

Piano Players

play outside the box



Student Handbook

Welcome to Piano Players!

Welcome to Piano Players! We are glad you are joining our studio, and we are excited to embark on this amazing journey of musical discovery with you. It is our mission that you will not only learn more about the instrument, but that you will also feel truly valued by our faculty and your fellow students. No matter what your individual goals may be, we invite you to be inspired, be creative, and be encouraged! Within this student handbook, you will find important information regarding our studio policies, as well as essential resources for success and answers to some of the most frequently asked questions about our program. Please take the time to read through everything in this handbook thoroughly; we are available at your convenience to answer any questions you may have.

Ways to reach us:

Via email at PianoPlayers@outlook.com

Via phone or text at 513-773-6357

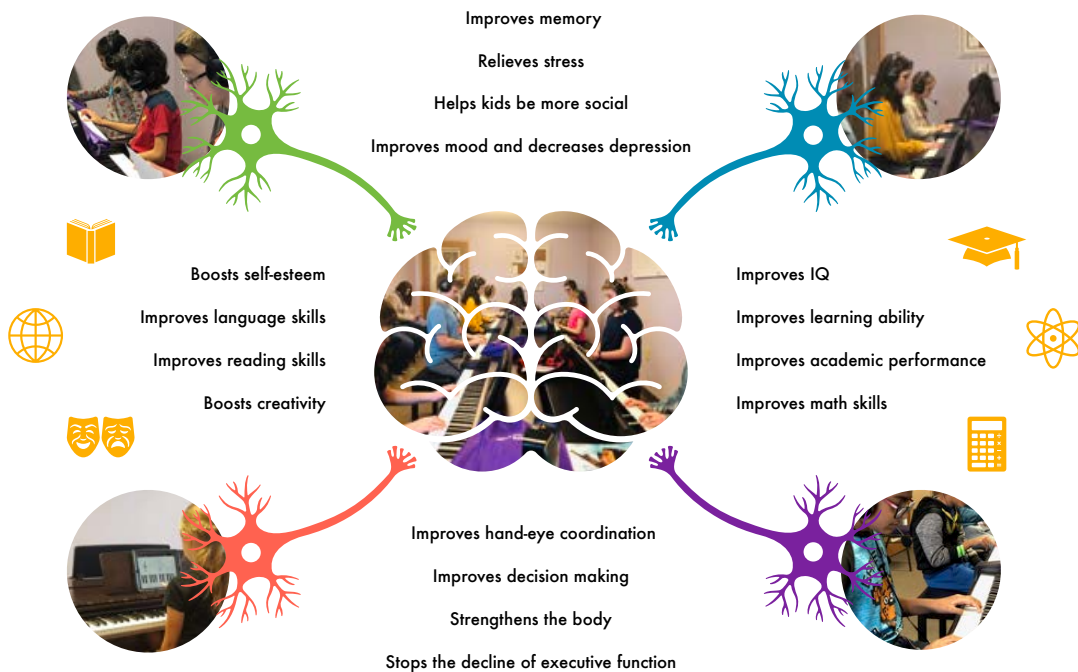
Private lesson faculty will share contact information individually with students



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Brain Benefits of Playing the Piano



Programs

At Piano Players, we offer various program options, and we are happy to tailor any program to best fit the needs of each individual student. Students may also switch from one program to another at any time. All programs include recital opportunities and access to practice supports.

Private Lessons

Students generally attend one 30 minute one-on-one lesson per week, although the amount of time may be adjusted to fit your individual needs and preference. We have many students who decide 45 or 60 minutes is the best fit for achieving their goals. Though many private students choose to follow the RCM curriculum, others may choose to customize their materials. Private lessons can be a good fit for students of any age, particularly for our youngest learners, and for those who have highly specific goals or needs.

Small Group Lessons

Students attend lessons in a state-of-the-art Yamaha piano lab, and have access to both printed and digital materials. Most of our group students use the internationally acclaimed Royal Conservatory of Music curriculum, and enjoy a well-rounded study of repertoire, technique, theory, song-writing, and ear training. Small group lessons are best suited for students over age 6, who are prepared for brief periods of independent learning.

