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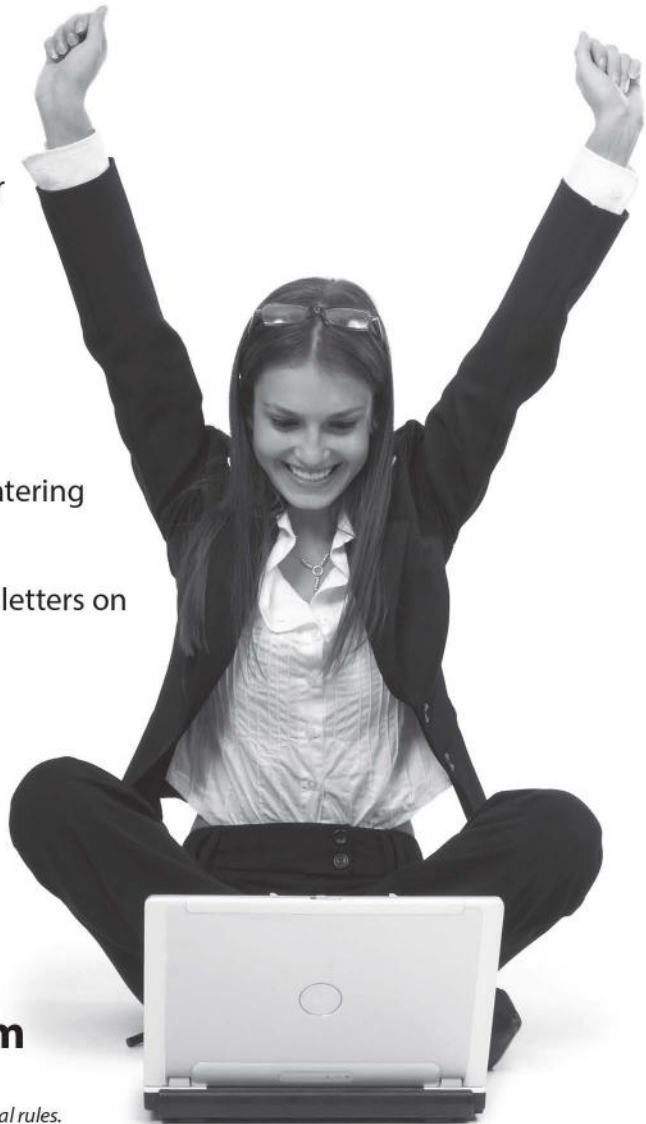
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Revised by Adam Perlmutter

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Introduction



Welcome 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, 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 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 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 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 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) 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 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

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