

Piano Basics.

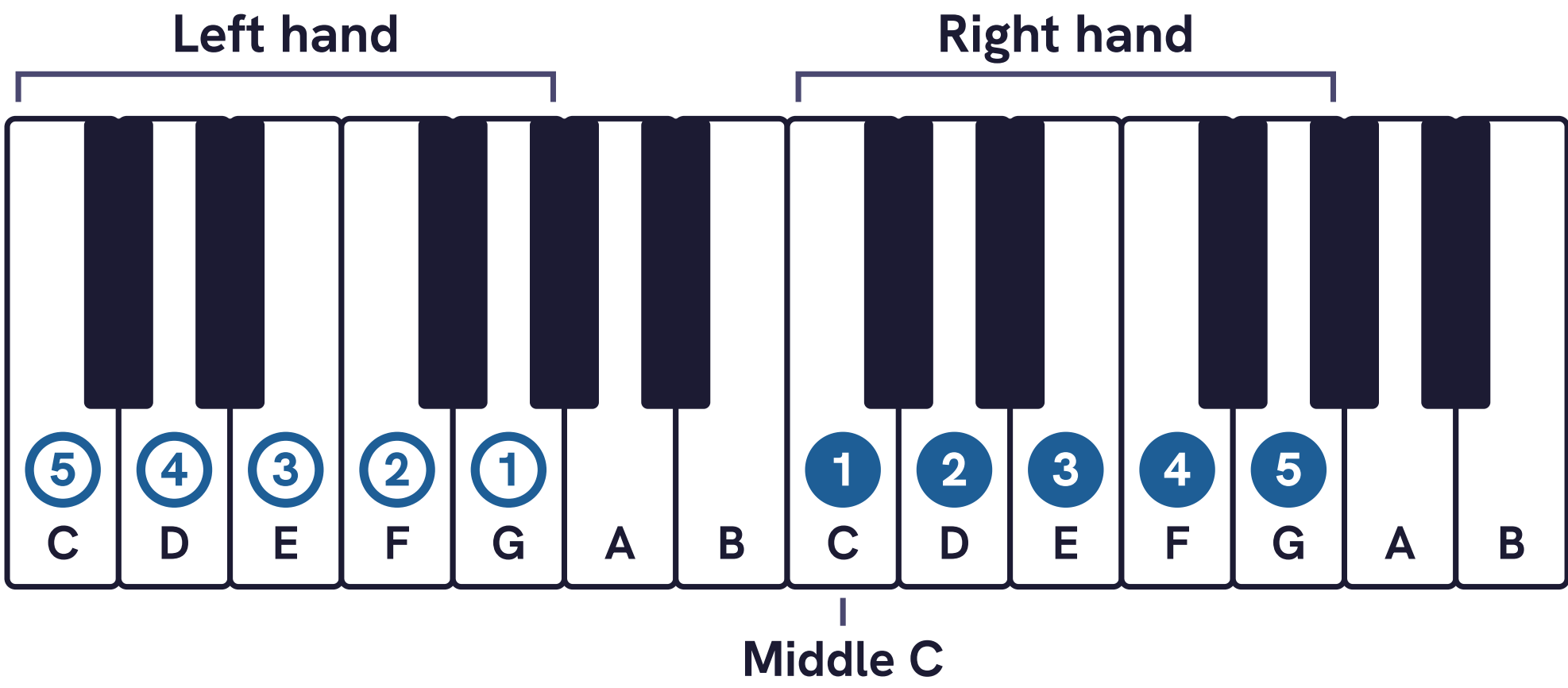
Your first steps at the keyboard: finger numbers, finding the notes, scales, chords and pedals.

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FOUNDATIONS

Finger Numbers & C Position

In C position each finger rests on its own white key.