Explorer Program

Students attend one 40 minute small group lesson per week. This option is perfect for busy families who also want the benefits of group lessons. Explorer students should expect to practice at home in order to see continued growth.

Premier Program**

Students attend up to three 40 minute small group lessons per week. Students in this program will typically learn and retain skills at a highly accelerated rate. Due to the frequency of lessons, these students do not need to devote much time to practicing at home.

Tuition

Our tuition is calculated based on a specific number of lessons offered per academic year, according to our studio calendar. The total annual amount is then divided into 12 equal monthly payments. This means that whether there are five lessons in a given month due to an extra day, or two lessons in a month due to a scheduled break, the tuition amount remains the same. If you need to end your lessons before the end of the academic year, we will balance tuition paid with lessons offered.

Tuition is invoiced monthly on the same date through our provider, Square; for your convenience, you are able to securely store your card information for recurring payments. As long as current students continue their enrollment, their tuition will not increase, unless they decide to change their program. Our current tuition rates are in the chart below:



Enrollment Options*

	<u>Private Lesson Program*</u>	<u>Explorer Program*</u>	<u>Premier Program*</u>
Description	Weekly 30 minute private sessions	Weekly 40 minute small group (up to 8 students) sessions	Up to THREE 40 minute small group (up to 8 students) sessions per week**
Number of lessons per year	45	45	130
Annual Tuition	\$1,668	\$1,188	\$1,668
Monthly Payment (12 months)	\$139	\$99	\$139
Per Lesson Cost	\$37.07	\$26.40	\$12.83
Savings (per lesson)		30%	65%

* Lessons, recitals, practice supports, and access to supplemental materials included

* World-renowned RCM curriculum

* Optional participation in competitions, festivals and RCM certification program

* Sessions tailored to include all aspects of musicianship

** Premier Program moves to two 1 hour lessons per week beginning at level 2 (85-88 classes per year)

Studio Calendar

Specific dates or activities may change slightly from year-to-year, or due to unforeseen circumstances or weather-related events, however, our annual calendar generally remains the same each year.

There are typically 3 recital opportunities per year, and the studio is generally closed for the following: Martin Luther King Jr. Day, Easter weekend, Memorial Day, Fourth of July, Halloween, Thanksgiving break, Christmas break, a brief summer break, and a brief back-to-school break.

To remain as flexible as possible, students also have the option of swapping their six weeks of summer lessons for a week of half-day summer camp each year. Summer camp dates are generally announced by March of each year.

The following is our 2023-2024 calendar:

2023-2024 Piano Players Studio Calendar

Month	Year	DATE	DESCRIPTION
August	2023	7/31	Late Summer Break Begins - no lessons (7/31 - 8/12)
September	2023	10/31	Halloween - no lessons
October	2023	11/1	Foster Child Gift Collection Begins! (11/1 - 11/18)
November	2023	11/11	Fall Formal Student Recital
December	2023	11/20	Thanksgiving Break Begins - no lessons (11/20 - 11/25)
January	2024	12/20	Christmas Break Begins - no lessons (12/20 - 1/2)
February	2024	1/15	Martin Luther King Jr. Day - no lessons
March	2024	2/10	Silent Film Student Recital
April	2024	3/16	Faculty Showcase Recital
May	2024	3/29	Good Friday/Easter - no lessons (3/29 & 3/30)
June	2024	5/11	Piano Players in the Park Recital and Family Picnic
July	2024	5/27	Memorial Day - no lessons
August	2024	6/3	Early Summer Break Begins - no lessons (6/3 - 6/15)
September	2024	6/17	Summer Camp Week 1 (6/17 - 6/21, all regular lessons still in session)
October	2024	6/24	Summer Camp Week 2 (6/24 - 6/28, all regular lessons still in session)
November	2024	7/4	July 4th - no lessons

Rescheduling Policies and Details

At Piano Players, we want to foster the best learning environment possible! While it is best for students to maintain a consistent lesson schedule, we completely understand that there will be times when it becomes necessary to miss, cancel, or reschedule an appointment. Depending on the reason for the scheduling conflict, we are able to offer online services as needed (i.e. in the case of inclement weather conditions, mild illness, extended travel, etc.).

