Music .....	251
Chapter 16: Great Grooves .....	275
Chapter 17: Perusing the Aisle of Style.....	297

---

<b><i>Part VI: The Part of Tens</i></b> .....	<b>321</b>
Chapter 18: Ten Ways to Improve Your Practice and Performance .....	323
Chapter 19: Ten Ways to Supplement This Book .....	327
Chapter 20: Ten Questions to Ask Prospective Teachers .....	341
<b><i>Appendix: About the Website: Audio Tracks and Video Clips</i></b> .....	<b>347</b>
<b><i>Index</i></b> .....	<b>353</b>

---

# Table of Contents

.....

## ***Introduction* ..... 1**

About This Book .....	1
Foolish Assumptions .....	2
Icons Used in This Book .....	2
Beyond the Book .....	3
Where to Go from Here .....	4

## ***Part 1: Getting Started with Piano* ..... 5**

### **Chapter 1: Preparing to Play a Piano . . . . . 7**

Knowing Why the Piano Is So Special .....	7
Advantages to playing the piano .....	8
Advantages to studying music at the piano .....	8
A skill and an art .....	9
Understanding Why People Take Piano Lessons (And Why They Often Quit) .....	10
Getting to Know Your Instrument .....	11
Comprehending the Language of Music .....	12
Developing an ear for horizontal and vertical music .....	13
Getting to know musical forms and styles .....	14
Starting to Play the Best Way .....	15
Being Aware of What You Already Know about Playing the Piano .....	15

### **Chapter 2: Meeting the Keyboard Family . . . . . 17**

Looking at the Acoustic Ones .....	17
Pianos .....	18
Harpsichords .....	21
Pipe organs .....	24
Identifying the Electric Ones .....	25
The nuts and bolts of electronic sound .....	25
Synthesizers .....	25
Digital keyboards .....	26

<b>Chapter 3: Finding the Perfect Keyboard</b> . . . . .	<b>29</b>
To Hum or Not to Hum: Electric or Acoustic (Or Both)? .....	29
Buying an acoustic.....	30
Buying a digital.....	31
Buying a hybrid.....	33
Picking the Perfect Acoustic Piano .....	34
Taking location into account.....	34
Getting all the pedals you deserve .....	35
Finding good buys (and avoiding scams).....	35
If you've heard one, you haven't heard them all .....	36
Looking at some specific piano brands .....	37
Selecting a Digital Keyboard That Lasts.....	38
Digital pianos and organs .....	39
Arrangers .....	40
Stage pianos.....	40
Workstations .....	40
Synthesizers .....	40
Avoiding obsolescence .....	41
Knowing the digital features you want.....	41
Browsing some specific keyboard brands.....	43
Other electric keyboards.....	44
Before You Drive It Off the Lot: Sealing the Deal at the Store .....	45
Taking it for a spin .....	45
Loving and leaving it .....	46
Refusing to pay the sticker price .....	46
Shopping online .....	47
The MIDI Places You Can Go.....	48
A MIDI primer .....	48
Keyboard to computer .....	49
Keyboard to keyboard .....	50
MIDI and music notation.....	50
<b>Chapter 4: Taking Good Care of Your Keyboard</b> . . . . .	<b>51</b>
Providing a Good Place to Live.....	51
Making It Shine: Cleaning Your Keyboard.....	53
Calling In a Pro for General Checkups and Serious Repairs .....	54
Tuning acoustic keyboards .....	55
Keeping digital keyboards happy .....	56
Dealing with serious keyboard problems.....	57
Taking the Worry Out of Moving Your Acoustic Piano .....	58



<b>Chapter 5: Eighty-Eight Keys, Three Pedals, Ten Fingers, and Two Feet.....</b>	<b>59</b>
Finding the Keys, Easy Peasy.....	59
The white keys.....	60
The black keys.....	62
Discovering What Your Parents Never Told You about Posture.....	63
To sit or not to sit: That's the real question.....	64
Sitting down: Chairs versus benches.....	65
Using stands and racks.....	67
Paying Attention to Hand Positioning.....	68
Arch those hands and fingers.....	69
Fingering.....	70
Giving your hands and fingers a rest.....	70
Pedal Power: Getting Your Feet in on the Action.....	71
Piano pedals.....	72
Digital keyboard pedals.....	73

