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

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

by John Keller

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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.
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 left and right hand, or high and low at this stage.

This hand plays on this side.

This hand plays on this side.

3 2 3 2 3 2 3
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:

Black key group of three:

Centre of keyboard

3

splash!

splash!

splash!
Twos and Threes

For each bar, teacher plays and sings first, then student copies.

Teacher's Accompaniment:

Start with this hand.

Two
black
twos.

rest

Three
black
Threes
and

rest

Twos
and

rest

threes!
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.

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.

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

The white keys are called the *naturals* ( ). 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.

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

Smoothly step along this line.

Hop and skip and step this line.

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.

Teacher's Accompaniment:

Play this side first
Racing car, Hop inside. Let me take you for a ride.

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

Play this side first. "double natural keys"

"double natural keys"

Teacher's Accompaniment:
The Groups of 2 Black Keys
(2 Extras):

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

The 2 black keys will have small white notes.

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.

T

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.
Walk along then have a rest.

Which side do you like the best?

On This Side

(Play black keys)

On this side we walk along.

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.

Play this side first

Teacher's Accompaniments:

"On This Side"

"Walk Along"

Keep in time and sing this song.

centre of keyboard
One Is My Thumb

Finger number one.

Teacher's Accompaniment:

One little bell.

One big drum.

Black notes mean play white keys (naturals).

Technique:
Thumb plays on its side with a light loose touch. No other parts of the hands touch the keys. Keep elbows out to the sides so that the backs of hands are level.

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

Start here.
Fingers 1 2 and 3

Start here.

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.

Teacher's Accompaniment:

Go this way

One two three

One two three

Go this way
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:

Play this side first
(Play next-door white keys.)
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.

Up and Down

(Start on the same black key.)

Teacher's Accompaniment:

Starting note:
(for both hands)
Watch These Stems

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

Teacher's Accompaniment:

Line

Keyboard
A pair: - no black key between.

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

Pairs of socks between these blocks.

Twos and threes.

Blocks of keys, low hand

Pairs of Socks

Teacher's Accompaniment:
Put Your Socks On!

Teacher's Accompaniment:

(Both hands together)

centre of keyboard
1: Pair of naturals on the right. That’s where treble clef will start.

2: Pair of naturals 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:

Play this side first.
The Groups of 3 Black Keys

(3 Extras):

The 3 black keys have large white notes.

On the line

High side of the line

Low side of the line

(line for group of 3)

We will call the 3 black keys KLH.

Find all the groups of 3 on this side.

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

Teacher's Accompaniment:

Trace and copy: line notes - and space notes.

If you're happy and you know it, then you really ought to show it.

Then play it all somewhere on the low side.

If you're happy and you know it, play for me:
Every White Note

Play this side first.

Every white note

Goes on one black key.

That way they'll be so easy to see.
Every day we play these keys, play these keys, play these keys.

Every day we play black threes, on the piano key-board.

Teacher’s Accompaniment:

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:
\[ C \text{-Chord} \]

Sing Down Low

Birds

Frogs

Play this side first.

Kids' Notes
Count to 4

1 2 3 4 1 ...

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

Birds

Play this side first!

Frogs

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

Birds

Frogs
Two Hands Play

Play each hand separately first.

Teacher's Accompaniment:

(Moving outward and inward)
Tops, Middles, Bottoms Race

Go!

It’s a race!

My timings:

3 bottoms
2 middles
3 tops
Repeat This Please

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

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

Teacher's Accompaniment:
Play in Group

Next is group of three:
(Move!)

Black key group of three:
(Move!)

Back to group of two:
(Change hand!)

Play in group of two:

(Move!)

Bottom middle top

The end!

Teacher's Accompaniment:

Play copy-cats.
I Like Ice Cream

If I only had my way, I’d eat ice cream every day.

I’ll have two scoops.

Repeat

If I only had my way, I’d eat ice cream every day.

Teacher’s Accompaniment:

If I only had my way, I’d eat ice cream every day.
The Link Lines

Here are the Link Lines, Middle of the threes. Special extra keys!

"Copy-cat" routine:
For each bar, teacher plays and sings, then student copies.
Or echo-clap and chant at first.
Skip link line,

Skip link line.

Both hands skip across link line.

Teacher's Accompaniment:

Start here.
Each Side of this Line

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

Notes can go in either place. Each side note is called a space.

