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# Piano & Keyboard

ALL-IN-ONE

for  
**dummies**<sup>®</sup>  
A Wiley Brand



**6**  
**Books**  
in one!

Holly Day  
Jerry Kovarsky  
Blake Neely  
David Pearl  
Michael Pilhofer





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by Holly Day, Jerry Kovarsky, Blake Neely,  
David Pearl, and Michael Pilhofer

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## Piano & Keyboard All-in-One For Dummies®

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# Introduction

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**W**elcome to *Piano & Keyboard All-In-One For Dummies!* You hold in your hands a well-rounded compendium of tips and advice about playing piano and other keyboard instruments, including electronic keyboards.

If you've never seen or put your hands on a piano or keyboard, no problem. This book starts at the very beginning and walks you through everything you need to know to tame that beast and make it sing sweet music. You'll also have fun along the way. That's the whole idea.

Maybe you have a little experience — like, say, maybe you were “encouraged” to take piano lessons as a youngster but are just now actually becoming interested in playing as an adult. Or maybe you poke around on your grandma's upright, or you got a Casio keyboard for your last birthday, and you want to start taking your playing a little more seriously. You too are in the right place. Or perhaps you're not bad on piano but are thinking of digging in to your wallet to buy a fancy new synthesizer or arranger keyboard, but aren't sure you can deal with the complicated-looking technology. This book can help you, too.

Basically, there's a whole lot here for anyone interested in playing piano or keyboards or taking their playing to the next level.

## About This Book

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*Piano & Keyboard All-In-One For Dummies* covers a wide range of topics, ranging all the way from what a quarter note is and how to find middle C, to breaking down the 12-bar blues structure, to hooking your keyboard up to your music player so you can jam out to your favorite tunes on headphones.

The chapters in Book 1 focus on getting to know the instrument — how to find a good, affordable one, what to look for, how to maintain it, and basically how it works and the best ways to play it. Book 2 turns to the fundamentals of music itself, with chapters covering how music breaks down into notes and rests, how

to read sheet music, and how to keep up with beats and rhythm. Book 3 brings all that together and introduces scales, melodies, harmonies, keys and key signatures, and chords.

Book 4 starts getting into more fancy stuff, like how to add flair to your playing, how to turn your left hand into your favorite accompanist, and what defines different classical and pop music forms. It also offers great tips on playing all kinds of music on piano and keyboard. Book 5 is all about practice. As with anything, playing piano and keyboard do require dedication and repetition — it is, after all, the way to Carnegie Hall — but these chapters try to keep things as fun as possible while refining your skills. Book 6 is all about electronic keyboards, how to choose one, how to find out what it can do and get the most out of it, and how to take advantage of its more complex features. The book finishes with a guide to the free online music tracks that are sprinkled throughout this book. Listening to these tracks can speed up your understanding and help sharpen your playing skills.

The book also contains an absolute ton of music. You'll have plenty — *plenty* — of songs and snippets to play and have fun with. And a lot of it is available for listening on the free online audio tracks.

Within this book, you may note that some web addresses break across two lines of text. If you're reading this book in print and want to visit one of these web pages, simply key in the web address exactly as it's noted in the text, pretending as though the line break doesn't exist. If you're reading this as an e-book, you've got it easy — just tap the web address to be taken directly to the web page.

## Foolish Assumptions

This book makes a few assumptions about you, the reader:

- » You like to listen to music and especially like the sound of piano and keyboard.
- » When you hear someone play the piano, it sparks something in you. You say to yourself something like, "I wish I could play like that."
- » You haven't had any piano lessons before, or you had some lessons at some point in your life, but you basically see yourself as a beginner. Either way, you'd like it all laid out and explained in a simple and easy-to-understand way.
- » You have a piano or keyboard but aren't playing it as much as you want to and need some help getting to the music making.



- » You don't have a piano or keyboard but are considering a purchase and would welcome help with the whole process. Most likely, your keyboard will have at least 25 black and white keys, may or may not plug into the wall, and will cost you as much as you're willing to part with.
- » You like to discover things for yourself.

If any of these assumptions is true for you, you're reading the right book.

## Icons Used in This Book

As you go through the chapters of this book, you'll find the following friendly icons scattered here and there. They're designed to draw your attention to different kinds of information, from helpful guidance to pleasant diversions.



REMEMBER

Be sure to pay attention to anything that has this icon attached. As you may guess, it's something important that you shouldn't forget.



TIP

When you see this icon, you know that some handy-dandy information follows that can save you time, money, energy, and more.



TECHNICAL  
STUFF

There's an occasional step into the swamp of technical jargon or complex discussion, and this icon gives you fair warning. It's not essential stuff. Feel free to flip past it if you just don't care.



WARNING

Pay attention to text featuring this icon. It can help you avoid mistakes and problems.