***Part II: Deciphering Squiggles on Paper to  
Create Sound.....*** **75**

<b>Chapter 6: Reading Lines and Spaces.....</b>	<b>77</b>
Your Guide to a Piano Score.....	77
Employing a staff of five lines.....	79
Hanging from a clef.....	80
Double Your Staff, Double Your Fun.....	84
Grand staff and ledger lines.....	85
Climbing up the staff and beyond.....	87
An octave above, an octave below.....	87
Punctuating Music: Bar Lines.....	88
Continuing to Read: Don't Stop.....	89
<b>Chapter 7: Joining the Rhythm Nation.....</b>	<b>91</b>
Eyeing Tempo: The Beat Goes On.....	91
Measuring the beat using tempo.....	92
Grouping beats in measures.....	93
Serving Some Musical Pie: Basic Note Values.....	94
Quarter notes: One piece at a time.....	95
Half notes: Half the pie.....	95
Whole notes: The whole pie.....	96
Counting all the pieces.....	97

Faster Rhythms, Same Tempo .....	98
Eighth notes.....	98
Sixteenth notes and more.....	99
Listening for the Sound of Silence: Rests .....	100
Whole and half rests.....	101
Quarter rests and more.....	102
Counting Out Common Time Signatures .....	104
Common time: 4/4 meter .....	105
Waltz time: 3/4 meter .....	106
March time: 2/4 meter .....	106
6/8 time.....	107
Playing Songs in Familiar Time Signatures.....	108

**Chapter 8: Changing the Beaten Path . . . . . 113**

Getting a Jump on the Start: Pickup Beats and Measures.....	113
Adding Time to Your Notes with Ties and Dots .....	115
Linking notes using ties.....	115
Extending notes using dots .....	116
Playing Offbeat Rhythms .....	119
Triplets love chocolate .....	119
Swing and shuffle time .....	121
Syncopation.....	123
Playing Songs with Challenging Rhythms .....	125

**Part III: One Hand at a Time .....** 133

**Chapter 9: Playing a Melody . . . . . 135**

Let Your Fingers Do the Walking .....	136
Getting into the Right Position .....	137
C position.....	137
G position.....	142
Shifting your hand position as you play .....	143
Crossing Your Fingers and Hoping It Works.....	144
Crossing over your thumb.....	145
Passing your thumb under .....	146
Playing Melodies in the Right Hand .....	147

**Chapter 10: Scaling to New Heights . . . . . 153**

Building a Scale, Step by Step .....	154
Stepping Up to the Majors.....	155
Understanding major scales.....	156
Trying a major scale exercise.....	158

Exploring Minor Variations .....	159
Natural minor scales .....	159
Harmonic minor scales .....	161
Melodic minor scales .....	161
Trying minor scale exercises .....	162
Showing Your Rebellious Side with Blues Scales .....	164
Playing Songs Made of Scales .....	165
<b>Chapter 11: Hey, Don't Forget Lefty! .....</b>	<b>169</b>
Exploring the Keyboard's West Side.....	169
Moving into position .....	170
Getting used to the new neighborhood .....	170
Tackling Some Left-Hand Melodies .....	172
Practicing Some South-Paw Scales .....	174
C, G, and F major .....	174
A, E, and D natural minor.....	174
A harmonic and melodic minor .....	176
Trying Accompaniment Patterns.....	176
Three-note patterns.....	177
Four-note patterns .....	178
Adding the Left Hand to the Right Hand.....	182
Sharing the melody in both hands.....	182
Melody plus one note.....	184
Melody plus three-note accompaniment pattern.....	184
Melody in unison octaves .....	186
Playing Songs with Both Hands .....	187
 <b>Part IV: Living in Perfect Harmony .....</b>	 <b>193</b>
<b>Chapter 12: The Building Blocks of Harmony .....</b>	<b>195</b>
Measuring Melodic Intervals.....	195
Interval shorthand .....	197
Seconds .....	198
Thirds .....	199
Fourths and fifths.....	200
Sixths and sevenths.....	203
Octaves.....	204
Combining Notes for Harmonic Intervals.....	204
Playing two notes together.....	205
Adding intervals to the melody.....	206
Harmonizing with the left hand.....	207
Playing Songs with More Harmony .....	209



