



To the Student

Musical Fingers 2 is the second in a series of books of exercises designed to help you develop the physical skills to play the piano. We call these books *musical fingers* because each exercise has musical goals as well as technical ones.

As you learned in Book 1, technic is a study of the way to produce the sound you want to make at the piano. It includes developing skills in three areas:

- the ability to create in your imagination the *sound* you want to make;
- an awareness of the way your hands and body *look* to make that sound;
- an awareness of how your hands and body *feel* to make that sound.

Readiness to Play

As a way of reviewing what you learned in Book 1 about a good playing position, let's take a look at this picture of Melissa. She may be younger or older than you, shorter or taller, but nevertheless you and she have some very important things in common.

1. Height of the bench

Notice that Melissa's bench is the proper height for her. Her wrists and forearms are level with the floor.

2. Distance from the keyboard

Notice that Melissa is sitting the proper distance from the keyboard. Her upper arms are hanging loosely from her shoulders and her elbows are a comfortable distance from her body.

3. Posture

Notice that Melissa is sitting tall, with shoulders dropped and relaxed, that her back is straight (no slumping!) and she is leaning slightly toward the keys.

4. Balance of weight

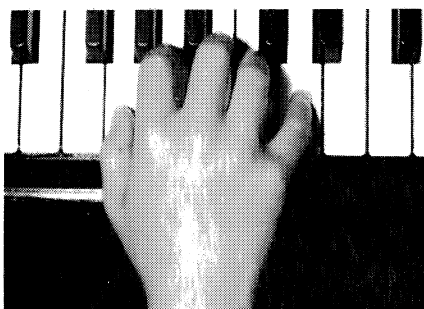
Notice that Melissa's weight is divided between "seat and feet." Part of her weight is on the bench and part is on the ball of her left foot. Because of this division of weight, she feels free to move over the entire keyboard without sliding on the bench or losing her balance.

In summary, she is in a condition of physical "readiness to play."

The comments and pictures that follow illustrate various skills, introduced in *Musical Fingers 1*, that will be developed further in *Musical Fingers 2*. Elaine's hands, which served as our model in Book 1, are pictured again here.

Five-Finger Positions

Pictures 1, 2 and 3 show Elaine's right hand in a G Major five-finger position.



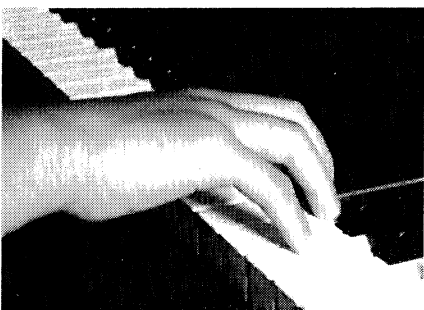
Picture 1 shows her right hand as it looks from above:

- the knuckles of her four fingers are visible
- her thumb is loose and curved toward her 2nd finger
- her fingertips form a curved shape on the keyboard, like this:



Picture 2 shows her right hand as it looks from the thumb's side:

- her arch is high and level, not sloping toward her 5th finger
- her thumb is close to her 2nd finger and curving toward it



Picture 3 shows her right hand as it looks from the 5th finger's side:

- her arch is high and level
- her 5th finger is standing tall with a firm tip

As you practice the patterns throughout the book, you will want to turn back to these pictures and study them frequently. At home, without your teacher, the pictures will help remind you of how your hands should look and feel.

Keyboard Topography

The way your hand and fingers fit the keys in any five-finger position is called the “topography” of that position. When a position includes *black* keys, prepare the black keys first, so that your hands and fingers fit the new terrain easily and naturally.

