

PIANO SAFARI® FOR THE OLDER STUDENT REPERTOIRE & TECHNIQUE BOOK 1

TEACHER GUIDE

by Dr. Julie Knerr

UNIT 1

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UNIT 1

Goals and Objectives

In Unit 1, our goals are:

- Learn the topography of the keyboard, including groups of two and three black keys and white key names
- Learn to count basic rhythms syllabically
- Internalize and automatize finger numbers
- Develop a good piano hand shape and play exclusively with a *non legato* articulation. Playing *non legato* allows the arm to be involved in controlling the fingers, which develops a good sound and a relaxed technique. The forearm moves from the elbow as one unit in *non legato* playing.
- Create sounds at various dynamic levels
- Learn to play with a singing tone through the Arm Drop Technique
- Play patterned pieces by Rote to develop rhythm, musicianship, memory, and confidence. **Reminder Videos** (pianosafari.com) and **Audio Tracks** (code on title page) are available to aid the student in practice.
- Reinforce reading pre-staff finger number notation through the Sight Reading & Rhythm Exercises and written Theory Pages in *Sight Reading & Theory Book 1*, Unit 1.
- Students should work within a unit until the entire unit is completed in both books, at which time they graduate to the next unit. However, the order in which the pieces and exercises may be assigned is left to the discretion of the teacher.

Pages 5 - 8 present basic information on Posture, Hand Shape, Finger Numbers, Rhythmic Values, and Black and White Keys. These pages can be used to explain these concepts, but it is not necessary to start with these pages or work through them in order before playing pieces. It is a much more satisfying introduction to the piano to actually start with playing the piano and then refer to these pages as the need arises.

RHYTHM p. 6 - 7

- **Why Syllabic Counting?** Students learn to count syllabically (Ta) as shown on p. 6 before counting metrically. Syllabic counting allows students to feel the rhythm in a musical way and prevents saying “the right numbers in the wrong rhythm” that can result from introducing metric counting too soon.
- **Why Eighth Notes From the Beginning?** We introduce eighth note rhythms from the beginning to add more variety and interest to the rhythms. Because we use a syllabic counting system, eighth notes are easy to count. We have found that students who begin in this way avoid problems with subdivision and are more rhythmically musical and confident.
- **Metric Counting** is introduced in Unit 4 on p. 62. Students can then count both syllabically and metrically, gradually converting solely to metric counting as they feel comfortable.

ALPHABET SUITE p. 9



UNIT 1
ROTE


I. Alphabet Boogie

By Knerr & C. Fisher

OBJECTIVES

- Learn that the keyboard is laid out according to the Music Alphabet, A B C D E F G
- Play with Finger 2 using a forearm motion. The forearm moves as one unit. Requiring students to focus on wrist movement at the initial stage at this fast tempo may lead to awkward movement. Instead, the forearm moves as one lever. Wrist motions are introduced later in the book after the student has developed control over the forearm. Finger 2 should have a firm, rather than collapsed, end joint and be gently curved.

TEACHING TIPS

- Demonstrate the piece, singing, "A B C D E F G." Start on the lowest note of the piano, and continue to the top of the piano in rhythm.
- The student imitates. Pieces that say "Rote" in the upper right hand corner are taught by imitation, *not* by reading the score. After the student is confident with his* part, add the Teacher Accompaniment.
- Vary the repetitions by having the student play the piece with the RH, LH, switching hands in the middle of the keyboard, or playing at various tempos or dynamic levels.
- Students should listen to the Audio Tracks to prepare for learning Rote Pieces and Technical Exercises in this book. Pieces that include Audio Tracks are denoted in this Teacher Guide with this symbol at the top of the page: 
- Reminder Videos for home practice are found at pianosafari.com on the Videos page

* Students are referred to in the masculine for clarity of prose.