**Chapter 13: Understanding Keys . . . . . 215**  
Homing In on Home Key . . . . . 215  
A whole ring of keys . . . . . 216  
Using keys to play music . . . . . 218  
Reading key signatures . . . . . 218  
Leaving and returning to the “home” key . . . . . 224  
Playing Songs with Key Signatures . . . . . 225

**Chapter 14: Filling Out Your Sound with Chords . . . . . 229**  
Tapping into the Power of Chords . . . . . 229  
Dissecting the Anatomy of a Triad . . . . . 230  
Starting Out with Major Chords . . . . . 231  
Branching Out with Minor Chords . . . . . 232  
Exploring Other Types of Chords . . . . . 233  
    Tweaking the fifth: Augmented and diminished chords . . . . . 233  
    Waiting for resolution: Suspended chords . . . . . 235  
Adding the Seventh . . . . . 236  
Reading Chord Symbols . . . . . 237  
Playing with Chord Inversions . . . . . 240  
    Putting inversions to work . . . . . 240  
    Flipping the notes fantastic . . . . . 241  
Playing Songs with Chords . . . . . 243

***Part V: Technique Counts for Everything . . . . . 249***

**Chapter 15: Dressing Up Your Music . . . . . 251**  
Playing Dynamically . . . . . 251  
    Starting with basic volume changes . . . . . 252  
    Widening the range . . . . . 252  
    Making gradual shifts in volume . . . . . 253  
Articulating the Positive . . . . . 255  
    Interpreting articulation symbols . . . . . 255  
    The power of articulation . . . . . 256  
Controlling the Tempo . . . . . 257  
Putting the Pedal to the Metal . . . . . 258  
    Using the damper pedal . . . . . 258  
    Getting the hard facts on soft-pedaling . . . . . 260  
    Eyeing the middle pedal . . . . . 260

Touching on Grace Notes .....	261
Tackling Trilling .....	262
Dazzling Your Audience: Gliss .....	263
Trembling Tremolos .....	266
Dressing Up Your Songs .....	268
<b>Chapter 16: Great Grooves .....</b>	<b>275</b>
Great Left-Hand Accompaniment Patterns .....	275
Fixed and broken chords .....	276
Chord picking .....	278
Octave hammering .....	280
Bouncy rock patterns .....	282
Melodic bass lines .....	282
Applying Great Intros and Finales .....	286
The big entrance .....	288
Exit, stage left .....	290
Playing Songs with Left-Hand Grooves .....	293
<b>Chapter 17: Perusing the Aisle of Style .....</b>	<b>297</b>
Taking Aim at Classical Music .....	297
Playing the Blues .....	300
Clues for the blues .....	300
12-bar ditties .....	301
Changing it up .....	302
Rockin' around the Keys .....	303
Rocking ingredients .....	304
Slamming and jamming .....	304
You're a Little Bit Country .....	305
Country-style cooking .....	305
Finger-pickin' good .....	306
Pop! Goes the Piano .....	307
Popular picks .....	307
Topping the charts .....	307
Soul Searching .....	308
Saving your soul .....	309
Motown sounds .....	309
Funky sounds goin' round .....	309
All That Jazz .....	311
Jazzing it up .....	311
It's up to you .....	312
Substituting chords .....	313
Playing Songs in Favorite Styles .....	314

**Part VI: The Part of Tens ..... 321****Chapter 18: Ten Ways to Improve Your Practice and Performance ..... 323**

Be Comfortable at All Times .....	323
Shut Off the Distractions .....	324
Make a Schedule and a List .....	324
Get into Deconstruction .....	324
Use a Metronome .....	325
Rehearse Your Dress Rehearsals .....	325
Know Your Performance Piano .....	325
If You Memorize . . . ..	326
Preempt Post-Performance Syndrome .....	326
Smile and Take a Bow .....	326