Our families are investing valuable resources in the musical growth and development of their student(s) when they commit to lessons and/or classes at our studio. In the same manner, each member of our faculty worked diligently to earn highly specific degrees and professional certifications within the field of Music. Our faculty has spent decades perfecting the craft of teaching and they invest heavily of themselves and their time into each and every student.

Our families, as well as our faculty, deserve our utmost respect. It is therefore our goal to be as flexible as possible, while still respecting the time of our faculty. It is in this spirit that we have adopted the following rescheduling policies:

For **ALL** Students:

- Appointments missed without any advance notice, or “no shows”, will not be rescheduled, and no refunds or credits will be given.

For **Group** Students:

- Students may reschedule missed appointments based on class availability. *Space may be limited in certain classes at certain times.*

For **Private** Students:

- Rescheduling of appointments will be offered in the following manner:
 - In the event that an individual teacher needs to cancel a lesson, the teacher will work to reschedule a private appointment with their student, at a mutually agreed upon date and time. Depending on the reason for the missed appointment (i.e. extended teacher illness), the student may have a substitute teacher make up the lesson.
 - If a student needs to miss or reschedule an appointment, the student may attend 2 regular group classes to make up the missed appointment, or on occasion, a private teacher may hold a masterclass session which will serve as an opportunity for students to make up for missed appointments.

We would be more than happy to discuss these policies further, if you should ever have any questions or concerns. Thank you for trusting Piano Players with your student's development!

Summer Options

Families often have questions about summer lessons, so we've put together this helpful Q&A as a guide.

When are summer breaks and lessons?

Summer breaks are typically the first two full weeks of June and the first two full weeks of August. There are six weeks of summer lessons between the early summer break and the late summer back-to-school break.

Do you have travel plans? Perhaps you want your summer schedule to look a little different?

Here are some options for how students can choose to navigate summer:

- If you are traveling and your travel aligns with our scheduled breaks, great! Your student won't miss anything!
- If you are traveling for up to 2-3 weeks, it's usually not a problem to make up these lessons.
- If you are traveling for more than 2-3 weeks, and/or if you'd like a bigger break over the summer:
 - Your student can swap out their regular summer lessons for a week of Piano Players half-day summer camp, which can take the place of six weeks of private or group classes. Summer camps will be offered for students of all levels, ages 6 and up. Activities will include songwriting, collaborative and ensemble playing, individual skills and repertoire, rhythm activities, Music History and Theory, as well as various other musical games and learning activities. Dates and times for summer camps are usually announced in late March each year.
 - If your student will have access to the internet and an instrument during travel, they may be able to attend their lessons and/or classes online.
 - You may choose to pause lessons for part or all of the six weeks of summer lessons. If you choose this option, your student's space, time slot, and teacher are not guaranteed to be available when you return. We will do our best to hold a spot for your student, however space is becoming increasingly limited and we are very close to being on a waiting list.

Is monthly tuition prorated or discounted for months when there are breaks?

Our tuition is program specific and is based on a total annual cost which includes (typically) 45 weeks of lessons, recitals, practice supports, home access to apps, etc... The total annual tuition is then divided into 12 equal monthly payments. Like schools and other educational institutions, scheduled breaks are already built into our studio calendar, and tuition is not prorated or discounted for months with any scheduled breaks; this also means tuition is not adjusted at a higher rate for months with 5 weeks of lessons.

Still have questions, or are you interested in modifying your student's summer schedule?

Please reach out to us at your convenience- we are looking forward to speaking with you!