ALPHABET SUITE p. 10

II. C D E March

By Knerr



UNIT 1
ROTE

OBJECTIVES

- Learn the white key names for the notes that surround the groups of two black keys, C D E. Although it is important for the student to understand that the keyboard is organized according to the Music Alphabet, students should learn to identify notes based on their relationship to the groups of two and three black keys.
- Play *non legato*
- Experience steady rhythm

TEACHING TIPS

- Demonstrate in rhythm with *non legato* technique and firm finger end joints.
- As the student plays, say, “C D E move,” to help the student stay in rhythm. If you prefer, you may have the student first play the entire piece with Finger 2 before playing with Fingers 2 3 4.
- Add the Teacher Accompaniment.
- Students can continue to solidify their knowledge of the white key names through the theory pages in the *Sight Reading & Theory Book 1* and through constant practice in pieces and Sight Reading Exercises throughout Unit 1 and beyond.

ALPHABET SUITE p. 11

II. F G A B Waltz

By Knerr



UNIT 1
ROTE

OBJECTIVES

- Learn the white key names for the notes that surround the groups of three black keys, F G A B
- Play *non legato*
- Experience steady rhythm in 3/4 meter

TEACHING TIPS

- Students play with the indicated fingers from the lowest F G A B group on the piano, moving up the keyboard. Say, "F G A B move up," to help the student stay in rhythm. If you prefer, you may have the student first play the entire piece with Finger 2 before playing with the indicated fingers.
- As a variation, you may also have the student play with RH Fingers 2 3 4 5 and LH Fingers 4 3 2 1.
- Students can continue to solidify their knowledge of the white key names through the theory pages in the *Sight Reading & Theory Book 1* and through constant practice in pieces and Sight Reading Exercises throughout Unit 1 and beyond.

OBJECTIVES

- Read finger numbers on black keys in pre-staff notation
- Understand basic rhythms by counting syllabically
- Gain control over the *non legato* forearm motion

TEACHING TIPS

- No Audio Track is provided for Reading Pieces, as we want students to learn the pieces by reading the notation.
- Explain to the student that the stem directions in this piece indicate which hand plays (stems up = RH, stems down = LH), but that this is not a rule that continues once he starts reading on the staff.
- The starting position is indicated by the keyboard picture.
- The student may preview the piece by playing on the fallboard and saying the finger numbers.
- The student should play *non legato* with a slight arm bounce on each note. Work to develop a good piano hand shape, with a raised bridge, slightly curved fingers, relaxed non-playing fingers, and firm finger end joints. *Non legato* playing will aid the student in developing a good piano hand shape and coordinating the arm, hand, and fingers. Even if a student is naturally adept at playing *legato* immediately, requiring the student to play *non legato* will yield better results in terms of tone, relaxation, and coordination.
- Pre-staff notation allows the student to learn the finger numbers for each hand, master tracking from left to right, and become confident with basic rhythms before adding the complexities of reading on the staff. We have found that it is well worth having older beginners start learning to read notation through a short period of pre-staff study, even if they might be able to begin reading directly on the staff. It is much better for students to begin piano with the idea, "Reading music is easy!" rather than struggling due to trying to master too many new concepts at once. It is best to lay a solid foundation in reading rather than rushing through the beginning stages.

DAWN ON EMERALD LAKE p. 14

By Knerr

UNIT 1
IMPROVISATION

OBJECTIVES

- Improvise beautiful sounds on black keys
- Have freedom to explore sounds apart from notation

TEACHING TIPS

- Play the accompaniment while the student improvises on black keys. The student may play using any fingers, hands separately or hands together.
- Be encouraging regardless of what the student plays. The goal is to become comfortable with exploring sound.
- If the student is reticent to play, provide short phrase examples on the black keys for him to imitate using fingers 2 3 4. (for example, RH 2 3 4, 4 3 2, or 2 2 2). Have him play the sample phrases while you play the accompaniment. He should then eventually have the courage to create his own phrases.
- Spend 1 or 2 minutes at each lesson improvising, and the student will become increasingly comfortable. I have found that improvising is often the student's favorite part of the lesson. One adult student who played "Dawn at Emerald Lake" at his first lesson had a profoundly musical experience while improvising. He was so excited to be able to play really good sounding music right from the start of his piano journey!

