

# **Piano Partners – Teacher’s Guide 1**

**for Children’s Book 1 (Music Makers: Piano 1)**

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***Piano Partners*** (an introductory method for young beginners) includes the following:

*Teacher's Guide 1* (Weeks 1-15)

*Children's Book 1*, with *Listening Recording 1* & *Practice Recording 1* (Weeks 1-15)

*Teacher's Guide 2* (Weeks 16-30)

*Children's Book 2*, with *Listening Recording 2* & *Practice Recording 2* (Weeks 16-30)

Units 3-6 for Teachers and Children will follow.

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<i>Family Music</i> for Toddlers	15 months to 3 ½ years
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<i>Music Makers: At Home in the World</i>	4 to 8 years
<i>Music Makers: Around the World</i>	from age 5
<i>Music Makers: At the Keyboard</i>	from age 6
Piano Partners	from age 5 ½

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## Features of the Publication

**Piano Partners**, an introductory method for 2 young beginners from age 5 ½, is based on an aural approach to music literacy that provides a natural pathway to reading. This method features a variety of activities which help lay the foundation for success at the piano and independent musicianship.

**Teacher's Guide 1**, covering the first children's book **Music Makers: Piano 1**, presents a clear step-by-step approach to learning to play the piano. The goal is to give the children a comprehensive music foundation and lead them to true music literacy. The children's musical development is enhanced through multifaceted activities that include:

- a collection of songs with associated activities to establish a piano repertoire
- movement and drumming activities to establish the body as a rhythmic instrument
- activities to establish repertoire, technique, musicianship, and a love for playing the piano.

### Lesson Suggestions

Lessons present an exciting approach which leads to playing songs with 2 hands within the first few weeks, together with a balance of singing, moving, drumming, writing, and reading activities. This approach to music literacy is carefully planned and sequenced to meet the developmental needs of young beginners. *Teacher's Guide, Book 1* contains 15 lessons (45 minutes), material intended for 4-5 months of study. Pacing will depend on the age and experience of the child. Younger beginners may need more than 1 week on a lesson.

### Parents & Practice

Parents play a vital role in establishing good practice habits at home. Suggestions for including parents in the music education process are outlined in this chapter.

### Companion Materials

- **Music Makers: Piano 1**, the first children's book: features songs to play and writing, reading, composing activities.
- **Notation Games, Set 1**: multiple games to involve the children actively again and again
- **Listening Recording 1**: includes songs, drumming and dancing activities, piano repertoire, and orchestral selections.
- **Practice Recording 1**: activities to reinforce the practice process for all songs and notation games.

## Foreword

Children are most successful in playing the piano when they are prepared with a strong aural and movement foundation and possess a desire to meet the challenges which playing an instrument offers. *Piano Partners* provides such a foundation for young beginners by giving them a rich song and listening repertoire. It also serves as a bridge between a solid early childhood music and movement experience and successful piano study.

*Piano Partners* includes guidelines so teachers are able to establish a music and movement foundation for young children who are encountering their first formal musical experience — regardless of their prior experience. The method is appropriate for children without any musical background, but, at the same time, builds on the competencies children have gained in the **Musikgarten Music and Movement Series** programs for children ages birth to 7 or from another early childhood music experience

### Playing the Piano

The goal of *Piano Partners* is to lead children to fall in love with playing the piano — and to help them develop a true music literacy, which enables them to constantly grow in all aspects of playing their chosen instrument. This goal is achieved through carefully sequenced pathways and developmentally appropriate materials, all within the delightful framework of making music with a partner.

Literacy, although defined concisely by Webster as the ability to read and write, implies much more than the manipulation of letters and words. When we speak of a literate person, we imply that s/he can take meaning from and give meaning to what is read and written. Music literacy applied specifically to piano playing is much more than reading note names and finding the right keys. Giving meaning to notes, phrases, and styles (as well as improvising and composing with them) is the hallmark of a deep relationship with the aural and written art of music and is the manifestation of true music literacy.

The progression to music literacy is the same as that of language literacy: listen — speak (sing and play) — write — read. Along this pathway, it is the children's desire to communicate that motivates and urges them onward to further development.

*Piano Partners* follows this body-to-mind, ear-to-eye progression to playing an instrument. The children must first develop a loved repertoire of songs and patterns (the content which seeks to be expressed) as well as the physical control to be able to play (the body preparation). Once the ear and body are prepared, they are ready to produce music on an instrument as well as to write and read traditional music notation.

