

PIANO SAFARI® SIGHT READING & RHYTHM CARDS FOR BOOK 1
TEACHER GUIDE
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INTRODUCTION

The **Piano Safari® Sight Reading & Rhythm Cards for Book 1** contain cards in five color coded levels (Levels A-E) that correlate with the five units in *Piano Safari® Repertoire Book 1* (Units 1-5). There are 16 cards per level.

Each card contains:

- RH Sight Reading Exercise
- LH Sight Reading Exercise
- Rhythm Exercise


Reading Exercises are for one hand alone to help the student feel thoroughly comfortable with reading intervals.

Reading Exercises: Students should pay careful attention to playing with correct technique.


Rhythm Exercises: Syllabic counting (Ta's) should be used for all cards.

Level A.1


Right Hand
Reading
Exercise




RH




2 2 3 3 4 2




Left Hand
Reading
Exercise




LH




2 2 3 3 2 3 4



Rhythm
Exercise





PURPOSE OF THE SIGHT READING & RHYTHM CARDS

The *Sight Reading & Rhythm Cards for Book 1* provide extra practice for students in reading intervals and tapping rhythms.

The systematic presentation of intervals and rhythms help the student develop fluency and confidence in his ability to read music.

These cards are an integral part to the Piano Safari® Method and should be used in conjunction with each unit of *Repertoire Book 1*. The cards correlate with the five units of *Repertoire Book 1* in the presentation of reading concepts.

These cards can also be used with any standard method series. They also work equally well with children and with adults.

MOTIVATION

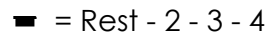
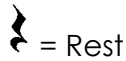
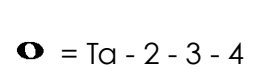
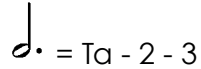
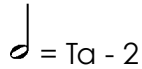
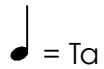
Students enjoy the *Sight Reading & Rhythm Cards* because:

- Children can see their forward progress through the color coded levels. This is similar to the motivation that comes from completing levels in a video game or earning colored belts in karate.
- The cards are not difficult, and children like to play what they can play well.
- We often reward students with small prizes, chocolate, or stickers to further motivate them to work through the levels of cards.

RHYTHM SYSTEM

The **Rhythm Exercises** at the bottom of each card should be tapped on the fallboard, played on one note on the piano, or played on a drum. The tapping motion is preferred to clapping because tapping is a pianistically related movement. Also, for young children, tapping is a simpler motion than clapping.

While tapping, the Rhythm Exercises should be counted aloud using the following syllabic system of counting. We created this system of counting as a modified Kodaly/Gordon system. Ta is always on the beat.



Not introduced in **Repertoire Book 1**: = Ta - ah - ti = Ta-ka-ti-ka

RHYTHMIC PATTERNS

Rhythm Patterns introduced in the Technical Exercises in *Repertoire Book 1* are found frequently in the Rhythm Exercises. Rhythm patterns help students develop the ability to read music in groups rather than note by note.






When tapping and counting the Rhythm Exercises, students can say the animal names for each Rhythm Pattern.

The Rhythm Patterns are:

- Zechariah Zebra 
- Tall Giraffe 
- Kangaroo 

RHYTHMIC PROGRESSION

Below is a table showing the progression of rhythms and meters in the **Rhythm Exercises** for each Level.

SIGHT READING & RHYTHM CARD LEVEL	REPERTOIRE BOOK 1 UNIT	METERS	RHYTHMS INTRODUCED OR ADDED
Level A	Unit 1	4/4	
Level B	Unit 2	4/4	
Level C	Unit 3	3/4 and 4/4	
Level D	Unit 4	3/4 and 4/4	
Level E	Unit 5	3/4 and 4/4	

WHY COUNT WITH SYLLABLES RATHER THAN NUMBERS?

Counting with syllables (Ta's) rather than numbers (metric counting) is beneficial in the early stages of study for the following reasons:

- When chanting syllables, students use a more musical and rhythmic inflection in their counting.
- There are many numbers at the beginning of study (finger numbers, beat lengths, page numbers, and interval numbers). Delaying the introduction of metric numbers lessens the difficulty of study.
- Rhythm is internalized more securely and more easily through syllabic rather than metric counting. Most young children will not be able to understand the math behind the subdivision of numbers and beats. Counting with syllables allows students to internalize complex rhythms in a musical and rhythmic way that can later be mathematically explained when students are at a developmental stage to understand fractions.
- Students who begin by counting with syllables generally have a much stronger sense of pulse and subdivision than those who begin by counting metrically.

