The Keyboard Express A
'Kids Notes' pre-staff reading for young pianists

Pre-staff reading for young pianists

A beginner piano method with pre-staff 'kids notes' and keyboard guides

The Keyboard Express™
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by John Keller
To the Teacher:

This book is designed to be used in both orientations.
Start with the book upright (portrait orientation), so notes go to the left and right.
Later have the book in the usual (landscape) orientation, so notes go up and down.
Introducing: 

**Kid’s Notes for Black Keys**

The teacher can slide a coin over the lines to help students learn to play these black keys.

Using these “Express Stave” notes for the black keys helps students learn keyboard geography, plus the concepts of up and down, lines and spaces, stepping and skipping.
Black Key Groups of 2 and 3

Find all the groups of 2.
Then find all the groups of 3.

Note to teacher:
Please do not speak of high and low at this stage.
Note to teacher:
White note-heads indicate the playing of black keys (*Express Stave* notation).
They do not indicate time values.

Teacher's Accompaniment:

- Centre group of two:
  
- Next is group of three:
  
- Back to group of two:
  
- Back key group of three:
  
- Black key group of three:

**splash!**

**centre of keyboard**

2

3

3

Next is group of three:

**splash!**

**splash!**

**splash!**

**splash!**

**splash!**

**splash!**

**splash!**
For each bar, teacher plays first, then student copies.

Teacher's Accompaniment:

Start with this hand.
1. Standing side-on to the keyboard, 'walk' your left hand along the white keys, all the way from one side to the other. The first white key on the left side is called A.

Note to teacher: Please do not speak of high and low or upwards and downwards yet.

2. Stop on the way and 'walk' on the spot for a while. The key should stay held down and not repeat its note.

3. Facing the other way, 'walk' your right hand along the white keys, all the way back.

The white keys are called the **naturals** (ABCDEFG). They were the first keys to be invented. But then all the keys looked the same! Later on, they gradually added the **extras** - the black keys in the groups of 2 and 3.

4. Stop on the way and 'walk' on the spot for a while. The key should stay held down and not repeat its note.
Teach by ‘rote’. Show which keys to play by firstly pointing directly on the keyboard, then to the keys at the bottom of this page. Lastly the student can play by reading the notes down the line.
Racing car, Hop inside. Let me take you for a ride.

Racing car, Hop right in. Let me take you for a spin.

Teacher’s Accompaniment:

“double natural keys” $\overset{\rightarrow}{\leftarrow}$

“double natural keys” $\overset{\rightarrow}{\leftarrow}$

Play this side first
The Groups of 2 Black Keys (2 Extras):

These are notes. They tell us which keys to play.

Let's pretend they are two eyes! - and call them I and J (- the 2 dotted letters in the alphabet).

This hand plays groups of 2 on this side.

The 2 black keys will have small white notes.

(line for group of 2)

The teacher can slide a coin over the line to help student learn to play these two notes.

Teach the student to hold each key down until playing the next one, aiming for a firm, smooth and clear legato action.

NB: As the young student will be playing black keys at this early stage, it is useful and logical to give these black keys their own unique single letter names.

This hand plays groups of 2 on this side.

Kids' Notes
Walk along then have a rest.

How to come off the keys:
(For rests and at the end of a piece)
Hold elbow slightly out.

Raise your wrist slowly. Let your hand hang loose, with the forearm muscles soft and relaxed.

Walk Along

On This Side

Play this side first!

On this side, we walk along.

(rest)

Keep in time and sing this song.

Which side do you like the best?
One Is My Thumb

“Copy -cat” routine:
For each bar, teacher plays and sings first, then student copies.
Echo with clapping and chanting at first if desired.

Finger number one.

One is my thumb.

One little bell.

One big drum.

Black notes mean play white keys (naturals).

Start here.
Wiggle Finger Number...

1. one
2. two
3. three
4. four
5. five
Fingers 1 2 and 3

One two three

Left Hand

Write in all your finger numbers.

Technique:
Hold each key down, only lifting the finger off after playing the next note.
Thumb plays on its side. Curve the other fingers.