The children learn to read solidly and to play with rhythmic integrity. This is achieved by a carefully constructed balance of playing beloved songs by rote and playing songs and pieces with traditional notation.

This aural approach to music literacy becomes the foundation which makes the transition to the world of music notation a delightful discovery — making what is known both visible and audible. By unlocking the code of music notation (that is, seeing a piece of music and hearing its sounds in one's head) children enter a dimension of cognitive functioning not previously experienced.

This aural-to-visual method of literacy allows children to understand and appreciate music in terms of its tonality, meter, and style, while further refining their ability to listen. When such learning is combined with piano skills, children can then play and understand their favorite songs. What a contrast this is to the mechanical drills and rote learning that were so common in piano pedagogy of the past!

### **A Child's Delight: The Company of Other Children**

*Piano Partners* capitalizes on the child's love for making music with other children. Piano lessons have in the past often been a lonely experience, one child with one adult, and at home one child practicing alone. Sharing lessons with a partner changes the environment fundamentally! The children learn from each other, play with each other, and simply enjoy the lesson much more.

Children delight in being with and in making music with others. Making music requires self-discipline as well as multi-track listening and functioning. Moreover, the deep concentration and total absorption which comes from working together to produce a desired effect fills the child-musician with satisfaction and inspires refined listening and social awareness. The joy in such joint productions enhances learning for each child, while teaching a valuable lesson in cooperative learning. *It is the children's joy and understanding that will keep them involved in making music long after the lessons stop.*

### **The Second Stage of Child Development**

The 6- to 9-year-old child has entered a new phase of physical and cognitive development and is eager to face fresh challenges. The aptitude for refined movement needed for instrumental playing is present, although achievement of a graceful, rhythmic body may not be if there have been few appropriate musical experiences in early childhood.

Sensory-motor functions of the first six years are now well-integrated and serve as a pre-requisite for abstract learning. Verbal language to communicate ideas and feeling is likewise highly developed, and the child is now interested in symbols, patterns, and codes to be deciphered. The young child's acceptance of simply naming an object now turns to the sharper scrutiny of an inquiring mind that seeks to know how and why.

### ***Piano Partners***

*Piano Partners* offers joyful opportunities for building piano skills — along with singing, dancing, drumming, ensemble playing, as well as writing and reading music. After completing the three-year program, students are equipped with the aural, music-reading, and technical skills to be successful in continued partner or private study. Many students will go on to private piano lessons. What is learned in *Piano Partners* will serve the children well in all future music-making activities.

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The authors thank Audrey Sillick for sharing her deep understanding of children and acknowledge the profound influence of Dr. Edwin E. Gordon, whose research, teaching and writing about music learning theory is the basis of our pathway to music literacy.

## LET'S BEGIN

“Let’s Begin!” At the beginning of each lesson, the children get ready to make music, singing new songs and favorite songs, which they have heard on the Listening Recording. The more the children sing, the more they want to sing. The better they know the songs, the greater the pleasure they derive from singing songs together with their partner, and then playing them on the piano. This is the foundation for success at the piano — **wanting** to play the song and **being able** to play the song because it is so familiar.

Singing songs is an important part of every lesson since this allows the children to begin their piano experience by playing familiar songs. A primary goal of *Piano Partners* is to fill the children’s heads with this repertoire of songs so the children’s playing is generated from what has already been heard and sung.

In addition to learning the song repertoire, we warm-up rhythmically and work on beat, meter, tonality, and patterns. These elements are key to success in making music and are advanced through activities such as:

- Tapping the beat while singing — to foster beat competence
- Adding a simple body movement, such as rocking from side to side — to lay the foundation for understanding meter
- Inviting the children to sing the resting tone at the conclusion of each song — to create an understanding of tonality
- Listening to and echoing patterns — to provide initial steps to music literacy.

All aspects of making music influence each other – vocal quality, grace of movement, how we play. Teachers, too, listen to their own voices in order to develop a vocal quality that nourishes the children’s sensitivity. Monitor the following as you sing with the children:

- Pitch the songs in the suggested range.
- Sing clearly and lightly, without dominating the singing.
- Model good singing posture, even if sitting on the floor.
- Model proper breathing and take a good breath before singing.
- Listen carefully for intonation so that your song model is tonally exact.
- Remember that singing offers an excellent opportunity for modeling expressive musicianship.
- Good singing leads to natural phrasing.

