

# Piano Learning Center

## Piano Sounds



*Based on a lesson plan by Natalie McKechnie, OTR, Boulder, CO*

**Age Range: Preschool, Kindergarten, and Early Elementary**

**Winner of the  
2013 Piano  
Learning Center  
Contest!**

*Learning objectives:*

1. Name the different parts of a piano.
2. Identify the different ways you can make sounds on the piano using the keys.
3. Identify how the pedals work to change sounds.
4. Explore how the different parts of the piano work together to make sounds.

*Materials needed:*

1. Grand or baby grand piano
2. Upright piano works if you are comfortable with taking off the front covers and the top cover quickly.
3. No staff music necessary - can be used for students at the pre-reading level.

*Overall Notes:*

1. 35 minutes of material.
2. Section A may take less than 5 minutes.
3. Skip over some parts of Section B if you do not have enough time or if the student is not interested in an activity.
4. Some of the parts of each activity might be taught as one larger part depending on the student.
5. Always follow the students lead and encourage as much hands-on practice as possible.

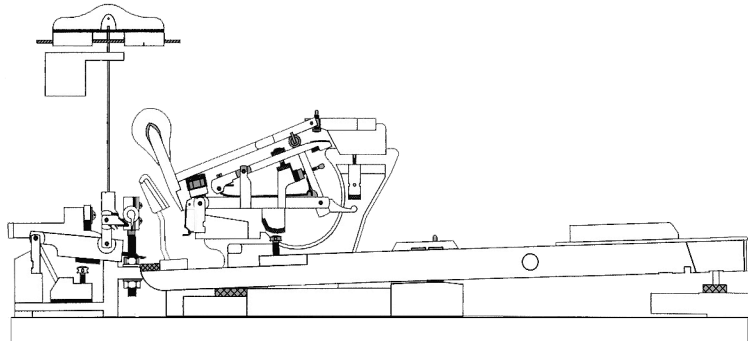
### A. Learning the parts of the piano (5 minutes)

**Activity: Without opening the piano, ask the student what he/she sees with their eyes.**

*Part 1:* Name each part [white/black keys, lid, pedals, legs] and put a different colored dot sticker on each of these parts (these stickers can be easily removed).

*Part 2:* Have the student think of what he/she would name each part and what he/she thinks it does to make the sound.

*Details:* Teachers uses the correct names *and* the names that the student comes up with when explaining the function of each piano part.



### B. Learning the sounds of the piano (10 minutes)

**Activity 1: Ask a general question about what types of sounds a piano can make.**

*Details:* Encourage any ideas the student comes up with by asking the student to sing, stamp/clap, describe, draw, and then play any of these sounds (students will most likely play the keys first, then have them clap/stamp/draw afterward).

**Activity 2: Teacher demonstrates different sounds using the keys (student imitates – student can close his/her eyes if appropriate).**

*Details: Play multiple versus single keys.*

*Details: Play loudly versus softly, fast versus slow, high versus low, long versus short (be creative).*

**Activity 3: Student creates sounds using the keys.**

*Details: Discuss what the student does to make each of these sounds (for example, the finger presses faster into the keys for louder sound).*

*Details: Encourage the student to play both hands together, to alternate hands, etc. (tailor this activity to the student's playing level).*

**Activity 4: Student learns the effect of each pedal.**

*Part 1: Teacher first presses down each pedal and plays some notes and then the student either presses down the pedal and/or plays the notes.*

*Details: Listen with the student to what happens to each sound.*

*Details: Listen with the student to how long each sound lasts (this can be made into a game of raising your hand or saying "stop" when the sound ends).*

*Part 2: Complete the same activity in Part 1 without the pedal and/or use the pedal only with certain keys.*

*Details: Discuss what happens to each sound.*

*Details: Relate and compare each sound to student's favorite character/animal to identify the sounds.*

*Part 3: Compare sounds with and without the pedal so that the student clearly hears the difference (this may overlap with Part 2).*

**C. Learning how the piano works (10 minutes)**

**Activity 1: Remove the top cover, front covers, or lift the lid of the piano so that the strings and hammers are exposed.**

*Part 1: Teacher plays single high, middle, and low notes as the student watches what happens with the hammers.*

*Part 2: Student plays across the keyboard (including black notes) and watches what happens with the hammers.*

*Part 3: Discuss about what happens and what the hammers and strings look like.*

*Part 4: Student and teacher place dot stickers of the same color on different keys to make patterns (you can also write on the keys with washable markers).*

*Details: Student and teacher play these patterns together.*

*Details: Always have the student watch what happens with the hammers as he/she presses the keys.*

**Activity 2: Name the parts of the piano: strings and hammers.**

*Part 1: Put one sticker on the low, middle, and high keys and their corresponding strings.*

*Details: Relate each key to the string and the corresponding keyboard area and sound (high, middle, low).*

*Part 2: Play the sounds and tunes previously played in the lesson while the student looks at the hammers and strings – this may have already occurred in Section A.*

**D. Summarize how the piano works (2 minutes)**

End with having the student summarize how the piano works, what he/she has learned, and what his or her favorite sound is.

*Bonus material: Download the Piano Parts Word Search from the Learning Center at [www.ptg.org](http://www.ptg.org) to learn more about the parts of the piano.*