Right Hand

Teacher's Accompaniment:

Go this way

One two three
Rocket ship, 
Take your place. 
Blast off into outer space.

Submarine, 
I will drive. 
Deep down in the sea we dive.

Teacher's Accompaniment:
Bird and Frog Sounds

Which side of the keyboard sounds like **birds**?

Which side of the keyboard sounds like **frogs**?

**Note to teacher:**
This is where the terms high and low may be introduced.
One two three four five, we heard
Notes that sound just like a bird.

One two three four five, we found
Notes like frogs down on the ground.

Teacher's Accompaniment:

Sky

Ground
This Way Goes Up

Up to the sky,
Where all the birds sing very high.

This Way Goes Down

Down to the ground,
Where all the frogs make their low sound.

Teacher's Accompaniment:

Starting note:
(for both hands)

(Use finger 2 all the way.)

(Start on the same black key.)

Play black keys.

This Way Goes Up

This Way Goes Down

Up and Down
Watch these stems, So you’ll see
Which hand plays each centre key.
I Spy With My Eye...

Teacher's Accompaniment:

```
\[ \text{Note|Note|Note|Note} \]
```

...some - thing -ing with...
A pair: no black key between.

Find all the pairs on your keyboard. They are called pairs because of their shape.

Teacher's Accompaniment:
Pair of Naturals

Teacher's Accompaniment:
Pair Of Keys

1: Pair of keys that's on the right. That's where treble clef will start.

2: Pair of keys that's on the left. They go down here in bass clef.

3: Hands together we can play. Notes go out and in this way.

Teacher's Accompaniment:

Treble clef:

Bass clef:
We will call the 3 black keys KLH

Low side of the line

On the line

The 3 black keys have large white notes.

High side of the line

The teacher can move a counter or coin on the page to help students follow these three notes.

The 3 black keys have large white notes.

Find all the groups of 3 on this side.

Find all the groups of 3 on this side.

We will call the 3 black keys KLH.
If You’re Happy

If you’re happy and you know it, then you really ought to show it,
If you’re happy and you know it, play for me:
First play it all somewhere on the high side.

Then play it all somewhere on the low side.

Trace and copy:
- and space notes.

Teacher’s Accompaniment:
swing

K L H
Every White Note

That way they'll be

notes

Teacher's Accompaniment:

Goes on one black key.

So easy to see.

 keys

Play this side first.
Sing Up High

Sing up high, Sing up high, Sing up high where black birds fly.

Sing down low, Sing down low. Sing down low where bull - frogs go.

Teacher's Accompaniment:

Sing Down Low
Up or Down

Notes go up or notes go down. Notes can go to either place.

Teacher's Accompaniment:

Space or Line

Notes are named by space or line. Next to lines they call it space.

centre of keyboard
Count to 4

Count to four in every colour, count to four in every bar.

Teacher's Accompaniment:

Start from 1 at every bar-line, 1 2 3 4, Here we are.

Play this side first.

high hand

low hand

frog side

bird side
Short and Long Notes

Notes are short or notes are long. One beat long or two beats.

How long will each note cling on? One beat long or two beats.

Teacher's Accompaniment:

\[
\begin{align*}
&c' \ b_b \ b_e \ c' \ b_b \ b_e \ c' \ b_b \ b_e \ c' \ b_b \ b_e \ c' \ b_b \ b_e \ c' \ b_b \ b_e
\end{align*}
\]

Frogs

Birds
Two Hands Play

Play each hand separately first.

Teacher's Accompaniment:

(Moving outward and inward)

Frogs

Birds

Centre of keyboard
Skip across.

Start here.

Teacher's Accompaniment:

Frogs

Birds
Threes and Twos Race

It's a race!

My timings:
Play in Group

Next is group of three:

Back to group of two:

Black key group of three:

(The end!)

Teacher's Accompaniment:

Play copy-cats.
Repeat This Please

Two dots mean repeat this please, So each hand can play.

When we play on centre keys, Either hand’s okay.

How many beats are in each bar?

First play it with high hand

Repeat it with low hand

Teacher's Accompaniment:

 centre of keyboard
1. First play it all with high hand. (Use fingers 1,2,3 and 4.)