The song repertoire is varied and includes songs in major and minor tonalities as well as in duple and triple meters. Most songs are taken from folk literature; care has been given to include songs from many countries as well as songs which express a variety of emotions and moods. The songs which the children sing provide the foundational repertoire for pieces to be played later on the piano.

### Tips for ‘Let’s Begin’

- Sing the song together, tapping the beat. If it is a new song for the children, spend time learning the song together.
- Be sure to include patterns as indicated. Patterns are initially sung/chanted on neutral syllables (*bam, ba*), then adding tonal and rhythm language.

- At the end of each song, sing the *resting tone* for the song identifying the *resting tone* as *do* or *la* and ask the children to echo you. After a song is familiar, the children will be able to supply the resting tone independently. You should correct them as necessary either in terms of intonation or supplying the proper solfeggio syllable.

## Piano Time

### Technique and Warm-ups

Good posture, proper arm and hand position, and finger technique are vital to instrumental education. For lifelong joy and success in playing an instrument, good habits must be established in initial sessions and then be observed continually and reviewed frequently.

Start by preparing the body — specifically, posture, arm and hand position — away from the instrument, or sitting at the piano with the cover closed. It is easier for children to concentrate on their bodies without the temptation of sounding the keys. When teacher, child, and parent work to establish good routines early on, the necessity of trying to correct ingrained habits (always a difficult task) is eliminated.

- **Height of the Bench:** There should be a proper alignment with the keys so the hands and arms will be in a straight line over the keys. A cushion or pillow might be needed for a young child to reach this desired position. Sitting at the proper height can also present a problem if the feet do not yet touch the floor. If you do not have an adjustable piano stool, consider putting something under the child's feet to raise them to a correct level so the legs are not dangling.
- **Posture:** Model the proper posture for sitting at the piano. Show the children "where" to sit on the bench and how far to sit from the keys. They should sit in the middle, not too far back, and lean slightly forward over the keys without slouching. If this is done properly, the child's hands, forearms, and wrists will be in a straight line. Reminder: this will need to be reviewed often.
- **Hand Position:** Most piano teachers have their own way of helping the beginner visualize how to curve the fingers for a proper hand position for playing. Some ask the child to have a mental image, as if holding a ball. Whatever terminology and mind picture you use, remember it should be easily understood by the child. Keep the concepts simple and in relation to control and coordination of the fingers and arms.

Each 'Piano Time' session begins with a warm-up activity.

- Warm-ups are initially played hands separately, then with hands together when the child has the facility to do so. Developing facility in the right and left hands equally is important.
- Students also sing the solfeggio while playing the warm-ups.
- The warm-up helps establish hand position and tonality.
- Major and minor three-note broken tonic chords, five-finger exercises, block and broken tonic and dominant chords comprise warm-up exercises in the first book.

The teaching of technique, proper hand position, and posture can, and should be, an integral part of the piano lesson. *Piano Partners* does not stress isolated technique exercises; the



LESSON 1	FOCUS
Let's Begin	Learn songs in major, minor, duple, and triple. Echo patterns in major, minor, duple, and triple. Explore steady beat movements.
Piano Time	Finger numbers, black key groupings of 2 and 3, high/middle/low. Locate the note <i>D</i> and the 5 <sup>th</sup> above. Sing a song, accompanying yourself on the piano with the open 5 <sup>th</sup> .
Rhythm/Drumming	Drum with a steady beat. Introduce a rhythm language for duple patterns.

<b>MATERIALS</b>	Drums, Keyboard Geography Game
<b>DISTRIBUTE</b>	Keyboard Geography Game cards (black keys, high/middle/low) <i>Debka Hora</i> Song Card

### Let's Begin

Suggestion: accompany each song once on the piano. Sing again a cappella, tapping the beat on the knees or the piano.  
OR do this entire section away from the piano, to heighten the excitement when the children explore the piano in the next section.

#### • *Mouse, Mousie*

- Sing the song, tapping the beat with both hands lightly on the knees. At the end of the song, ask the children to sing the *resting tone (tonic)*. Identify it as *Do*.

#### **Major melody patterns.**

- Sing and echo for a few weeks on the neutral syllable *bam*. Repeat the patterns using solfeggio.
- Keep singing the patterns on *bam* until each child can sing them tunefully. Repeat with language to prepare the children for playing melodies.

• ***Listen for Bells.*** Sing as above, keeping the beat. Sway from side to side on the first beat of each measure.