Studio Policies

- Students are responsible for bringing their lesson books to each class.
- Students are expected to be respectful to instructors, classmates, and equipment at all times.
- Students are to maintain positive and encouraging attitudes toward their peers.
- Please do not attend class if you are feverish or feeling unwell.
- Please practice proper hygiene by having students wash their hands before and after class. Hand sanitizer is available in the lab and we will offer it to students as they enter and exit.
- There is no food or drink allowed inside the piano lab, however students and families are welcome to consume any foods or beverages in the lobby or kitchen area of the building.
- Families and friends of students are welcome to observe lessons as space permits, but please be mindful of creating distractions (electronic devices, talking, etc...), as students learn best in an environment in which they can focus!
- Please plan to arrive on time, but not more than 5-10 minutes before your class time, and please be respectful of any class that is still in session when you enter.
- Any minor student who is dropped off should be picked up no later than 5 minutes after their lesson time has ended.
- Have fun!!!



Guide to Successful Practicing

Practice-Progress Relationship

The number of weekly practice sessions is in direct relation to progress. A balanced approach allows for appropriate progress while avoiding burnout. Piano lessons count as practice sessions. Duration of practice sessions will vary, depending on student age and level, but in general should begin with approximately 15 minutes per session and eventually ideally progress to roughly the duration of the student's lesson time.

Weekly Practice-Progress Correlations*		
1 day per week	Very slow progress and little retention	Average of > 12 months per level
2 days per week	Slower progress and less retention	Average of 12 months per level
3-4 days per week	Very good progress and appropriate retention	Average of 6-9 months per level
5 days per week	Fastest progress and greatest possible retention	Average of 6 months per level
6-7 days per week - too many practice days for most students; greater chance for burnout		
* A lesson counts as one practice day/session		

Practice Routine

A variety of elements should be included in the practice session. Some activities should be rotated on different days, while some activities should be included in every practice session.

Activities To Include in Every Practice	Rotating Activities (For support, please visit: https://www.pianoplayers.org/practice-support)
Technique: up to 5 minutes of drills	Tenuto (important for note reading skills)
Repertoire: roughly 10 minutes for each piece	Interval Training
	Chord Training
	Quizlet Theory Sets
	Clapback/Playback
	Rhythm Reading/Sight Reading
	PianoMaestro (app for iPad)
How to Practice Technique and Repertoire	
Focus on Small Sections	
Aim for precise performance of notes, rhythm, fingering, articulation, and dynamics.	
Develop your inner voice - shape the melodic lines!	
Make notes on your music - finger numbers, note names, highlight sections... all to help you succeed!	

Keep Track!

Keeping a tally of how many days you have practiced and the activities you completed in each practice session can help you stay on track and reach your goals.

Recital Information

Recitals and other performance opportunities are a fun and exciting way for students to share their talents and progress with family, friends, and the community. We typically have at least three recital opportunities per academic year. Students are not required to participate in recitals, but we do encourage students to perform if they are comfortable doing so. Recitals may be held at a more formal location or at a local park amphitheater, and some recitals may be themed; themes may include a masquerade recital, a heritage recital, or a composition recital, where students share their very own compositions!

Recital dates are included on the studio calendar, and additional information is shared in the newsletter as the date approaches. Students generally have all recital repertoire about two months in advance.

What should I wear? Recital attire will depend on the location and any theming and will be announced as the date approaches. Family and/or audience members may dress as they choose.

What should I bring? Please make sure you bring all of your music with you to the recital, even if you have your pieces memorized.

Can I invite family/friends? Yes, of course!

Where is the recital venue? Recital locations are announced in advance in the monthly newsletter, typically about two months in advance.

What time should I arrive? Please plan to arrive for recitals approximately 15 minutes before your scheduled time, in order to find seating, use the restroom if needed, and try out the piano.

Where will I sit? Students are often seated in the front row of the recital hall, and will be placed in the order they will perform. This allows for the program to run smoothly. Family members may sit in any seat that is not reserved for the students. (A note about our youngest performers: if appropriate, very young performers may choose to sit with their family following their performance.)

When should we applaud (clap)? It is respectful to applaud to show our appreciation for a student's performance. We will wait to clap for each student until they have finished playing all of their listed pieces. We will also have a time to applaud for all of our students at the conclusion of the recital.