Metric counting is introduced at the beginning of *Repertoire Book 2*.

WHY DO WE INTRODUCE EIGHTH NOTES FROM THE BEGINNING?

- Students are more than capable of tapping and counting eighth notes as long as they do not need to understand the fractional subdivisions mathematically.
- Students prefer fast rhythms to slow rhythms. Fast is fun!
- Introducing eighth note rhythms early expands the variety of pieces students can play.
- Introducing eighth note rhythms early provides more variety in the rhythms students use when improvising and composing.
- Students who begin counting eighth notes from the beginning with syllables have no problems subdividing or counting metrically later. They have internalized rhythmic pulse and subdivision so completely, that when introduced to metric counting, all they need to do is put numbers to the rhythms they already know.

ASSIGNING THE CARDS

Here are some of the successful ways we have found for working on Sight Reading & Rhythm Cards:

- Complete two or three cards at each lesson with the student.
- Complete a card at the lesson and assign two or three more for practice at home.
- Assign three to five cards for home practice, and check them quickly at the lesson.
- Have the student arrive five minutes early to preview several cards silently while you finish the previous student's lesson. Then begin the lesson with the previewed cards.
- One student stays five minutes after their lesson time, and the next student arrives five minutes early. This gives you ten minutes to work on Sight Reading & Rhythm Cards with the two students together. While one student is previewing an exercise on his card, the other is playing his exercise. They alternate previewing and playing. In this way, students at different levels of cards can be working at the same time.
- If you have a group class each week, students can preview and play their cards for you during the class.

LEVEL A

PRE-STAFF BLACK KEYS WITH FINGERS 2 3 4

Level A cards should be assigned during the study of **Unit 1** of *Repertoire Book 1*.

Level A has six cards of Reading Exercises that are two measures long. The remainder of the cards have Reading Exercises that are four measures long.

In terms of technique, all the Reading Exercises in Level A should be played *non legato*, with a slight arm bounce for each note. Playing *non legato* aids the student in maintaining a good piano hand shape. Introducing *legato* too early can cause the hand bridge or knuckles to collapse and the hand and arm to become tense.

At the beginning, coordinating the correct fingers with the correct numbers and tracking the Reading and Rhythm Exercises from left to right with the eyes may be complicated. However, after just a few cards, the teacher should use each Reading Exercise as a time to work on technique as well as reading (bouncy arm, *non legato*, firm fingertips rather than flat "pancake fingers," tall bridge, relaxed non-playing fingers). In this way, the Reading Exercises also become mini technical etudes. Formation of a good piano hand will take time. However, the student can be working toward the goal of a good piano hand shape throughout the Level A cards, and refining the hand shape in the Level B cards and future levels.

Step 1: Instruct the student to find the correct hand position for the RH Reading Exercise based on the keyboard picture.



Step 2: The first time you introduce the Sight Reading Cards, provide support to insure that the student feels successful about the Sight Reading Cards. For example, you could say, "This exercise starts on Finger 2. Which finger is 2?" Then tap the student's Finger 2 to help the student feel his starting finger.

OBJECTIVES:

- Practice reading finger numbers 2 3 4 in each hand
- Track the eyes from left to right
- Play *non legato* on the black keys

DOES YOUR STUDENT HAVE?

- Steady rhythm
- Slightly bouncy arm for *non legato* articulation on each note
- Confidence in reading finger numbers 2 3 4
- Beginnings of a good piano hand shape, with firm fingertips, a tall hand bridge, and relaxed non-playing fingers



Step 3: Sing, “2 3 4 4 4 4” in rhythm while you tap each of the student’s corresponding fingers and point to the notes on the card. This helps the student feel the connection between his fingers and the numbers on the card.

Step 4: Have the student play while you point to the notes on the card and sing the finger numbers with him. You can also say “Ta - 2” for the half notes if desired. Be sure the student uses *non legato* articulation. For young children, I ask them to have a “small bunny hop before each note” to explain the *non legato* articulation. For each card, gradually work with the student on forming a good piano hand shape by asking him to play up on his fingertips. Be sure his hand bridge is tall, not collapsed.

I have found that when using **Counting Insurance** in the Reading Exercises (counting aloud to insure that the student does not make unnecessary mistakes), it is not necessary to say the quarter note Ta’s. Instead, just say the long notes (Ta - 2), as the long notes are where students tend to rush. Unnecessary counting of Ta’s is distracting, since the student is also thinking about the finger numbers and coordination.