I LOVE COFFEE p. 15

Traditional, arr. Shaak



UNIT 1
ROTE

OBJECTIVES

- Play a patterned piece by rote
- Gain control over the forearm motion
- Lengthen concentration through playing a long piece
- Experience a steady beat

TEACHING TIPS

- Teach each Part in small sections, such as two-bar phrases. Play a phrase, and the student imitates. Because the piece is very patterned in relation to the black and white keys of the keyboard, the patterns will be easy for the student to remember. When you play a two-bar phrase, you may sing, "I love coffee, I love tea," or, "Black white black white black white black."
- As a reminder, because this piece is to be taught by rote, as indicated in the upper right hand corner of the piece, the student should *not* read the notation. The notation is for teacher reference only.
- Students may learn the parts of this piece over the course of several weeks, adding a Part or two Parts at each lesson until the entire piece is learned.
- Remind the student that there are Reminder Videos at pianosafari.com under Videos to aid in home practice.
- In Part 2, the close fist rolls along the keys for the grace notes, and the closed knuckle plays the notes adjacent to the rolled notes.
- In Part 6, the student may use Finger 2 in each hand (one note for each hand), or use RH Fingers 2 3.

ECHOES OF WESTMINSTER p. 18

By Fisher & Knerr

UNIT 1
READING

OBJECTIVES

- Read finger numbers on white keys in pre-staff notation
- Play a piece that features the C D E group of white keys, which surrounds the group of two black keys in the RH
- Gain control over the forearm motion and hand shape by playing *non legato*. The forearm moves as a unit.

TEACHING TIPS

- As in “Sapphire Jazz,” the stem directions indicate which hand plays (stems up = RH, stems down = LH) in this pre-staff notation.
- Students may preview the piece by playing on the fallboard and saying the finger numbers before playing on the piano.
- The student should play *non legato* with a slight arm bounce on each note. Work to develop a good piano hand shape, with a raised bridge, slightly curved fingers, relaxed non-playing fingers, and firm finger end joints. *Non legato* playing will aid the student in developing a good piano hand shape and coordinating the arm, hand, and fingers. Even if a student is naturally adept at playing *legato* immediately, requiring the student to play *non legato* will yield better results in terms of tone, relaxation, and coordination.
- Since it is easier to play with firm fingertips on white keys than on black keys, have the student work toward having firm fingertips on this piece. The fingers should not be too curved, as this produces tension.

RIVER RAFTING p. 20

By Fisher & Knerr

UNIT 1
READING

OBJECTIVES

- Read finger numbers on white keys in pre-staff notation
- Play a piece that features the F G A B group of white keys, which surrounds the group of three black keys
- Gain control over the forearm motion and hand shape by playing *non legato*. The forearm moves as a unit.
- Control the *ritardando* at the end of the piece
- Learn about form in music.

TEACHING TIPS

- Use the Practice Suggestions on p. 21 to explain the idea of form in music. Lines 1, 2, and 4 are the same (except for the *ritardando* in Line 4), and in Line 3, there are two repeating phrases. Finding that three of the lines are the same greatly reduces the complexities of learning the piece.
- The student should be quite adept at playing *non legato* with a relaxed hand and firm fingertips at this point, especially as they complete the correlating Sight Reading Exercises in the *Sight Reading & Theory Book 1*. This will allow the student to play "River Rafting" *Allegro* with technical ease.

ARM DROP p. 22

By Knerr



UNIT 1
TECHNIQUE

OBJECTIVES

- Produce a singing tone by using the weight of the arm
- Control dropping into the key with arm weight
- Explore shifting by octave
- Review white key names on the keyboard

TEACHING TIPS

- Play Finger 2 on D with a good piano hand shape. As you drop into the key, your wrist will drop lower than the general playing position as you relax the arm. You may have the student feel your loose arm by moving it gently up and down. Repeat with a stiff arm and a harsh tone. Have the student feel your tight arm to understand the difference between a loose and stiff arm.
- As you release the key and move to the next octave, your wrist will be loose and relaxed (floppy) in the air.
- The student imitates. Check his arm for looseness.
- As the student finds his arm weight and plays with a loose arm and singing (not harsh) tone, you may refine the motion further to be sure the student is playing with a firm finger end joint and a graceful wrist drop and lift.
- A Reminder Video for each Technique Exercise is available at pianosafari.com on the Videos page.
- After playing the exercise as written, ask him to practice dropping on another key, such as A. Transpose the Teacher Accompaniment to A to accommodate. Repeat with other keys. This is a great way to help the student further internalize the names of the white keys.

