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

The Keyboard Express™
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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.
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.
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, splash!
- Back to group of two:
- Back to group of two:
- Black key group of three, splash!
- Splash!
- Splash!
- Centre of keyboard
- 3
- 3
For each bar, teacher plays and sings first, then student copies.

Teacher's Accompaniment:
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.

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

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.
Smoothly Step

Smooth-ly step a-long this line.

Hop and skip and step this line.

(rest)

(rest)

Teacher's Accompaniment:

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.

Play this side first
Racing car, (get ready) Hop in-side. Let me take you for a ride.

Racing Car

Racing car, (get ready) Hop right in. Let me take you for a spin.

Teacher's Accompaniment:

"double natural keys"
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.

Lets 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.

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?

Walk Along

On This Side

(Play black keys)

Play this side first

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.

Teacher's Accompaniments:
"On This Side"

"Walk Along"

All 8vb

Keep in time and sing this song.

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

One is my thumb.

One little bell.

Teacher’s Accompaniment:

One big drum.

Black notes mean play white keys (naturals).

Finger number one.

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.

Start here.

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.
Wiggle Finger Number ...
Fingers 1 2 and 3

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

One two three

Left Hand

Start here.

Fin - gers play

Fin - gers play

Write in all your finger numbers.

Go this way

Left Hand

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

Start here.

One two three
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 next-door white keys.)

(Play this side first)
This Way Goes Up

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

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

Up and Down

Play black keys.
(Use finger 2 all the way.)

This way goes up.

This way goes down.

(Start on the same black key.)

Teacher's Accompaniment:

Starting note:
(for both hands)

Play black keys.

centre of keyboard

This Way Goes Down

Play black keys.

(Start on the same black key.)

Teacher's Accompaniment:

Starting note:
(for both hands)

Play black keys.

centre of keyboard

This Way Goes Down
Watch these stems, So you'll see
Which hand plays each centre key.

Teacher's Accompaniment:

stem up on right

stem down on left
I Spy With My Eye

Teacher's Accompaniment:
The Groups of 3 Black Keys (3 Extras):

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

Low side of the line

On the line

High side of the line

The 3 black keys have large white notes.

(line for group of 3)

Find all the groups of 3 on this side.

We will call the 3 black keys K L H

Find all the groups of 3 on this side.

Kids’ Notes

4 3 2

down

up

2 3 4
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.

Teacher’s Accompaniment: Swing

Trace and copy: line notes - and space notes.
Copy Cat

Copy this

Copy that

Copy this

Copy cat!

Teacher's Accompaniment:

\[ E^\flat_\flat \quad \text{or} \quad E^\natural \quad \text{or} \quad E^\flat \]
Every white note

That way they'll be

So easy to see.

Goes on one black key.

Play this side first.

Teacher's Accompaniment:
Play this side first.

Go this side, that side, of this line.

Go-ing up and down.

This Side, That Side

Sky

birds

centre of keyboard

up

down

This Side, That Side

up side, down side, next to line, towards the sky or ground.

ground
Every day we play these keys,
Play these keys,
Play these keys.

Every day we play black threes,
On the piano keyboard.

Teacher's Accompaniment:
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
Count to 4

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

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:

Piano accompaniment notation is shown with arrows indicating the corresponding piano keys.

Frogs and Birds
Two Hands Play

Play each hand separately first.

Teacher's Accompaniment:

(Moving outward and inward)
These lines are called link lines, for groups of three. Links are what they point to, the blacks' most famous key.
Twos and Threes

centre

high hand

low hand
Tops, Middles, Bottoms Race

It's a race!

My timings:

Go!

centre of keyboard
Repeat This Please

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

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

Teacher's Accompaniment:

centre of keyboard
Play in Group

Next is group of three:
(Move up!)

Black key group of three:
(Move down!)

Back to group of two:
(Change hand!)

Play copy-cats.
(Move down!)

The end!

Play in group of two:

Teacher's Accompaniment:

bottom 3  middle 2  top 3
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 the student learn keyboard geography, plus the concepts of up and down, lines and spaces, stepping and skipping.
I Like Ice Cream

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

Teacher's Accompaniment:

So do we. I'll have two scoops. We'll have three.

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

high hand

low hand

3 2 3 3 2

bottom  middle  top
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:

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

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

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.

Teacher's Accompaniment:
swing boogie
Go up and down with both hands, in the same direction.

Play hands separately at first.

Practice for perfection.

Repeat immediately.

Teacher's Accompaniment:
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.