**Chapter 19: Ten Ways to Supplement This Book. .... 327**

Working through Method Books .....	327
Using Reference Books .....	328
Buying Music to Play.....	329
Types of printed music .....	329
Arrangements and transcriptions.....	330
Fake books .....	330
Where to buy printed music.....	331
Gigging with Others.....	332
Piano duets .....	332
Chamber groups .....	333
Bands .....	333
Checking Out the Masters .....	333
Johann Sebastian Bach .....	334
Ludwig van Beethoven.....	334
Johannes Brahms.....	334
Frederic Chopin .....	334
Franz Liszt.....	335
Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart.....	335
Sergei Rachmaninoff.....	335
Attending Live Concerts .....	336
Listening to Recordings .....	336
Perusing record stores.....	336
Shopping online .....	337
Visiting the library .....	337
Exchanging music with friends .....	337
Exploring Piano Sites on the Web .....	338
Enjoying Pianos on the Big Screen .....	338
Realizing You're Not Alone.....	340

<b>Chapter 20: Ten Questions to Ask Prospective Teachers . . . . .</b>	<b>341</b>
Whom Else Have You Taught? .....	341
How Long Have You Been Teaching and Playing? .....	342
How Much Do You Expect Me to Practice? .....	342
Would You Mind Playing Something for Me? .....	343
What Repertoire Do You Teach? .....	344
How Do You Feel about Wrong Notes, Mistakes, and Slow Learners? .....	344
What Methods Do You Use to Teach Piano? .....	345
Where Will the Lessons Take Place? .....	345
How Much Do You Charge? .....	346
Do You Have Student Recitals? .....	346
 <i>Appendix: About the Website: Audio Tracks and Video Clips</i> .....	 <b>347</b>
 <i>Index</i> .....	 <b>353</b>





---

# Introduction



**W**elcome to *Piano For Dummies*, 3rd Edition. Don't be nervous about wanting to play the piano; it's just a big, lazy piece of oversized furniture with a bunch of black and white keys on it. By selecting this book, you're taking the appropriate action to keep your piano from becoming a giant dust collector.

If you've never seen or put your hands on a piano or keyboard, no problem. This book starts at the very beginning and walks you through everything you need to know to tame that beast and make it sing sweet music. You'll also have fun along the way.

## *About This Book*

Because you're in possession of a piano or keyboard or you have access to one, you may need this book to figure out how to play it. Or you may want to study how to read music. Maybe you already know how to play and you just want to improve your playing skills or develop your style. Could be you're interested in knowing more about pianos and their performers. Or you may need some help buying a keyboard or finding a teacher. For any of these reasons, this is the book for you.

You can use *Piano For Dummies*, 3rd Edition, as a teaching aid or just as a reference book. Even if you already know how to play music, you may run across some new tricks or techniques in these pages. If you read every page of this book and set about to play the examples and listen to the audio tracks and watch the video clips at [www.dummies.com/go/piano](http://www.dummies.com/go/piano), you'll be able to read piano music; know the names of notes, scales, and chords; understand a lot about different musical styles; and in general get a solid handle on some fundamental piano skills.

If you have a few specific questions about playing piano or want to go directly to something you've been dying to know, you'll find the part titles, chapter titles, and section headings practical and helpful. They make it easy to maneuver through the book and find what you're looking for.

**Note:** Truth be told, reading music and coordinating your hands and fingers to play musically on the piano are skills not learned in a day. It takes a bit of time and dedication. Although you may have seen or heard about methods to play the piano without reading music, this book isn't one of them. *Piano*

*For Dummies*, 3rd Edition, follows the tried-and-true method of teaching the basics of reading notes and rhythms from the get-go. And this book aims to do all that in a simple and fun way.

Within this book, you may note that some web addresses break across two lines of text. If you're reading this book in print and want to visit one of these web pages, simply key in the web address exactly as it's noted in the text, pretending as though the line break doesn't exist. If you're reading this as an e-book, you've got it easy — just click the web address to be taken directly to the web page.