2. Then repeat it with low hand (fingers 1,2,3,4)

Next Note

1: Next note up, Next note down. Group of two to groups of three.

2: Changing groups, Moving round. Moving to this next black key.

Teacher's Accompaniment:

```
---------
| c | e | g |
---------
| A | D | G |
---------
| f | b |
---------
| B |
---------
```

bottom middle top

3-line guide
Group of 3 and Group of 2

Group of three and group of two.
Making music just for you.

Extra key groups, big and small.
Move your hand and play them all.

Teacher's Accompaniment:

Repeat 

bottom    middle    top

3 2 3

low hand

high hand
Smiley Face

When you see a smiley face,
Put your guide in centre place.

That's where children sing and play,
Making music every day.

Teacher's Accompaniment:

centre of keyboard

3 - line guide

When you see a smiley face,
Put your guide in centre place.

That's where children sing and play,
Making music every day.
Big notes for threes,
And small notes for twos.
That way we’ll know
Which ex - tras to choose.
Go up and down with both hands, in the same direction. Practice for perfection. Repeat.

Teacher's Accompaniment:

Play hands separately at first.
Can you play this song with both hands together?

Play this side first.

Teacher's Accompaniment:

```
C Bb C Dm E F G |
A Bb C Dm E F G |
```

“Extras”

Play this side first.

“Naturals”
1: Naturals next to group of three, At the edge and floating free.

2: Out in space I'd love to be, Where there is no gravity.

3: Play together everyone, Different notes all having fun.
Notes on this side sound up high. Notes on this side sound down low.

Put these notes up in the sky. On the ground these notes should go.

Teacher's Accompaniment:

Find the keys by feel.
"I like sun." "And I like rain." "I prefer it hot." "Not me!"

"I like day." "But I like night." "We just don't agree." "That's right!"

Teacher's Accompaniment:
One-thumb and Tutu

Now, One-thumb was a race-horse, and Tutu was one too.

Well, One-thumb won one race, and Tutu won one too!

Repate at a faster speed!

Teacher's Accompaniment:
(Read-y, stand-y, off you go)
Cling Tight

Play these extras, then cling tight. Change to natural keys of white.
When there's no rest, don't let go. Fingers neat and in a row.

Teacher's Accompaniment:
3 “extras”
(big notes)

4 naturals (small notes)
What is black and white with stripes? And you'll find it in a zoo.

What is black and white with spots? In a zoo and eats bamboo.

Teacher's Accompaniment:

Answers:

Teach by 'rote'.
Baby twins, in their bed, One fell out and bumped his head.

This is what the other said, Glad that wasn’t me instead!
"Copy-cat" routine:
For each bar, teacher plays and sings, then student copies.
Or echo-clap and chant at first.
Boogie Woogie

Boogie Woogie under link,                      Next to link or moved away.

Boogie Woogie over link,                      Play this Boogie every day.

Teacher's Accompaniment:

\[
\begin{align*}
E & : \quad \text{E} & \text{E} & \text{E} & \text{E} & \text{E} & \text{E} & \text{E} & \text{E} & \text{E} & \text{E} & \text{E} & \text{E} & \text{E} & \text{E} & \text{E} \\
\text{F} & : \quad \text{F} & \text{F} & \text{F} & \text{F} & \text{F} & \text{F} & \text{F} & \text{F} & \text{F} & \text{F} & \text{F} & \text{F} & \text{F} & \text{F} & \text{F} & \text{F}
\end{align*}
\]

Teach by 'rote'.

Teach by 'rote'.

Teach by 'rote'.

Teach by 'rote'.

Teach by 'rote'.
How To Find A

Play this side first.

How to find A,

This first natural key.

Write in the letternames on the naturals.

Teacher's Accompaniment:

Right above link,

And inside of three.

Play L - A everywhere on the keyboard.

Write in the letternames on the naturals.
In between links we see:

That's one music alphabet.

Staccato:
- a dot over or under the note(s).
- hop off the keys straight after playing.

Teacher's Accompaniment:

Centre Characters
First Two Naturals (1)

Up above this link line,
We see these first two naturals.