Teacher's Accompaniment:

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C | D | E | F | G | A | B |
```

What do you think these keys look like?

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Start with high hand

Repeat with low hand
Rocket ship, 
Take your place. 
Blast off into outer space.

Submarine, 
I will drive. 
Deep down in the sea we dive.
Middle twos, teach by copying.

High twos, low twos, two twos. Right on the twos lines, jump to link lines.

Low 2
Middle 2
High 2

Three Twos
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:

* Practice moving your hands gracefully to treble and bass sides of the keyboard while sitting still in the middle.
Twos and Threes
(Hands Together)

It's a race!
My timings:

3 2 3 2 3 2 3

Play by feel, without looking at the keys!

Play hands separately at first.
(Both hands play the middle twos.)
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 between these blocks.

Teacher's Accompaniment:

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

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

Pairs of Socks

Pairs of Socks
How many pairs are on the high side?
Put Your Socks On!

Put 1 your socks on!

Put 2 your socks on!

Both hands together:

1. Put 1 of your socks on.
2. Put 2 of your socks on.

Now, put 1 pair of socks on.

Teacher’s Accompaniment:
1: Pair of naturals on the right. They go down here in bass clef.

2: Pair of naturals on the left.

3: Hands together we can play.

Notes go out and in this way.
This treble clef means play on naturals high up where birds go.

This bass clef means play naturals on this frog side where it’s low.
In the Centre

The D-clef means play in the centre.

Do you know what this could be?

In the centre, I can see,

Something smiling back at me.

Something that begins with D.

Teacher’s Accompaniment:

Kids’ Notes
Note Stickers

Each little note sticker goes on one key. Put them on keys where they're easy to see.

Playing on extras to help find our place. Playing on naturals in treble and bass.

centre of keyboard
Mary had a little lamb, its fleece was white as snow.
Every where that Mary went, that lamb was sure to go.
"Copy-cat" routine:
For each bar, teacher plays and sings, then student copies.
Or echo-clap and chant at first.
How Do We Find A?

How do we find A? This very first white key.

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.

Here in the centre these characters play.
Inside these link lines they all have to stay.

**Teacher's Accompaniment:**

Teacher's Accompaniment:
All Links on the Keyboard

It's a race!
My timings:

Start on lowest link

centre alphabet
crogs alphabet
birds alphabet
Three 'alphabet clefs':

Learn each music alphabet, Inside link lines, don't forget. Seven naturals in a row, G on top to A below.

Lower (Frogs') Alphabet  Centre (Kids') Alphabet  Top (Birds') Alphabet
First Two Letters

Touching link is first key A.

B’s a little bit away.

First two letters, don’t forget.

Start of every alphabet.

Write in the other letter names.
Play L - A - B all over the keyboard.
Ants Push Balls

Ants push Balls a - long this wall. Balls just roll and ants just crawl.

A and B we sing down low. So on bass clef they must go.

Teacher's Accompaniment:

Introduce flash cards for these notes A and B.
Last Two Letters

Touching link is last key G.
F’s out at the edge of three.

Last two letters, don’t forget.
Top of every alphabet.

Teacher’s Accompaniment:
Play L - G - F all over the keyboard.
Naturals (♩) Above and Below

Bird Clef

Naturals above, and naturals below.
Two on each side, that’s four in a row.

Both hands at once, Just practice it slow.
Play up and down. Think which way to go.

Frog Clef

low hand

high hand

Birds

Frogs
G the Girl and First-space F

G the Girl and First-space F, Love that curly treble clef! 
I think they'll get married soon, And go on their honeymoon!

Teacher's Accompaniment:

Add flash cards for these notes F and G to A and B.
Skip Link Line

Skip link line, Skip link line. Both hands skip across link lines.

Teacher's Accompaniment:

Start here.
"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:
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.
Smiley Face  =D

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 alphabet

3 - line guide
Notes On This Side

These notes would be near the sky. Near the ground these notes should go.

Teacher's Accompaniment:

Find the keys by feel.
Mary Had a Little Lamb

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

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

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

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

Teacher's Accompaniment:

\[ \begin{align*}
E & : E \quad E \quad E \quad E \quad E \quad E \quad E \quad E \\
\end{align*} \]
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!
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.
Here is a D-line 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.

Play copy-cats.

Start here.
Hot Cross Buns

Hot cross buns, Hot cross buns. One a penny, two a penny, Hot cross buns.
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.
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).
Copy Cat

Low hand plays, High hand plays. Pat that cat two different ways.
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
My friends were playing hiding, They thought I would not find them.

But when I heard them laughing, Beneath my bed I found them.