At the beginning of study, **Pointing Insurance** will help the student track with his eyes from left to right, which is a skill that takes time to develop. You can also use **Singing** and **Playing Insurance** if the student has trouble. However, be sure he is not just copying you, but that he is actually reading the notation, since these are Reading Exercises, not Rote Pieces!

Step 5: Train the student to automatically play the Reading Exercise three times without you having to ask. Have the student draw a check next to the exercise after each repetition. Use the repetitions to:

- Reduce the amount of **Counting, Playing, or Singing Insurance** you are using until the student is successfully playing alone
- Check technique (bouncing arm, good piano hand shape, relaxed non-playing fingers, strong fingertips)

Step 6: Repeat **Steps 1-5** with the LH Reading Exercise.

Step 7: Tap the Rhythm Exercise on the fallboard (or play on a drum) with the student while counting Ta’s. *Do not* count metrically (1 2 3 4)! Then draw the student’s attention to the Zechariah Zebra rhythm (m. 1). Repeat the exercise saying “Zechariah Zebra” for m. 1.



Step 8: After checking off the Rhythm Exercise, move the card to the back of the stack of cards.

SUMMARY OF STEPS

In summary, the steps for completing a Sight Reading & Rhythm Card are as follows:

- **Step 1:** Preview the **RH Reading Exercise**. Student plays it three times. Have the student draw three checks next to the exercise.
- **Step 2:** Preview the **LH Reading Exercise**. Student plays it three times. Have the student draw three checks next to the exercise.
- **Step 3:** Tap the **Rhythm Exercise** while counting Ta's. Repeat one to three times, and draw checks next to the exercise.
- **Step 4:** Put the completed card at the back of the stack of cards, and move on to the next card.

These steps are for all the levels of cards, with modifications noted below based on the new reading concept presented in each level.

STEPS FOR GROUP CLASS

The Sight Reading & Rhythm Cards are useful in group classes, because each student can work at his own pace. Some students may work through one card in a 10-minute segment. Others may finish four cards. One student may be on the Level A cards while another student is working on Level D cards. Each student works at his own level.

I allot 10-15 minutes for Sight Reading & Rhythm Cards in class.

Below are steps for using the cards in group class.

Step 1: Hand each student a card from his individual stack of cards. Give the students the following instructions about how to practice the RH Reading Example on the table top:

1. Find your RH.
2. Play the RH Exercise while saying the finger numbers quietly.
3. Repeat the RH Exercise three times.
4. Get in line to play it on the piano.

Demonstrate the steps.

Step 2: When the student completes the steps above, he comes to the piano to play it for you. Provide **Pointing** and **Counting Insurance** to help him, especially in the earlier levels. If he is secure in notes, rhythms, and technique, draw a check next to the exercise and send him back to practice the LH Reading Exercise.

If the student is not secure in his playing, send him back for more work on his own, saying, "Play it on the table three more times and then get back in line."

The students in the class come to you when they are ready and stand in line for their turn. Work quickly with each student so the others do not have to stand in line too long.

Step 3: When a student is ready with the LH Reading Exercise, he comes to the piano to play it for you. If it is secure, draw a check next to the LH Reading Exercise and tap and count the Rhythm Exercise with him. I find that students usually do not need to preview the Rhythm Exercises, and tapping it with the teacher is more helpful than previewing it alone, because you can insure that he will tap it correctly the first time if he is tapping with you. Draw a check next to the Rhythm Exercise and move the card to the back of his stack. Give him another card, congratulating him on finishing the card so well.

Step 4: Every three cards, give the student a sticker to put on his book, use an extrinsic motivation system of your choice, or use none at all, since just completing the color coded levels is often motivation enough to work hard.

LEVEL B

PRE-STAFF WHITE KEYS WITH FINGERS 1 2 3 4 5

Level B cards should be assigned during the study of **Unit 2** of *Repertoire Book 1*.

Use the cards in Level B to refine the piano hand shape. All cards should be played *non legato* in order to preserve a good piano hand shape. The work you put into the piano hand shape in Level A will pay off in Level B, and the student will suddenly find that maintaining a piano hand shape on the white keys is much easier. This will show the piano that hard work pays off, giving him a sense of accomplishment.

Step 1: Celebrate the fact that the student passed all the pink **Level A** cards and is now on the yellow **Level B** cards, where he gets to use all five fingers and play on white keys!

Step 2: Have him find the hand position for the **RH Reading Exercise**. For example, in the exercise below, have him find his:

- Right Hand
- Finger 1
- Put Finger 1 on G

Then show him that if 1 is on G, then 2 plays A, and 3 plays B, so that each finger has a note.