Touching link is A,
and B is moved away.

Play L - A - B all over the keyboard.

Write in the other letter names.
Ants Push Balls

Ants push Balls along this wall. Balls just roll and ants just crawl.

Teacher's Accompaniment:

centre of keyboard
Tell me where is last white key. Just below this link key L.

Say which letter this would be. “Gee that’s hard for me to tell!”
Sometimes we must start with frogs to make it sound down low.

So we have these clefs that tell us where we have to go.
Merrily we roll along, roll along, roll along,

Merrily we roll along, O'er the deep blue sea.

Teacher's Accompaniment:
First Two Naturals

First two naturals A and B. At the edge or inside three.

Last Two Naturals

Last two naturals F and G. Touching link or floating free.

Teacher's Accompaniment:
G the Girl and First-space F

G the Girl and
I think they'll get

First-space F,
married soon,

Love that curly
treble clef!

And go on their
honey-moon!

Teacher's Accompaniment:

expressivo
Find all the single naturals on this side of the keyboard.

In between two black keys, there lives a single natural.

White notes for each black key, and black notes for each natural.

Start with high hand

Repeat with low hand

Teacher's Accompaniment:

What do you think is its letter name?
Here is a D-line

“Copy-cat” routine:
For each bar, teacher plays and sings first, then student copies.
Echo with clapping and chanting at first if desired.

Play copy-cats.

Know which D to choose.

Frogs

Bats

Birds

high hand

low hand
In Express Stave notation, the two extra keys I and J are written as small white notes close in to the line. The three naturals near them are written as larger black notes touching the line. The two next naturals are written as small black notes moved away from the line.

Play these notes as your teacher points to them, or moves a coin on the page. Remember to hold each key down firmly until you smoothly play the next one.

Naturals (⅔) Near Twos

Extras

(line for group of 2)
Near this group of two we see,                     There’s a natural group of three.

Extras small and pushed in close,                Natural threes have wider notes.

The D-clef means play in the centre.

First play it with high hand

Repeat it with low hand

Teacher’s Accompaniment:

Natural Group of Three
I sit in the centre and I always will.

My two hands can travel, but I just keep still.

Teacher's Accompaniment:

```
C C C C C C C C
C C C C C C C C
```

I Sit In the Centre

Treble Clef: This sign means to play naturals on the high side, to the right of the centre.

Bass Clef: This sign means to play naturals on the low side, to the left of the centre.
Up Above, Down Below

Up above, Down below, Each side of this D we go.

Find all these, natural threes.
Big notes for important keys.
High Side, Low Side

High side, low side, sky and ground.
Fingers feel their way around.

Over, under, up and down.
Children sing with middle sound.

Find the keys by feel.

Repeat

Teacher's Accompaniment:

Draw some small and big notes (like small and capital letters, o O).
Near these twos are three white keys. Let us learn each letter name.

They are letters C D E, Everywhere they’re named the same.

Teacher's Accompaniment:
Keep In the Middle

Cat and Duck and Edge-line, You all are very little.

Do not leave this playground! Please keep right in the middle.

Teacher's Accompaniment:

Common time: 4 beats per bar

Centre of keyboard
“Copy-cat” routine:
Student chooses a colour.
Teacher plays and chants that pattern ("play", "easy", "rest", etc).
Student copies.

Student can also “mark” the rhythms with a pencil in real time as you chant.

Let’s Play Copy Cats

Let’s play copy cats.

Black notes for white keys.

high side
centre
low side

low hand

222

birds
crogs
Line and Space

Line and space, Line and space. Space notes always touch a line.

Under line, Over line. Next to lines they call it space.

Teacher's Accompaniment:
Go Down, Down, Up, Down ...

1: Play high hand.

Go down down up down ...

3: Play hands together, getting wider, getting closer, same notes.

Go up down up up ...

2: Play low hand.

Teacher's Accompaniment:

Frogs

Birds
Next door naturals, next door fingers, Playing with my friends next door.

Fingers curve and walk on tip-toe, Thumb lies on its side for sure.