Can I enter or leave the room during the recital? Once the recital has begun, please refrain from leaving the room unless absolutely necessary. If you absolutely must leave the room, please only do so between performances. If you or an audience member should arrive after the recital has started, please enter quietly between performances.

What about photos or videos? Audience members are more than welcome to take pictures and/or videos during the recital. We do ask that there be no flash photography or bright lights, as it can be quite the distraction for the performers. There will be only limited time for pictures before the recital begins, however there will be plenty of time at the end of the recital for photos.

Cell phones and other electronic devices: Please silence or turn off all electronic devices prior to the beginning of the recital.

How do I prepare for the recital? Our instructors will help you build the knowledge for the pieces you are playing. It is important that you continue attending classes regularly and, if you have an instrument at home, to keep practicing even when you are not in class. As we get closer to the performance date, our instructors will also help you learn the recital etiquette (for example, bowing, approaching the instrument, etc).

Evaluation Opportunities

RCM Exams

A majority of our students use The Royal Conservatory of Music, or RCM, curriculum, and Piano Players is recognized as an affiliated RCM School of Music. The curriculum is divided into 12 sequential levels: Preparatory level A and level B, and levels 1-10. The amount of time spent completing each level varies widely based on the individual student; most students will progress through a given level in 6-12 months, though the advanced levels do require more dedication. A level 10 student would be playing at the collegiate level. The RCM program is centered around excellence and preparing a well-rounded musician with a solid foundation. Upon completion of each level, students have the opportunity to be evaluated by a RCM examiner through The Royal Conservatory Certificate Program. Examiners for The Royal Conservatory are carefully selected from only the most highly qualified and dedicated professionals in their field. Exams are typically held in-person in May, August, and December of each year, and remote online exams are available throughout the year. Exam fees are not included in student tuition and vary based on the level the student is completing. Students are not required to participate in RCM exams.

Mason Music Festival

Mason Music Festival is a locally organized festival-style evaluation opportunity that is both appropriate and affordable for all students of any level. There are typically festivals held in the spring and fall of each year. Students usually prepare 2 repertoire pieces to play for an adjudicator, who will give the student a score, as well as encouraging and helpful written comments concerning their performance. Students also have the opportunity to earn prizes. Students are not required to participate in Mason Music Festival, though this is a low-stress and fantastic starting point for anyone interested in future competitions.

MTNA Auditions Festival

The Auditions Festival is offered through the Ohio chapter of the Music Teachers National Association, MTNA, and is typically held locally in the early spring of each year. Students may enter any number of pieces they choose, and there is a modest fee per piece performed. Students receive written evaluations, scores, certificates, and a chance to earn ribbons, medals, and/or trophies, depending on their level and the quality of their performance. Students are not required to participate in the auditions festival, however it is another great place to start if you are interested in competing.

Other Opportunities for Evaluation and Competition

There are numerous other opportunities for evaluation and competition throughout the year, including virtual, regional, national, and international opportunities. More information is available concerning these and any other opportunities for evaluation and performance. If this is something that interests you, please don't hesitate to reach out to us and/or discuss it with your teacher.



Instrument Recommendations

Full Digital Keyboard

These keyboards have 88 keys, the standard size of all full pianos. We recommend students start with these instruments, if at all possible. They range between \$200-800.

- Alesis Concert 88-key digital piano
- Alesis Recital pro 88-key Hammer action digital piano
- Yamaha P-45
- Yamaha P-125
- Casio Privia PX-S1000
- Yamaha YDP-103 (this is the one we use in our studios)

Acoustic Pianos

These are the standard for live performances and practice of more advanced students (RCM level 5 and above). There are two types of acoustic instruments: upright and grand. These instruments vary largely in price and in quality. A piano dealer (Piano Pros, Willis Music, Seta Music) would be qualified to point you in the right direction when purchasing one of these instruments. Acoustic pianos require periodic maintenance by a piano tuner. The cost of an acoustic piano could range from nearly free to thousands of dollars, depending on where the instrument is purchased and its condition, size, and manufacturer. Facebook Marketplace or Craigslist **can** be a good resource for affordable acoustic options.