OBJECTIVES:

- Practice reading finger numbers 1 2 3 4 5 in each hand
- Track the eyes from left to right
- Play *non legato* on the white keys
- Refine the piano hand shape

DOES YOUR STUDENT HAVE?

- Steady rhythm
- Slightly bouncy arm for *non legato* articulation on each note
- Confidence in reading finger numbers 1 2 3 4 5
- Good piano hand shape, with firm fingertips, a tall hand bridge, and relaxed non-playing fingers

RH 1 on G



When the student plays *non legato* with an arm bounce on each note on firm fingertips, the hand should absolutely *not* stay over all the notes in the five finger position. Instead, it should be free to bounce from note to note with the arm aligned behind the playing finger.

It is detrimental to students to keep their hands locked in a position touching five keys because:

- Keeping all five fingers over their respective notes stretches small hands unnecessarily
- Students become afraid to bounce off the keys for fear of losing the position or playing a wrong note.
- Playing *non legato* with the forearm becomes impossible. Instead, when locked in a position, students tend to play with the fingers alone, a tense hand, and a flat or collapsed hand shape.

Students who are taught to bounce freely above the keys, keeping the arm aligned over the finger playing and the hand in a relaxed position, develop:

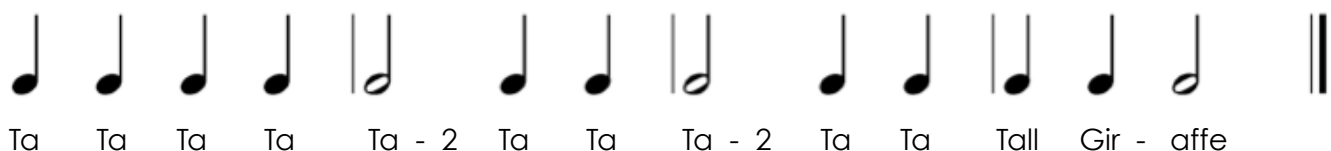
- A relaxed technique, flexible wrist, and choreographed movements at the piano
- Good aim and spatial sense
- Confidence
- Rich tone

Therefore, showing him that each finger has a key (when 1 is on G, 2 is on A, etc.) is just for visual reference of the position rather than for keeping the fingers literally over their assigned keys.

Step 3: Have the student play while you point to the notes on the card and sing the finger numbers or rhythm with him. He repeats the exercise three times, writing a check next to the exercise as he completes the repetitions.

Step 4: Repeat **Steps 1-3** with the LH Reading Exercise.

Step 5: In the Rhythm Exercise below, count in Ta's. Then draw the student's attention to the Tall Giraffe rhythm pattern in m. 4. Perceptive students may notice that m. 2-3 have backwards Tall Giraffe rhythms!



Step 6: After checking off the Rhythm Exercise, move the card to the back of the stack of cards.

LEVEL C

2NDS ON THE STAFF

Level C cards should be assigned during the study of **Unit 3** of *Repertoire Book 1*.

Level C cards have Reading Exercises on the staff with intervals of 2nds and Sames (Unisons). They begin on the Landmark Notes of Treble G and Bass C.

The student should complete the **Landmark** and **Interval of a 2nds** pages at the beginning of Unit 3 in *Repertoire Book 1*.

For more information on marking intervals with colors, see **Mini Essay 12** under **Pedagogical Resources** at pianosafari.com.

Step 1: Ask the student what the first note of the RH Reading Exercise is. "Treble G." "Which finger plays Treble G?" In the RH Reading Exercise below, the answer is "5." The finger on the Landmark Notes changes with each card to prevent the student from associating a specific finger with only one specific note.

Step 2: If desired, have the student to mark the sames (unisons) with his "sames color." His sames color (for example, orange) should stay consistent. He marks the sames by connecting the note heads with a line. As the student becomes adept at reading, skip this step.



Step 4: The student plays *non legato* while you point to the notes to help him track from left to right. Have him repeat the exercise three times, writing a check next to the exercise after each repetition. Be sure that on some repetitions, you do not sing, so that you are sure the student is reading the notation rather than playing by ear.

Step 5: Repeat **Steps 1-4** with the LH Reading Exercise. Note that in this LH Reading Exercise, it will be helpful for you to count the long notes (Ta - 2) to prevent rushing.



Step 6: Tell the student that the four eighths together is the first part of Zechariah Zebra. Therefore, we can count saying "Ta-ti Ta-ti Ta-ti Ta-ti" or Zechariah Zechariah." Tap and count the Rhythm Exercise.