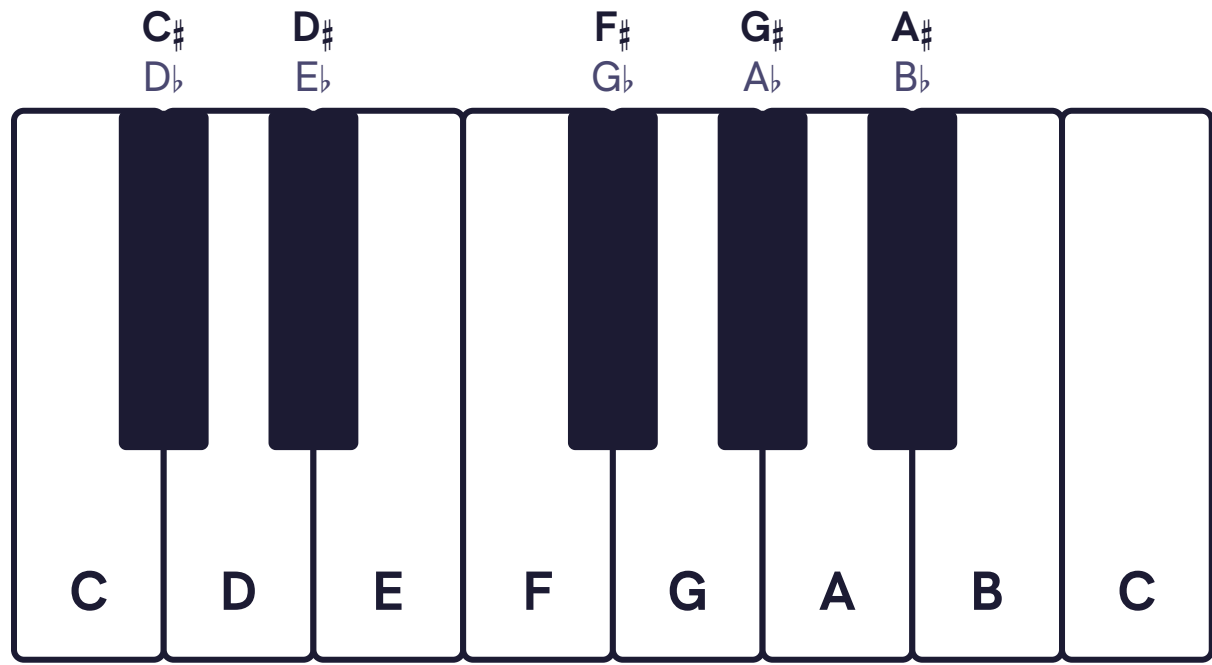


1 = thumb, 5 = little finger, on both hands. Solid circles: right hand; outlined: left hand.
Right thumb on middle C; left little finger on the C below. Keep your fingers curved, as if holding a ball.

FOUNDATIONS

Piano Keyboard

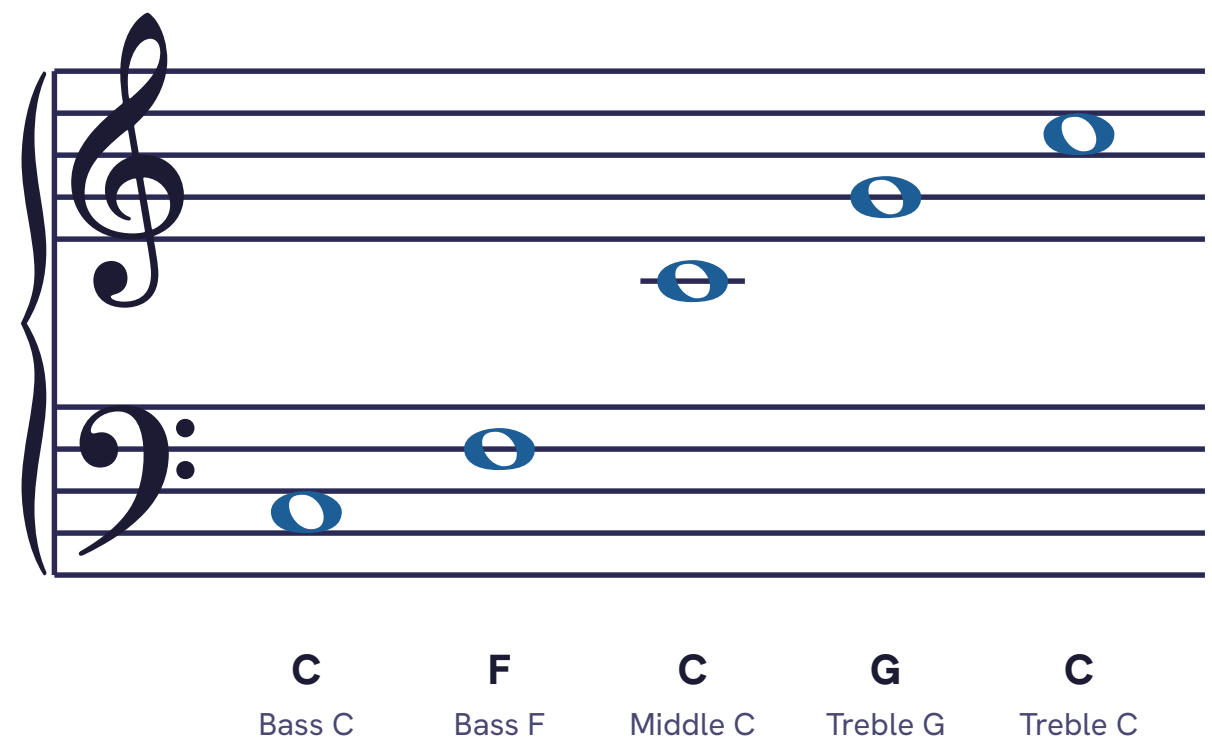
One octave from C. Each black key has two names: the sharp of the white key to its left and the flat of the white key to its right.



FOUNDATIONS

The Grand Staff

Piano music uses two staves joined by a brace: treble clef for the right hand, bass clef for the left. Middle C sits between them on its own ledger line.



Learn these landmark notes first, then read the others as steps up or down from the nearest one.

SCALES & KEYS

Scale Fingering

One octave going up. Coming down, play the same fingers in reverse.