## *Foolish Assumptions*

In writing this book, I made a few assumptions about you, the reader:

- ✔ You like to listen to music and especially like the sound of a piano.
- ✔ When you hear someone play the piano, it sparks something in you. You say to yourself something along the lines of, "I wish I could play the piano."
- ✔ You haven't had any piano lessons before, or you had some lessons at some point in your life but you basically see yourself as a beginner. Either way, you'd like it all laid out and explained in a simple and easy-to-understand way.
- ✔ If you have a piano or keyboard, you aren't playing it as much as you want to and need some help getting to the music-making.
- ✔ If you don't have a piano or keyboard, you're considering the purchase of a keyboard and welcome some help with the whole process. Most likely, your keyboard will have at least 25 black and white keys, may or may not plug into the wall, and will cost you as much as you're willing to part with.
- ✔ You like to discover things for yourself.

If any of these assumptions is true for you, you're reading the right book.

## *Icons Used in This Book*

As you go through the chapters of this book, you'll find the following friendly icons designed to draw your attention to different bits of information, from helpful guidance to pleasant diversions.



Be sure to pay attention to anything that has this icon attached. As you may guess, it's something important that you shouldn't forget.



When you see this icon, you know some handy-dandy information follows that can save you time, money, energy, and more.



This icon lets you know that there's an audio track and, in many cases, a video clip that demonstrates the concept, playing technique, or song discussed in the text. Check out these online resources at [www.dummies.com/go/piano](http://www.dummies.com/go/piano) to deepen your understanding and speed your progress.



Pay attention to text featuring this icon. You can thank me later for showing you how to avoid mistakes and problems.



This icon points out bonus material you can find online.



This icon suggests different music that you can play on your keyboard.

## *Beyond the Book*

In addition to the material in the print or e-book you're reading right now, this product also comes with some online goodies. Check out the eCheat Sheet at [www.dummies.com/cheatsheet/piano](http://www.dummies.com/cheatsheet/piano) for common musical symbols, piano fingerings, and the names of the piano keys.

You can also find several other tidbits of information online about rhythm, mode, and arpeggios. Go to [www.dummies.com/extras/piano](http://www.dummies.com/extras/piano) to read them.

You can view and listen to various techniques and songs that I discuss throughout the book. Go to [www.dummies.com/go/piano](http://www.dummies.com/go/piano) to download the audio tracks and video clips. You can also discover a list of ten additional tips for making the most of your practice sessions at this same site. When prompted, enter the username of [pianofordummies](http://pianofordummies.com) and the password of wiley.

## *Where to Go from Here*

If you don't know much about the piano as an instrument, start with Part I and get to know the different types of pianos. Pianos are a wonder of the world.

If you're thinking about buying a piano or keyboard, turn to Chapters 3 and 4. They'll leave you feeling so much more prepared for the tasks of shopping and buying.

Check out the guide to reading music at the beginning of Chapter 6 and test yourself by trying to identify the elements of music notation on a page of piano music. (Don't worry, there's a key that tells you where to look for a reminder or an explanation of each element.)

Go through Chapters 7 and 8, which cover rhythms. Reading and responding to rhythm smoothly are huge components of reading music. If you can get your rhythm down, it will make all the other elements come together much more easily.

If you already know how to read music, try Parts III and IV for some scales, melodies, chords, and more that fit your taste and technique. Skip around and play fun songs while you expand your knowledge. If you have trouble playing something, backtrack to where you can brush up on a particular technique.

To get an idea of the music you play as you work through this book, check out the audio tracks and video clips on the accompanying website ([www.dummies.com/go/piano](http://www.dummies.com/go/piano)) and enter the username (pianofordummies) and password (wiley). Use the audio track table at the back of the book to direct you to the written music.

## Part I

# Getting Started with Piano

getting started  
with

**Piano**  
big no



Visit [www.dummies.com/cheatsheet/piano](http://www.dummies.com/cheatsheet/piano) for great free Dummies content online.

## *In this part . . .*

- ✓ Find out what makes playing the piano so satisfying and what elements come together to make beautiful piano music (you're probably aware of some without even knowing it). Also check out some tips that will make your piano-playing journey a smooth one.
- ✓ Take a tour inside the piano and meet the extended family of keyboard instruments. Get the lowdown on the two major players in the keyboard arena — acoustic and electric pianos — along with an introduction to the organ and the harpsichord.
- ✓ Gather advice for finding and purchasing a piano or keyboard, getting one that's not only right for you now and but will also allow you room to grow as a musician.
- ✓ Keep your instrument — be it a traditional piano or a digital instrument — clean, in tune, and in perfect working order.
- ✓ Get to know the keyboard, what makes it tick, where to put your hands and feet, and what all those keys are for.