Piano Dealers

The contact information for each of these locations can easily be found online, and all of them are trusted local sources for selecting digital and/or acoustic instruments.

- Piano Pros - Local store in Tri-County area. Acoustic instruments - www.pianopros.biz
- BHA Piano Center - Local store in Dayton, OH. Acoustic and Digital Instruments - www.pianocenter.com
- Seta Music - Local store in Montgomery. Acoustic instruments - www.setamusic.com
- Willis Music - Multiple chain stores located in Mason and Kenwood. Both acoustic and digital instruments - www.willismusic.com/kenwood-location
- Guitar Center - Chain store in Tri-County and online. Digital instruments - www.guitarcenter.com
- Sam Ash - Chain store in Tri-County and online. Digital instruments - www.samash.com
- Sweetwater - Online store. Digital instruments - www.sweetwater.com
- Amazon - Digital instruments - amazon.com
- MusiciansFriend.com - offers a good range of digital pianos with monthly payment options.
- AmericanMusical.com - also offers monthly payment options.



Who We Are

Our faculty is comprised of highly qualified and degreed professionals, who have many years of experience in working with students of all ages, levels, and abilities. We are dedicated to helping each and every student succeed. Our current faculty includes Rodrigo and Shannon Vasconcelos, co-owners and instructors of group and private lessons; Lana Smith, private lesson instructor; Anna Greco, group and private lesson instructor; Elizabeth Larson, group and private lesson instructor; and David Michel, private lesson instructor. Specific information regarding each member of our faculty may be found on our website.



As both a business and individuals, we believe in giving back as much as possible, which is why you may see announcements about opportunities to help the community throughout the year in our newsletters. One of the causes closest to our hearts is supporting local foster care and at risk children and youth. We are also involved with providing housing for families in rural areas of Brazil, as well as supporting local food pantries and anti-trafficking groups for women and children in both the Philippines and Zimbabwe. If you are ever interested in knowing more about the organizations we support, we would be happy to share with you!



What to Expect

Maybe you've taken lessons in the past and you already know what to expect, or maybe no one in your family has ever taken lessons and you have no idea what to expect... either way, here are some things to consider when taking lessons:

- Expect to have fun, make new friends, and to learn not only musicianship skills, but also essential life skills like discipline, perseverance, problem-solving, and time management.
- It takes most students 6-12 months to complete one level of any given curriculum, depending on individual abilities and student commitment.
- Most students remain excited after they begin lessons, but after a few months some students will experience a brief period of frustration or a feeling that "it's too hard" for them. This is a normal reaction, and if your student experiences this sensation, please discuss it with their teacher. Teachers have helped countless students through this and they can help you!
- Students who are coming to multiple classes per week will not need to devote as much time to at-home practice, however students who attend only one class or lesson per week should be prepared to spend time at home practicing if they wish to see steady progress.
- Group students will have a "progress tracker" placed inside the front cover of their book. On this sheet, you will be able to see what students have already mastered and what they are currently working on for their level. This is an important way for teachers, parents, and students to keep track of what to practice and how students are progressing at any given time. Private students might use progress trackers, or teachers may prefer to write assignments in a notebook or directly in the book the student is using.
- Piano Players sends out monthly and/or bi-monthly newsletters through email and text. These newsletters contain studio announcements and important information about upcoming events. Please take the time to read through them each month.
- The practice section of our website can be a highly useful support tool. There, you will be able to practice note reading, ear training, and rhythm exercises, and you will also have access to various repertoire tutorials and recordings. If you need help navigating the website, please let your teacher know.
- If you have access to an iPad, you will also have complimentary full at-home access to PianoMaestro, which is a useful piano learning app that nearly every student falls in love with. When your student begins lessons, they will receive user information for PianoMaestro, and an invitation email will be sent, allowing them to access the features of the app from home. This email will come from "JoyTunes" and sometimes is filtered as spam or junk mail, so you may need to check to make sure you've received it.