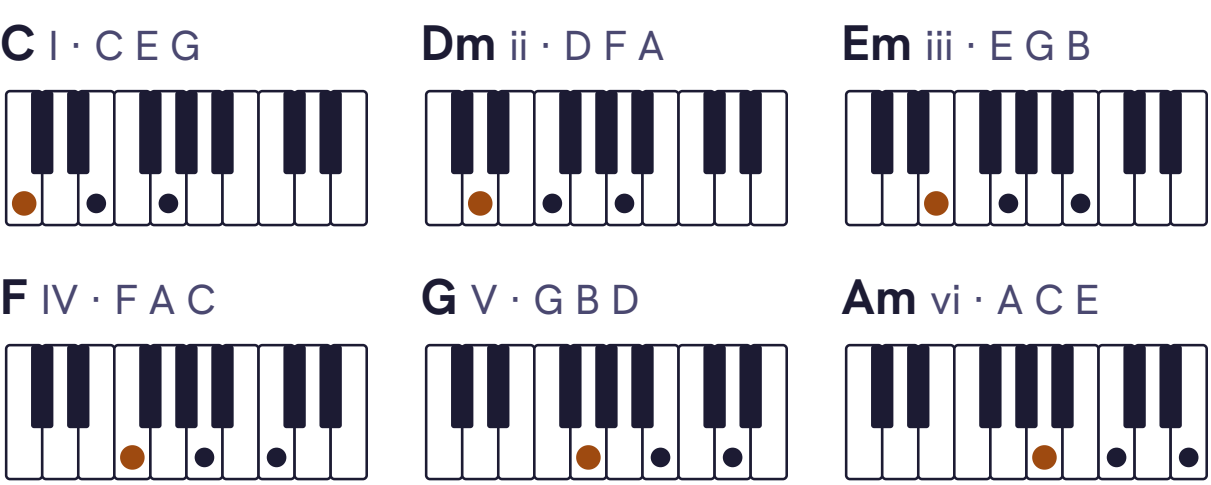
C MAJOR	RH	1	2	3	1	2	3	4	5
	LH	5	4	3	2	1	3	2	1
G MAJOR	RH	1	2	3	1	2	3	4	5
	LH	5	4	3	2	1	3	2	1
D MAJOR	RH	1	2	3	1	2	3	4	5
	LH	5	4	3	2	1	3	2	1
F MAJOR	RH	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4
	LH	5	4	3	2	1	3	2	1

Right hand (RH) above the notes, left hand (LH) below. Colored numbers: where the hand moves.
The thumb passes under (going up in the right hand) and fingers cross over it, so the scale flows without a gap.

CHORDS & HARMONY

Chords on the Keys

The six main chords of C major, all on white keys. A root-position chord skips one white key between each note.



Colored dot: the root, the note the chord is named after.

RHYTHM

Note & Rest Values

NOTE	REST	NAME	BEATS IN 4/4
		Whole note	4 beats
		Half note	2 beats
		Quarter note	1 beat
		Eighth note	1/2 beats
		Sixteenth note	1/4 beats

A dot adds half the note's value: a dotted half note = 2 + 1 = 3 beats.

Time signatures

Top number: how many beats in a measure. Bottom number: which note gets the beat (4 = quarter, 8 = eighth).

TIME	WHAT IT MEANS	USED FOR
4/4	4 quarter-note beats per measure	Most pop, rock and hip-hop C (common time)
3/4	3 quarter-note beats per measure	Waltz
2/4	2 quarter-note beats per measure	March, polka
6/8	6 eighth notes, felt as 2 beats of 3	Lilting, rolling (compound time)

EXPRESSION & TEMPO

Articulations

Marks above or below a note tell you how to play it. Most go on the note-head side; the marcato and fermata go above.

	Staccato	Short and detached
	Accent	Play this note louder
	Tenuto	Hold it for its full length, slightly stressed
	Marcato	Strongly accented
	Fermata	Hold longer than written
	Slur	Play smoothly, without breaks (legato)

PRACTICE TIP

Practice slowly. Speed comes from playing it right, not from playing it fast.

PRACTICE TIP

Say the note names out loud as you read.

EXPRESSION & TEMPO

The Pedals

Most pianos have two or three pedals, pressed with the feet.

Right	Sustain (damper) pedal Lets the notes ring on after you lift your fingers. The one you'll use most.
Middle	Sostenuto pedal Holds only the notes already down when you press it. On many upright pianos it's a practice mute instead.
Left	Soft pedal (una corda) Makes the sound softer and gentler.

Under the music, Ped. means press the sustain pedal and * means lift it. Some music uses a line instead: down at the start, up at the end.



EXPRESSION & TEMPO

Dynamics

How loud or soft to play.

<i>pp</i>	<i>pianissimo</i>	very soft
<i>p</i>	<i>piano</i>	soft
<i>mp</i>	<i>mezzo-piano</i>	moderately soft
<i>mf</i>	<i>mezzo-forte</i>	moderately loud
<i>f</i>	<i>forte</i>	loud
<i>ff</i>	<i>fortissimo</i>	very loud
	<i>crescendo</i>	gradually louder
	<i>decrescendo (diminuendo)</i>	gradually softer