---

## Chapter 1

# Preparing to Play a Piano

.....

### *In This Chapter*

- ▶ Understanding what makes the piano unique
  - ▶ Getting acquainted with the instrument and reading music
  - ▶ Discovering what you may already know about playing piano
- .....

**I** love to run my fingers o'er the keys, the ivories.”

These lyrics from the 1915 Irving Berlin song, “I Love a Piano,” were no doubt true for many people when they were written nearly 100 years ago. The piano was in its heyday, and your average Joe and Jane felt owning and playing the piano in their home was almost as important as putting a roof over it. But neither the song nor the sentiment has lost its charm; the lyrics certainly ring true for a whole bunch of people. The piano remains a very popular instrument, with the number of piano lovers growing and its popularity spreading throughout the world. Even as the piano is treasured for its quality as an instrument, it also adapts itself to the changing times through technological advances.

This chapter helps you understand what makes the piano unique and what’s involved in learning to play the piano. You may find out that you know a lot more about music than you thought you did, even if you’re a beginner.

## *Knowing Why the Piano Is So Special*

Playing the piano involves the following fundamentally musical tasks:

- ✓ Playing different pitches and melodies
- ✓ Controlling the attack and release of a note
- ✓ Playing different dynamics (relative loudness and softness)

But playing the piano is different from playing other instruments in some important respects, and the piano has several attributes that make it an ideal tool for learning and understanding music.

## *Advantages to playing the piano*

The piano occupies a central position in the world of music. It's the gold standard of musical instruments, utilized by composers and arrangers and featured routinely in nearly all musical styles, in chamber groups, rock bands, and jazz trios (everything except marching bands). The following characteristics make the piano a wonderful instrument:

- ✔ **You can play many different notes at the same time.** The fancy word for this characteristic is *polyphonic*.
- ✔ **It's a completely solo instrument.** You can play a complete song or other musical work without requiring additional accompaniment or other help from your musical friends. That makes the piano satisfying and self-sufficient.
- ✔ **It's the perfect choice for accompaniment.** You can accompany a singer, a choir, a dance class, a silent movie, your own opera, or your own soap opera, not to mention any other instrument.
- ✔ **You can play almost anything on the piano.** The piano has an unmatched repertoire of music. You name it, there's piano music for it.

## *Advantages to studying music at the piano*

The piano is an ideal instrument for studying all about music, starting with the design of the keyboard. As you sit in front of your keyboard, the notes are laid out before your very eyes in a clear, organized, and orderly way. Understanding and playing musical pitches is quite easy because the keyboard presents a clear visual image for your brain to process the way musical notes go up (higher in pitch), down (lower in pitch), or stay the same.

Each key produces a single, distinct pitch, and you can't beat that for simplicity. Not much skill is required to make a nice, musical sound. Compared with some other instruments I shall refrain from naming (well, okay: oboe and tuba, to name just two), playing any key on the keyboard, no matter how high or low the pitch, is as easy as playing any other key.



---

sample content of Piano For Dummies

- [read Dust on the Sea \(Bluejacket Books\) book](#)
- [Ordeal of Gilbert Pinfold for free](#)
- [click The Journey of Robert Monroe: From Out-of-Body Explorer to Consciousness Pioneer online](#)
- [download online Take Your Time: The Wisdom of Slowing Down](#)
- [click Maids, Wives, Widows: Exploring Early Modern Women's Lives 1540 - 1714](#)
  
- <http://flog.co.id/library/Dust-on-the-Sea--Bluejacket-Books-.pdf>
- <http://thermco.pl/library/Ordeal-of-Gilbert-Pinfold.pdf>
- <http://econtact.webschaefer.com/?books/The-Journey-of-Robert-Monroe--From-Out-of-Body-Explorer-to-Consciousness-Pioneer.pdf>
- <http://test.markblaustein.com/library/Take-Your-Time--The-Wisdom-of-Slowing-Down.pdf>
- <http://growingsomeroots.com/ebooks/Maids--Wives--Widows--Exploring-Early-Modern-Women-s-Lives-1540---1714.pdf>