Mark the “easys” and “plays”

Edgeline E, First-space F,
Bottom pair in treble clef.

Girl looks through that curl at me.
Line to line, skip one key.

Centre Alphabet
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.

**Naturals (♮) Near Twos**

**Extras**

- **Naturals (♮) Near Twos**
  - **Line Note**
  - **Moved Away**
  - **D-line**
    - Line for group of 2

**Pairs of Naturals**

- **Line Note**
- **Moved Away**

**Line of Naturals**

- **Line Note**
- **Moved Away**

**Thumb plays on its side.**

**Other fingers are curved.**

**Next-door white keys have next-door fingers.**

**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.**
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:

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\[\text{Teacher's Accompaniment:}\]
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\[\text{Teacher's Accompaniment:}\]
Go Down, Down, Up, Down ...

1: Play high hand.

Go down, down, up, down.

2: Play low hand.

Up, up, down, up.

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

Teacher's Accompaniment:

Frogs

Birds
Next Door Naturals

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 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 high side.

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)

Stay on the low 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:
Bass Clef

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:

\[ \text{Bass clef, bass clef, Just play naturals on the left.} \]

\[ \text{Bass clef, low side. Down there where those white frogs hide.} \]
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:
First Three, Top Three

First three letters: A, B, C.
Top three letters: G, F, E.
Letter D. E, F, G.

First three letters: A, B, C.
Centre key, A, B, C.

Place a 3-line alphabet guide in the centre.
Special Little Characters

Special little characters,       Just for centre alphabet.

Girls and boys and pets and toys,      All to learn and not forget.

Change the 3-line alphabet guide ...

... to the centre characters' guide.
Centre Kids

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

Playing outside in their playground, feeling happy all day long.
Bird and Frog Alphabets

In this alphabet up high, Seven seagulls in the sky.
In this alphabet below, Seven white frogs in a row.

Teacher's Accompaniment:

Alphabet staves have three lines.
In the middle of each alphabet, Lives the letter D,
And above is letter E and below is letter C.
In the Bass

A is a space note, B is a line note, C is a space note, D is a line note,

E is a space note, F is a line note, G is a space note, In the bass.
In the Treble

A is a space note, B is a line note, C is a space note, D is a line note,

E is a space note, F is a line note, G is a space note, treble clef.
Bass and Treble Alphabets

This alphabet is down low in the bass. This is where frogs hop all over the place.

This is the treble or third alphabet. High in the sky it’s the birds alphabet.

Frogs (‘basic’) alphabet
treble.alphabet
1: Old MacDonald had a farm.

2: On that farm he had a cow.

Moo moo here,  moo moo there,  here a moo,  there a moo,

Ev - ery where a  moo moo.

FINE:

-Tie:
   - just hold the note on.

REPEAT
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:

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:
Be careful!

First Two Naturals (\(\text{\text{First two naturals A and B.}}\) At the edge or inside three.

Last Two Naturals (\(\text{\text{Last two naturals F and G.}}\) Touching link or floating free.

Teacher’s Accompaniment:

\(\text{\text{THREE}}\)
Thumbs are Finger 1s.
Soccer, Cricket, Basketball

Soccer, Cricket, Basketball. Throw a ball against a wall.

Tennis, Hockey, Bowling too. Ball game sports are fun to do.

Repeat
“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:
Top Half, Bottom Half

Top half of alphabet: G F E D.

Bottom half of alphabet: A B C.

Learn all the letters in each alphabet.

In each position which letter you get.
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.

Teacher's Accompaniment:

“Basic” Alphabet
Copy of Copy-Cat

Co - py this,  Co - py that,  
E - ven co - py  Co - py - Cat.  
So are they two diff -'rent C's? 
No, the same spot on the keys!

Teacher's Accompaniment:
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.
In this centre alphabet, Seven characters we met.

Common time: 4 beats per bar

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!
Treble Clef Starts; Bass Clef Starts

Treble clef starts from this pair. Treble clef ends right up there.

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

Bass clef starts with double keys. Double keys are inside threes. At the edge, one line, one space. Double keys at edge of bass.

Edge-line and First-space

Top line and space

Bass clef region

Treble clef region
Twinkle Twinkle Little Star

Twin - kle twin - kle lit - tle star, How I won - der what you are. Up a - bove the world so high,

Like a dia - mond in the sky, Twin - kle twin - kle lit - tle star, How I won - der what you are.

Teacher's Accompaniment:

Fine
London Bridge

Play each hand separately at first.

London bridge is falling down,
falling down, falling down.

London bridge is falling down,
My fair lady.
“Ode To Joy” by Beethoven

Ode to Joy is by Beethoven, from his great ninth symphony.
Ode to Joy is all about how man should live in harmony.

Play each hand separately at first.
Count 4 beats in each bar.

One-two, and three-four.
Express Staves