#### • *See the Pony*

- Sing as above, keeping the beat. Tap on beats 1 and 4.

#### **Triple rhythm patterns**

- Chant and echo on *ba*. All tap the macro beat lightly on their knees.
- 

### Piano Time

#### • *Stars Shining*

- Teacher and children all face in the same direction.
- Number the fingers on the right hand, 1 to 5. Children and teacher repeat together. Number the fingers on the left hand.
- Sing the song together. Slow the tempo for the middle section, allowing the children time to locate and touch the proper finger. Repeat with the other hand.
- Place one hand on your knee or the key cover, modeling good hand position. Invite the children to copy. Sing the song again, "playing" with the appropriate finger in the middle section. Repeat with the other hand.
- Sing the song again, touching the thumbs on number 1, the forefingers on number 2, etc.
- Extend the finger number identification game with directions such as "Show me finger number 2 on this hand," etc. Invite each of the children to lead the game.

- **Meet the Piano**

- Show the children how to hold down fingers 4 and 5 with the thumb and allow fingers 2 and 3 to extend in a natural relaxed curve. Practice a hopping motion with these two fingers on one hand, and then on the other.
- Show the children how to locate and play clusters of two black keys with these fingers.
- Invite the children to play clusters of two black keys. Remind them to try with both hands.
- Repeat the procedure for playing clusters of three black keys. Practice the hand position for three fingers: extend fingers 2, 3 and 4 in a natural relaxed curve, using the thumb to hold down finger 5. Locate and play the 3-black-key clusters.

- **Keyboard Geography Game (2 cards: black key groupings; 3 cards: high/middle/low)**

- Place the black key groupings in one pile, the high/middle/low cards in another pile. Shuffle the cards in each pile.
- Choose one card from each pile. Read the cards, asking the children to play accordingly, for example, 2 black keys, high.
- Play the game for a few minutes.

## Rhythm and Drumming

- **Renaissance Dance** (L1, No. 3)

- Drum to the recording, asking the children to follow the teacher's lead.
- Begin playing the micro beat with both hands. Switch to alternating hands as the children are able.
- When the beat is firmly established, accent the first beat of each phrase by playing in the center of the drum. When all are successful, play only the accented first beat; rest for the remainder of the phrase.
- Alternate between playing loudly, using your whole hand, and quietly, playing with just one finger from each hand. Do each for a full phrase, to encourage the children's awareness of phrase length.
- **Duple rhythm patterns.**
- Practice the patterns on *ba*. Repeat the echo patterns with all playing the beat on the drums. Repeat again, adding rhythm language.

## Piano Time

- **Debka Hora** (L1, No. 1)

- Sing and dance.
  - o Measures 1-4: Stand in a circle holding hands. Walk around the circle while singing.
  - o (Alternative for a small space: walk on the spot.)
  - o Measures 5-8: Clap the beat.
- Repeat the song several times. Make up a new motion each time for measures 5-8, such as tapping the thighs, tapping your head, etc.
- **Minor melody patterns.** Sing and echo.
- Sing and echo on *bam*.

**At the piano**

- Show the children how to locate the note *D*. Children find and play *D*s on the piano.
- Sing and echo the following pattern on *bam*.



- Play and sing the first note. Demonstrate, by trial and error, how to find the second pitch on the piano. Ask the children to find *D*, and then to aurally determine the location of the other note in the pattern.
- All play the open 5<sup>th</sup> several times.
- All sing the song, accompanying themselves on the open 5<sup>th</sup>.

**Parent Time**

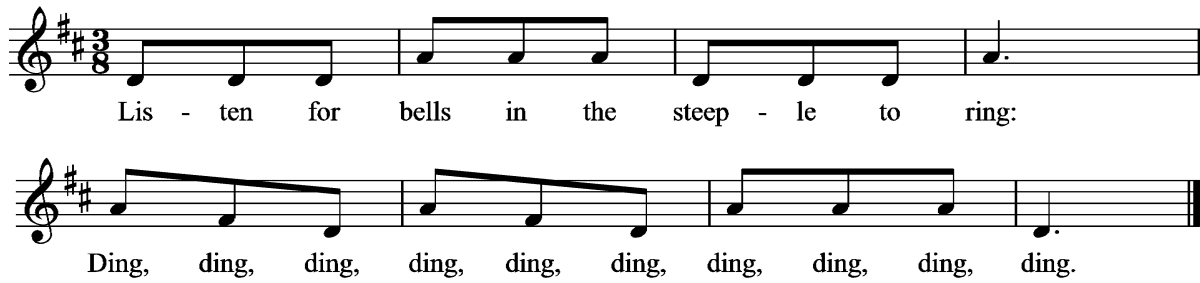
- Keyboard Geography Game: play the game again with the parents.
- *Debka Hora*: sing the song. Dance together if space allows.
- *Debka Hora, Mouse, Mousie, Listen for Bells, Stars Shining*: all sing the songs, with the partners accompanying on the piano with the open 5<sup>th</sup> on *D*.
- Review and mark AT HOME assignments.