Teacher's Accompaniment:

Called a Space

Frogs

Birds
Go up and down with both hands, in the same direction. Practice for perfection.

Play hands separately at first.

Teacher's Accompaniment:

```
\[ \begin{array}{c}
\text{Down} & \text{Up} & \text{Down} & \text{Up} \\
\end{array} \]
```

```
\[ \begin{array}{c}
\text{Down} & \text{Up} & \text{Down} & \text{Up} \\
\end{array} \]
```
Pointer Finger

Draw an L but call it 2. Curve your finger, then it's true!

Can you play this song with both hands together?

Teacher's Accompaniment:

"Extras"

"Naturals"
These Naturals (♮) and Extras

These naturals and extras, they all get along.

They made up a game with a beautiful song.

Teacher's Accompaniment:

They taught by 'rote':

Frog side

Bird side
Frog and Bird Clefs

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.

Teacher's Accompaniment:
Merrily we roll along, roll along, roll along,

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

Teacher's Accompaniment:
How Do We Find A?

Teacher's Accompaniment:

It's right above this link line, And inside group of three.

Write in the letternames on the naturals.

Play L - A everywhere on the keyboard.
**Staccato:**
- a dot over or under the note(s).
- hop off the keys straight after playing.

Alphabet: A B C D E F G.

Here in the centre these characters play.
On seven naturals from G down to A.