Teacher's Accompaniment:
Touch This Line
(All On the High Side)

Touch this line then move a-way. People say that’s not okay.

Moved a-way notes need a line. Then the people think it’s fine.

Teacher's Accompaniment:
Treble clef, treble clef. Right hand plays white keys up high.
Treble clef, treble clef. Seagulls fly up in the sky.

The **treble stave** is only for **white** keys (naturals) on the high side, and notes are all the same size.

Number the **lines** upward from the bottom **Edge-line**. How many **lines** are there?

Also number the **spaces** upward from the **First-space**. How many **spaces** are there?

Teacher's Accompaniment:
Touch This Line  
(All On the Low Side)

Touch this line then move a-way. People say that's not okay.

Moved a-way notes need a line. Then the people think it's fine.

Stay on the low side.

Teacher's Accompaniment:
The bass stave is only for white keys (naturals) on the low side, and notes are all the same size.

Number the **lines** upwards. How many lines are there?

Number the **spaces** upwards. How many spaces are there?

This is the **bass clef**.

This is the **bass stave (staff)**.

Bass clef, bass clef, Just play naturals on the left.
Bass clef, low side. Down there where those white frogs hide.

Teacher's Accompaniment:
Baby Monkey

Ba - by mon - key, cling on tight. Don’t fall off and get a fright.

Hold on to your mo - ther’s coat, like we cling to ev - ery note.

Find the 2-black-key groups by feel.

Teacher's Accompaniment:
Stepping

In these five-line staves we see each line and space is one white key.

Next door naturals, next door fingers. Stepping up and down with me.
5-Finger Exercises

Fingers do their exercises on the piano keyboard.
Fingers do this exercise on five keys in a row.

The D-clef means play in the centre alphabet.

In this centre alphabet these characters are hiding.
Can you show me where these centre characters all go?

Teacher's Accompaniment:

\[
\begin{align*}
E & \quad D & \quad C & \quad B & \quad A & \quad G & \\
F & \quad E & \quad D & \quad C & \quad B & \quad A &
\end{align*}
\]
Play upwards all the way with your left hand.

A, B, C, D, E, F, G, Link...

Then play downwards all the way with your right hand.
Play This Alphabet

Play this basic alphabet from A right up to top note G.

The F-clef means play in the lower (basic) alphabet.

Play this central alphabet where children sing so happily.

Teacher's Accompaniment:

Central Alphabet

Basic Alphabet
In this central alphabet, Seven characters we met.

In this treble clef and bass, Some on line and some in space.
Inside These Links

In-side these links, lives A, and G. They are the first, and last, white key.

Play one of these, and I will say, Whether that note was G or A.

Teacher's Accompaniment:

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G   | B   | D   | F   | G

```

Centre alphabet

Centre A  Centre G
On these white keys, play the right keys. Line then space, all in a row.

Notes are either lines or spaces. In these places all notes go.

Teacher's Accompaniment:

On these white keys, play the right keys. Line then space, all in a row.
Edgeline and Firstspace

They live there, On that pair, Centre-E and Centre-F.

Edge-line and First-space, Bottom of this treble clef.

Centre Alphabet

Play these keys:

Mark the “plays” and “easys”

Teacher’s Accompaniment:

See the image for visual representation of the musical notes and instructions.

Play with right hand
Ant and Ball and Copy Cat

From this centre alphabet.

Ant and Ball and Copy Cat, They all crawl along this wall.

Teacher's Accompaniment:

Centre Alphabet
Start with Edge-line and next door, then move away, from Edge-line.

When notes move out past the edge, we just add one leger-line.

Teacher's Accompaniment:
Duck Walks Down This Lane

Duck walks down this lane between treble clef and bass.

Quickly take a photograph and recognise that face.

Teacher's Accompaniment:
Twinkle Twinkle Little Star

Twinkle twinkle little star, How I wonder what you are. Up above the world so high,

Like a diamond in the sky, Twinkle twinkle little star, How I wonder what you are.
Copy of Copy-Cat

Teacher's Accompaniment:
London Bridge

Lon - don bridge is fall - ing down,
fall - ing down, fall - ing down.

My fair la - dy.
Express Staves