PLAY THIS

The audio examples that appear throughout the text bring a lot of the music in this book to life. When you see this icon, it means you can find an online audio track related to what you're reading about. You can find these tracks and clips at [www.dummies.com/go/pianokeyboardaio](http://www.dummies.com/go/pianokeyboardaio).

# Beyond the Book

In addition to the book content, you can find a free online Cheat Sheet that includes advice on building scales, modulating to a new key, achieving the right posture for playing, and getting to know the different types of electronic keyboards. Go to [www.dummies.com/cheatsheet/pianokeyboardaio](http://www.dummies.com/cheatsheet/pianokeyboardaio) to access this handy reference material, and then print it out and keep it handy.

You can also access additional free articles that cover information that simply couldn't fit into the book. You'll find information on using fake books to expand your repertoire, gigging with others, implementing syncopation, and checking out practice exercises by some great composers. Check them out at [www.dummies.com/extras/pianokeyboardaio](http://www.dummies.com/extras/pianokeyboardaio).

Finally, [www.dummies.com/go/pianokeyboardaio](http://www.dummies.com/go/pianokeyboardaio) is home to the more than 150 audio tracks that accompany this book. Head there to listen to notes, scales, chords, songs, exercises, demonstrations of the sounds of instruments and various keyboard features, and much more.

## Where to Go from Here

The book is organized into parts containing chapters that are grouped according to broad, related topics. But you sure don't have to read it from front to back — or in any particular order. The idea is that you can skim through the table of contents and pick and choose whatever's interesting to you, based on where you are currently in your musical journey. Then go directly to that section and get cracking.

Still, if you really want some tips about where to begin, here are a few: If you've never touched a piano before, definitely start with Book 1. If looking at printed music gives you heart palpitations, you really should think about heading to Book 2. If you're okay on the very basics, try Book 3, where you gain knowledge of important piano-playing fundamentals and techniques. If you're not too bad at playing but would like to dig deeper into some particular styles, like rock, country, or jazz, head to Book 4. If you're pretty good but could use some terrific warmups to get your fingers even more limber (limberer?), try Book 5. And if you've got your hot little hands on a smokin' new keyboard or synthesizer and want to delve into its possibilities, head on over to Book 6.

Bottom line: Every person's musical journey is unique. Wherever you start — or end up — the important thing is to have fun (and keep playing!).

# 1

**Piano &  
Keyboard 101**

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#### IN THIS CHAPTER

- » Getting acquainted with the piano and music
- » Discovering what you may already know about playing piano
- » Grasping the basic attributes of a keyboard
- » Understanding the benefits of reading music
- » Access the audio track at [www.dummies.com/go/pianokeyboardaio/](http://www.dummies.com/go/pianokeyboardaio/)

## Chapter **1**

# Warming Up to the Piano and Keyboard

**T**he piano remains a very popular instrument, with the number of people who love the piano growing and its popularity spreading throughout the world. Even as the piano is treasured for its quality as an instrument, it also adapts itself to the changing times through technological advances.

The first half of this chapter helps you understand what makes the piano so unique and what's involved in learning to play it. You may find out that you know a lot more about music than you thought you did, even if you're a beginner. Beyond the familiar black and white keys, though, keyboards can be wildly different instruments, and looking at the front panels may not give you much of a clue as to what's inside. The second half of this chapter gives you an overview of what keyboards are and just what you can do with them.

# What's So Special About the Piano?

Playing the piano involves the following fundamental musical tasks:

- » Playing different pitches and melodies
- » Controlling the attack and release of a note
- » Playing different dynamics (relative loudness and softness)

But playing the piano is different from playing other instruments in some important respects, and the piano has several attributes that make it an ideal tool for learning and understanding music.

## Advantages to playing the piano

The piano occupies a central position in the world of music. It's the gold standard of musical instruments, utilized by composers and arrangers and featured routinely in nearly all musical styles, in chamber groups, rock bands, and jazz trios. (Okay, not marching bands.) The following characteristics make the piano a unique instrument — in a great way:

- » **You can play many different notes at the same time.** The fancy word for this is *polyphonic*.
- » **It's a complete solo instrument.** You can play a complete song or other musical work without additional accompaniment or other help from your musical friends. That makes the piano satisfying and self-sufficient.
- » **It's the perfect accompaniment.** You can accompany a singer, a choir, a dance class, a silent movie, your own opera, or your own soap opera, not to mention any other instrument.
- » **You can play almost anything on the piano.** The piano has an unmatched repertoire of music. You name it, there's piano music for it.

## Advantages to learning music at the piano

The piano is an ideal instrument for learning all about music, starting with the design of the keyboard. The notes are laid out before your very eyes in a clear, organized, and orderly way. Understanding and playing musical pitches is quite easy because the keyboard presents a clear visual image for your brain to process the way musical notes go up (higher pitch), down (lower pitch), or stay the same.