SYNCOPATED PEDAL p. 23

By Knerr & Fisher

UNIT 1
TECHNIQUE

OBJECTIVES

- Learn to play with syncopated pedal
- Play single notes with arm weight

TEACHING TIPS

- We know it is a bit unusual to introduce syncopated pedal so early in a method! However, older students are much more coordinated, as well as taller, than young children. Mastering syncopated pedal early in their study will increase the variety of sounds the student can experience.
- As you follow the steps listed on the page, note that at first, the student will change the pedal just *after* playing each key. Once this coordination is mastered, he can then change the pedal *as* he plays each key. This is to avoid the common mistake of changing the pedal *before* the note is played, which results in a gap in sound.

OCEAN DEPTHS p. 24

By Fisher



UNIT 1
TECHNIQUE ROTE

OBJECTIVES

- Explore sounds at a variety of dynamic levels with syncopated pedal
- Learn a patterned piece by rote that uses the Arm Drop Technique
- Play with a partner or alone

TEACHING TIPS

- All six of the Technique Exercises found in Level 1 have a correlating Rote Piece, which allows students to use the featured technical motion in a piece. Playing by rote allows students to focus on the motions of their hands and arms without being distracted by reading notation.
- This entire piece will be played with Finger 2 in both hands.
- Teach the RH first, breaking the piece into small phrases. Play each phrase and have the student imitate your playing.
- Although the student will not be able to read the notes on the score, because the students learning in this book are older than the average age beginner, many of the Rote Pieces will actually be “Quasi-Rote” pieces. This means that although the patterns are primarily taught by rote, some reference to the score may be helpful. By looking at the score, the student can detect patterns and see how they relate to what he is playing on the piano, remember dynamics, and see how the notes line up between the hands. Use a combination of teaching patterns by imitation and referring to the score to teach this piece. Quasi-rote teaching helps students become familiar with seeing complicated looking scores, which gives them confidence that although a piece may look difficult, they are up to the challenge of learning it!
- Explain how the dynamics relate to the colors noted in the score and create a sound picture of ocean depths.
- Before learning the LH, the student should complete the preparation steps on p. 25.
- We have provided several Variations on p. 25, because we realize that some older beginning students will be coordinated enough to play this complicated piece hands together, while other students may need an easier option. Especially in a group class setting, having variations for a piece will provide ideas for providing every student in the class with the appropriate amount of challenge.

ODE TO JOY p. 26

By Beethoven, arr. Knerr

UNIT 1
READING

OBJECTIVES

- Read pre-staff notation on white keys using all RH fingers
- Play a familiar melody by a famous composer
- Read eighth notes in pre-staff notation in a piece
- Hear the dotted quarter eighth rhythm, which is formally introduced in *Older Student Repertoire & Technique Book 2*.

TEACHING TIPS

- Note that the dotted quarter eighth note rhythm is used, as students tend to play this rhythm they are used to hearing in “Ode to Joy” rather than the simplified rhythm that is sometimes found in other books. Teach this rhythm by rote.
- The student should play using a *non legato* articulation. This is even possible on the eighth notes, although you may also allow the student to play these fast notes *legato* as long as the hand shape is preserved.
- Have the student transpose this piece to C Major according to the Transposition direction on p. 27. The Teacher Accompaniment in C Major can be downloaded from the Teacher Guide Page at pianosafari.com.

WIND CHIMES p. 28

By Knerr



UNIT 1
ROTE

OBJECTIVES

- Experience the sound of a whole tone scale
- Play a piece in 3/4 meter, feeling the rhythm in one large beat per measure
- Learn a Rote Piece that features patterns of black and white keys that shift position over a wide range of the piano

TEACHING TIPS

- Notice that in this piece the LH plays on the groups of three black keys while the RH plays on the white key groups of C D E.
- Play short phrases of the piece, and have the student imitate until the entire piece is learned. Play with the indicated dynamics to allow the student to learn the notes, rhythms, and dynamics correctly the first time. This is generally easier than adding the dynamics later.
- The student should play *non legato* to preserve a good piano hand shape, but the pedal will make the piece sound mysterious and smooth.