Teacher's Accompaniment:
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\[\text{Teacher's Accompaniment} \]`
```

These are the letters these naturals will be.

(Play finger 3 all the way.)
All Links on the Keyboard

It's a race!
My timings:

Start on lowest link

centre alphabet
crogs alphabet

birds alphabet
First Two Letters

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

Touching link is A, and B is moved away.

Write in the other letternames.

Play L - A - B all over the keyboard.

Teacher's Accompaniment:
Ants Push Balls

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

Teacher's Accompaniment:

Introduce flash cards for these notes A and B.
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!”

Teacher’s Accompaniment:
First Two Naturals (1/4)

Be careful!

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

Last Two Naturals (1/4)

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

Teacher's Accompaniment:

THREE LINK
G the Girl and First-space F, Love that curly treble clef!

G the Girl and I think they'll get married soon, And go on their honey-moon!

Repeat

Teacher's Accompaniment:

Add flash cards for these notes F and G to A and B.
1: Out in space I’d love to be, Where there is no gravity.

2: Naturals next to group of three, At the edge and floating free.

3: Play together everyone, Black and white keys having fun.
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
Bigs and Smalls

Big notes for threes,
And small notes for twos.

That way we'll know
Which extras to choose.
1. First play it all with high hand. (Use fingers 1,2,3 and 4.)

Start with finger:

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

Teacher's Accompaniment:

Climbing

1: Climbing up, Climbing down. In the branches of a tree.

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

3 - line guide
Once I built a snowman,
He was my friend all winter long.

Time will wait for no man.
And so by summer he was gone.
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.

What do you think these keys look like?

Teacher's Accompaniment:
Rocket ship,           Take your place.                Blast off into outer space.

Submarine,                 I will drive.                   Deep down in the sea we dive.
Near two extras, find three naturals. One between and one each side.

Extra keys close in and thin but naturals further out and wide.
I Sit In the Centre

I sit in the centre and I always will.

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

Teacher's Accompaniment:

*B Practice moving your hands gracefully to treble and bass sides of the keyboard while sitting still in the middle.
Do you know what this could be?

Something that begins with D.

In the centre, I can see,

Something smiling back at me.

The D-clef means play in the centre.

Teacher’s Accompaniment:

Kids’ Notes
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.

Know which D to choose.

Start here.

High

Low

Frogs

Birds

Play copy-cats.
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:
In the centre, children play, With their favourite pet each day.
Tell me, what’s your favourite pet? Told me once, but I forget.

Teacher's Accompaniment:
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

Add flash cards for middle C, D and E so as to complete the centre alphabet (A to G).
Line and Space

Birds

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

Frogs

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

Teacher's Accompaniment:
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. Next-door white keys have next-door fingers.
Go Down, Down, Up, Down ...

1: Play high hand.

2: Play low hand.

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

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.
Touch This Line
(All On the High Side)

Touch this line then move away. People say that’s not okay.

Moved away 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.

This is the treble clef.
This is the treble stave (staff).

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 then move away. People say that’s not okay.

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

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?

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

Find the 2-black-key groups by feel.

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.

Teacher’s Accompaniment:
Centre Kids

Centre kids are exercising, keeping healthy, fit and strong.

Playing outside in their playground, feeling happy all day long.

Teacher's Accompaniment:
“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.
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.

Teacher's Accompaniment:
3 - line guide

Thats where children sing and play,
Making music every day.

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

Teacher's Accompaniment:

centre alphabet

Repeat
These notes should be in the sky. On the ground these notes should go.

Notes on this side sound up high. Notes on this side sound down low.

Tied note (hold note on)

Teacher’s Accompaniment:

Find the keys by feel.
Taking Sides

“Like sun.” “And I like rain.” “I prefer it hot.” “Not me!”

Taking Sides

“I like day.” “But I like night.”

“We just don’t agree.” “That’s right!”

Teacher’s Accompaniment:

\[ \text{Sheet music} \]
Mary Had a Little Lamb

Mary had a little lamb,
Its fleece was white as snow.

Everywhere that Mary went,
That lamb was sure to go.

Mary had a little lamb,
Little lamb, little lamb.

Ev'ry where that Mary went,
Mary went, Mary went, Mary went,
Ev'ry where that lamb was sure to go.
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!

Repit at a faster speed!

Teacher's Accompaniment:

(Read, stand, off you go)
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:

\[
\begin{align*}
  &\frac{3}{4} \quad A \quad B \quad C \\
  &\frac{3}{4} \quad D \quad E \quad F \\
  &\frac{3}{4} \quad G
\end{align*}
\]
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.

1 5

centre A (Ant)

centre G (Girl in the Curl)

Teacher’s Accompaniment:
To Birdsville and Frogtown

To Birdsville I fly, to sing, and play.

To Frogtown I hop, to stop, and stay.
Somersaulting

Play- ing leap- frog o- ver thumb,   Duck your head,   Here I come.

Teacher's Accompaniment:

Somersaulting on these keys,   O- ver twos,   O- ver threes.
Three alphabet clefs:

Learn each music alphabet, Inside link lines, dont forget. Seven naturals in a row, G on top to A below.
Seven smiling friends we met.

In this central alphabet,
Two alphabet staves

In this alphabet below,
Seven letters in a row.

Teacher's Accompaniment:

Centre Alphabet

Lower Alphabet

Alphabet staves have three lines.
Alphabet in Bass Clef

Bottom letters A and B,
Middle letters C D E.

Fold finger 3 over thumb.

Top two letters G and F
Alphabet, In bass clef.

Fold finger 2 over thumb.

“Basic” Alphabet

Teacher’s Accompaniment:

\[\text{\textcopyright 2023} \text{Music Notes}\
\]
5-Finger Exercises

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

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

Teacher's Accompaniment:
Ant and Ball and Copy Cat

Ant and Ball and Copy Cat, From this centre alphabet.

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

Teacher's Accompaniment:

Centre Alphabet
Edgeline and Firstspace

Point to notes, tapping the rhythm. Use left hand.

Mark the “plays” and “easys”

Edge-line and First-space,

Bottom of this treble clef.

Centre Alphabet

Play these keys:

Teacher’s Accompaniment:

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

Play with right hand
In this central alphabet, Seven characters we met.

Rest for 4 beats.

Common time: 4 beats per bar

Rest for 2 beats.

Teacher's Accompaniment:

In this treble clef and bass, Some on line and some in space.
Duck Walks Down This Lane

Duck walks down this lane between treble clef and bass.
Quickly take a photograph and recognise that face.

Duck under!
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.
Copy of Copy-Cat

Teacher's Accompaniment:
Start and End of Treble, Bass

Both these pairs are E and F. Edges of this treble clef.

Bass clef region

Doubles doubles

Edge-line and First-space

Top line and space

Treble clef region

High hand

Low hand

Doubles doubles
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Twinkle, twinkle, little star,</th>
<th>How I wonder what you are.</th>
<th>Up above the world so high,</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

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

Teacher's Accompaniment:
London Bridge

Play each hand separately at first.

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

Lon - don bridge is fall - ing down, My fair la - dy.
Treble and Bass 5-line Staves
Express Staves