AT HOME	Assignments
<b>Piano</b>	Keyboard Geography Game, play 2s and 3s using the cards for black keys and high/middle/low.
	<i>Debka Hora, Mouse Mousie, Listen for Bells, Stars Shining</i> : sing, accompanying yourself with the open 5 <sup>th</sup> on <i>D</i> . Play with each hand separately, then, two hands together.
<b>Listen</b>	Listen to and sing often with Listening Recording 1.
	<i>Renaissance Dance</i> (L1, No. 3), drum with the recording.
<b>Write/Read</b>	pp. 6/7 (finger numbers), 8/9 (2s and 3s), and p. 10 (locate <i>D</i> ).

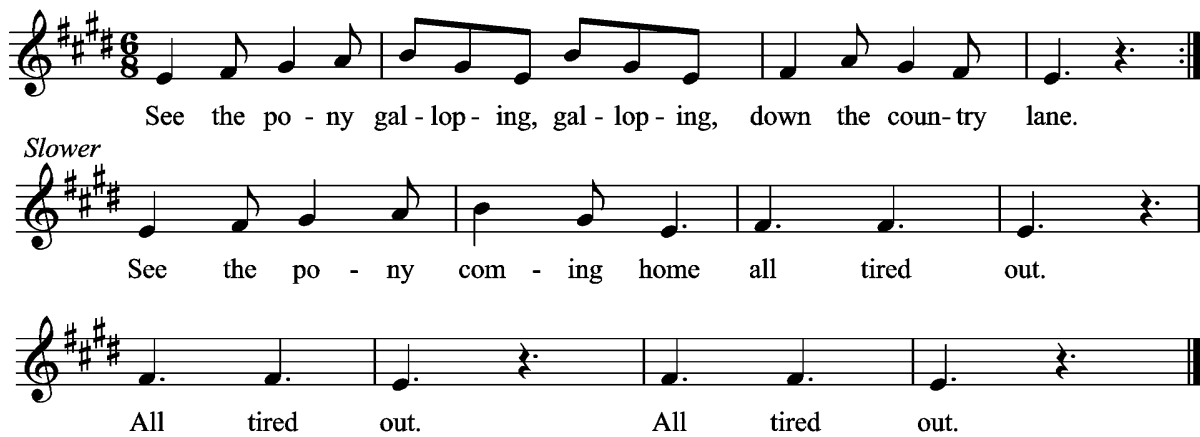
**Lesson Activities and Information*****Mouse, Mousie***

Mouse, mous - ie in the hous - ie, hur - ry, hur - ry, do.

Or the kit - ty in the hous - ie will be chas - ing you. Run!

**Listen for Bells**


Lis - ten for bells in the steep - le to ring:  
Ding, ding, ding, ding, ding, ding, ding, ding, ding, ding.

**See the Pony**


See the po - ny gal - lop - ing, gal - lop - ing, down the coun - try lane.  
*Slower*  
See the po - ny com - ing home all tired out.  
All tired out. All tired out.

**Stars Shining**


Stars shin - ing! Stars shin - ing! Num - ber, num - ber one, num - ber  
two, num - ber three, num - ber four, num - ber five, Stars  
shin - ing by and by, by and by, Oh, yes, by and by.

**Debka Hora**


La la la la la la la la la la la la la la la.



Sing lit - tle chil - dren, sing with me. I love you and you love me.

**Major Melody Patterns**


Sol mi do. Do mi sol. Sol do. Do do do. Do sol. Sol sol do.

**Triple Rhythm Patterns**


ba ba ba ba ba ba ba ba ba ba ba ba ba ba ba  
du da di du du da di du da di du di du di du du

**Duple Rhythm Patterns**

1. 

ba ba ba ba ba ba ba ba ba ba ba ba  
du du du de du du de du de du du de

**Minor Melody Patterns**


La do mi. Mi do la. Ti do re. Do ti la.