

Executive/Keyboard Skills (ease in playing the whole keyboard) for the MLT Piano Student: Music Moves for Piano/Marilyn Lowe 2017

1. Hand Shape and Arm Movement
 - a. Begin with arms hanging from shoulders and fingers resting in a gentle, rounded way
 - b. Play clusters using the gently folded fingers; think of a mitten or a paw
 - c. Begin with using the middle fingers to feel arm balance and to keep a straight arm/hand
 - d. Engage in large motor movement of the forearms
 - e. Let the arm/hand take the fingers to a new place (throw)
 - f. Think about seeing the backs of the fingers -- the finger nails
 - g. Alternating hand movement encourages large motor movement and the equal use of two hands
 - h. Use arm movement to take the hand/fingers to a new place, as in octave movement
 - i. Remember to "let go" at the appropriate time to avoid tension
 - j. Words for arm movement: over shape, in-out movement, throw the hand (the arm takes the fingers to a new place), rotation, separated touch to use the forearm (down movement), large motor movement
2. Avoid
 - a. Stretching (the hand should keep fingers resting together as much as possible)
 - b. Twisting (especially when moving from white to black keys or moving to another register)
 - c. Reaching (either throw or let go)
 - d. Gripping (holding onto the keys)
 - e. Curling (keeping fingers rounded to an extreme)
 - f. Isolating fingers (poking with one finger -- keep the fingers together in a natural shape)
 - g. Keybedding (pressing on the key after it is depressed)
 - h. Pushing (using too much effort to depress a key)
 - i. Hitting (using too much force to depress a key)
 - j. Holding the arm up; sticking out the elbow; raising the shoulders (keep all resting)
 - k. Lifting fingers (use the hand to move the fingers or feel the key generate the movement)
 - l. Hovering
3. Physical apparatus: body parts
 - a. Avoid isolated finger movement - fingers move as a unit
 - b. Feel gravity - play down and gently feel the bottom of the keybed and rest
 - c. The thumb stays close to the index finger and the fingers remain close together
 - d. Arm balance: The forearm is straight with the hand and moves behind every finger (walking arm)
 - e. Feel the elbow to finger tip in one piece
 - f. Know all body parts: torso, shoulders, feet, arms, wrists, hands, fingers, elbows (efficient, coordinated movement)
 - g. Fingers/hands/arms/elbows/shoulders awareness - Keep loose - be aware of tension areas
 - h. The arch of the hand is obvious when the "long" fingers are on the black keys
4. Weight of keys
 - a. Learn how much effort it takes to depress a piano key - know that speed of key descent changes the sound
 - b. Trampoline from one key to another: Let the key throw the hand to a new place
 - c. Ride the key up (elevator)
 - d. Use a separated touch while experimenting with where the sound stops
5. Sound production
 - a. Speed affects both the quality of sound and the volume
 - b. Breathing affects the beginning sound of a piece: audiate and breath, then play
 - c. Breath to begin and end a phrase, listening to the relationship of the sounds between the tones
 - d. Parachute (or float) into a key, then rest there gently
 - e. Move on a key when playing repeated notes: Do not play in the same place
6. Eye movement
 - a. Look at the key where the finger/hand will go, then let the arm take the hand there
 - b. Decide which hand to look at when both hands are moving
 - c. Audiate the sound of a melody or the accompaniment: use the eyes to organize the hand movement
 - d. Play with closed eyes or eyes looking up
7. Develop the left hand
 - a. Play folk song melodies with the left hand
 - b. Play roots of harmonic chord progressions
 - c. Play a variety of accompaniment patterns