Ta-ti Ta-ti Ta-ti Ta-ti Ta-ti Ta-ti Ta-ti Ta-ti Ta-ti Ta-ti Ta-ti Ta-ti Ta-ti Ta-ti Ta-ti

Zechariah Zechariah Zechariah Zechariah Zechariah Zechariah Zechariah Zechariah

Step 7: After checking off the Rhythm Exercise, move the card to the back of the stack of cards.

LEVEL D

3RDS ON THE STAFF

Level D cards should be assigned during the study of **Unit 4** of *Repertoire Book 1*.

Level D cards have Reading Exercises on the staff with intervals of 3rds and Sames (Unisons). They begin on the Landmark Notes of Treble G and Bass C.

The student should complete the **Interval of a 3rd** pages at the beginning of Unit 4 in *Repertoire Book 1*.

Step 1: Ask the student what the first note of the RH Reading Exercise is. "Treble G." "Which finger plays Treble G?" In the RH Reading Exercise below, the answer is "5."

Step 2: Ask the student to play down a 3rd from Finger 5 and down another 3rd to feel the 3rds in his hand. Tell him that this exercise uses 3rds with Fingers 1, 3, and 5.

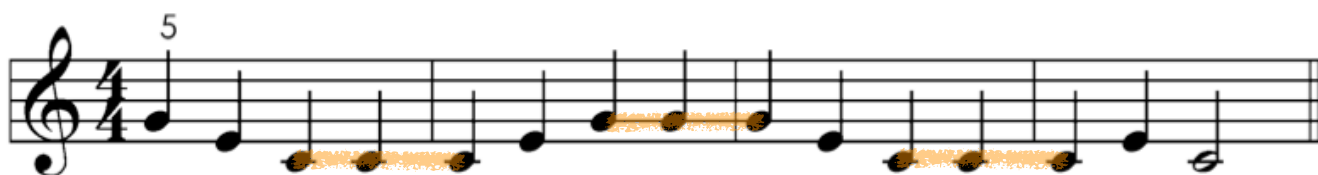
Step 3: If necessary, have the student mark the sames (unisons) with his "sames color." As the student becomes adept at reading, skip this step.

OBJECTIVES:

- Read 3rds and unisons on the staff
- Recognize the Landmark Notes of Treble G and Bass C

DOES YOUR STUDENT HAVE?

- Steady rhythm
- Understanding of how 3rds move on the staff
- *Non legato* articulation
- Good piano hand shape



Step 4: Have the student preview and play the exercise three times, writing checks for each repetition. Be sure that he plays *non legato* and that the hand stays aligned over the finger that is playing, rather than stretched out over all three notes.

Step 5: Repeat **Steps 1-4** with the LH Reading Exercise, noting that in this example, there are no sames. It is all 3rds!



Step 6: In the Rhythm Exercise, find the animal rhythm patterns (in this exercise, Kangaroo in m. 1, Zechariah Zebra in m. 2).

Step 7: Have the student color the quarter rests yellow. When counting, say, "Rest" and lift the hand.



Step 8: After checking off the Rhythm Exercise, move the card to the back of the stack of cards.

LEVEL E

2NDS & 3RDS ON THE STAFF

Level E cards should be assigned during the study of **Unit 5** of *Repertoire Book 1*.

Level E cards have Reading Exercises on the staff that combine the 2nds, 3rds, and Sames (Unisons). They begin on the Landmark Notes of Treble G and Bass C.

The student should complete the **Interval of a 2nd & 3rd** pages at the beginning of Unit 5 in *Repertoire Book 1*.

Step 1: Have the student choose a “3rds color” and mark the 3rds in the RH Reading Exercise by connecting them with a line. He should be able to read the sames and 2nds without marking them.

Step 2: Ask him what the first note of the RH Exercise is. “Treble G.” “Which finger plays Treble G?” “1.” Student finds the position.

OBJECTIVES:

- Read 2nds, 3rds and unisons on the staff
- Recognize the Landmark Notes of Treble G and Bass C

DOES YOUR STUDENT HAVE?

- Steady rhythm
- Understanding of the difference between 2nds and 3rds
- *Non legato* articulation
- Good piano hand shape



Step 3: Have the student preview and play the exercise three times, writing checks for each repetition.

Step 4: Repeat **Steps 1-3** with the LH Reading Exercise.



Step 5: Tap and count the Rhythm Exercise, check it off, and move the card to the back of the stack of cards.