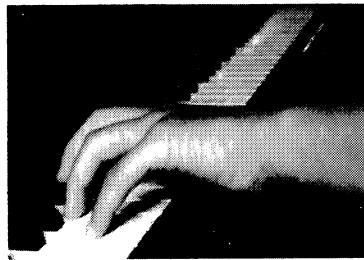
D Major

To prepare your LH for D Major:

Poise your 3rd finger over F#, like this:

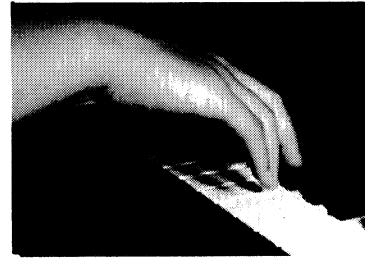


Then lower your hand into position, like this:

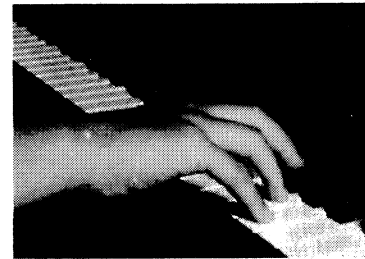


To prepare your RH for D Major:

Poise your 3rd finger over F#, like this:

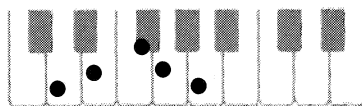


Then lower your hand into position, like this:

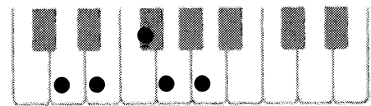


By preparing your fingers over the black keys first,

your tips will form a rounded shape, like this:



not like this:

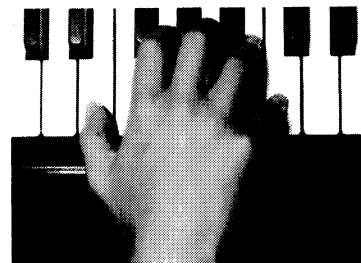


Extensions

When your hand is extended over more than five consecutive white keys, we call it an “extension.”

In this picture of a right-hand extension, notice that:

- there is a skipped key between fingers 1 and 2;
- fingers 2-3-4-5 are on consecutive white keys;
- the thumb is curved slightly toward the second finger.

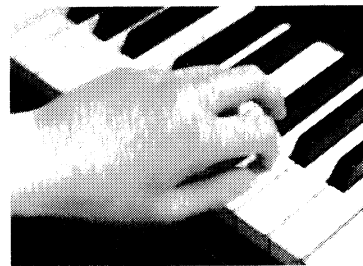


Contractions

Positions in which your hand covers less than five consecutive white keys are called "contractions." Contracting your hand makes it possible to play chromatic passages.

In this picture of a left-hand contraction, notice that:

- the tips of fingers 3 and 1 are close together;
- the hand remains small and loose.



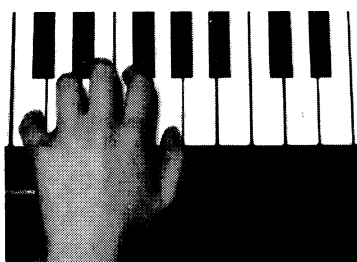
Scales

To play a scale, the hand must be able to do three things:

- play in a 5-finger position smoothly and evenly;
- contract by:
 - rolling the thumb so the fingers cross over it,
 - or passing the thumb under the fingers;
- open into the new 5-finger position.

Study the three pictures below:

C Major Scale: LH One Octave Ascending



In picture 1, the hand is in a 5-finger position, 5th finger on C.

In picture 2, the thumb has rolled so that fingers 3-2 have crossed over it as a unit to A-B.

In picture 3, the hand has opened into the new 5-finger position, thumb on C.

When black keys are included in a scale, prepare the black keys as early as possible so that your fingers are over the black keys, not reaching for them:

G Major Scale

LH Scale Ascending



The thumb has rolled on D, and fingers 3-2 are in position on E-F#.

The thumb has rolled on G, and fingers 4-3-2 are in position on F#-E-D.

RH Scale Descending



Play-Prepare

The most efficient and musical way to move from one position to another is called “play-prepare” because the same energy used to play the first gesture also prepares for the next. When play-prepare is called for in this book, an asterisk (*) is used to show on what beat to be prepared for the next position. Be sure to move directly and gracefully from one position to another.

How To Use This Book**Memorizing**

The exercises are written as patterns that are easy to remember. Memorize them at once so that you are free to concentrate on the *sound*, *look* and *feel*. As soon as a pattern is memorized, the book serves as a reminder of these experiences.

Dynamics

As you begin your study of the patterns you will notice that there are no dynamic marks. These are omitted intentionally to give your teacher the flexibility of assigning the dynamic levels appropriate for you in any given lesson.

Tempo

At first, practice the patterns so slowly that you can concentrate on the desired *sound*, *look* and *feel*. Later your teacher will ask you to review the patterns at various tempos.

Rhythm

All good technical practice is done with a strong, rhythmic flow. Before beginning to practice any pattern, feel the pulse so strongly that it maintains itself steadily to the end of the pattern.

Daily Practice

Good technical practice is done every day. In developing any physical skill (dancing, swimming, baseball or gymnastics) the practice must be regular. Piano practice is no exception. As your technique becomes more comfortable, efficient and musical, playing the piano will be more and more fun.

Frances Clark, Louise Goss and Sam Holland

Acknowledgements

We gratefully acknowledge our two photographic models, Melissa Millman and Elaine Cheng; also the students of the New School for Music Study who tested pilot editions during three seasons and our teaching staff who taught, criticized and contributed to the present edition. Special thanks to students, staff and colleagues too numerous to name who, for twenty years, have helped in the development of the ideas and materials presented in this book.

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1

Five-Finger Positions

A. Five-Finger Patterns in Sixteenth Notes

1. *Building the Outside of the Hand (Fingers 5, 4, 3)*

As you play pattern 1:

Emphasize the tones played by fingers 5, 4, 3, letting the weight of your arm drop into each finger as it plays.
Play your thumb with a gentle, weightless feeling.

1

2. *Building the Inside of the Hand (Fingers 1, 2, 3)*

As you play pattern 2:

Emphasize the tones played by fingers 1, 2, 3, letting the weight of your arm drop into each finger as it plays.
Play your 5th finger with a gentle, weightless feeling.

2

4 Scales

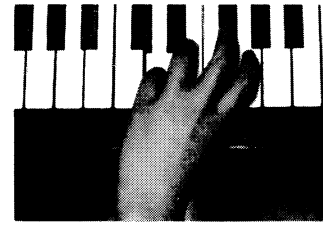
A. D Major Scale

Study these pictures of the LH.

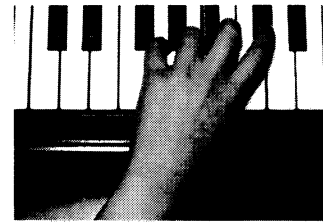
Picture 1 shows how the hand looks when fingers 2-3-4 have crossed over the thumb, or the thumb has passed under fingers 2-3-4.

Picture 2 shows how the hand looks when fingers 2-3 have crossed over the thumb, or the thumb has passed under fingers 2-3.

1



2



1. LH Preparatory Exercise

Pattern 30 prepares your LH for the topography of the D Major scale.

Play each measure over and over with perfect legato until it feels natural and comfortable.

Then play the whole pattern non-stop, listening for legato.

In crossing over, be sure your thumb rolls so that your fingers cross freely over it, preparing the keys directly with no wandering or hesitation.

In sliding your thumb under, be sure your arch is high and your thumb moves quickly and loosely to the new key.

30

2. LH Scale Ascending and Descending

Play pattern 31a over and over with perfect legato until it feels natural and comfortable.

Skeleton

31a

Play the D Major Scale (pattern 31b) over and over, listening for legato, for full, even tone and for steady rhythm.

Scale

31b

SOUND

Did you play legato, with a full, even tone and steady rhythm?

FEEL

Was your thumb loose enough to:

roll so that your fingers crossed freely over it?
slide under your fingers quickly and easily?