

# Get Set! Piano Tutor Book 1

Teacher's Guide

## Introduction

This short teacher guide includes some tips to aid teachers using *Get Set! Piano Tutor Book 1* and *Get Set! Piano Pieces Book 1* and the accompanying website resources.

## Posture

One of the most important things when teaching beginners is to ensure they are aware of good posture at the piano. **Good posture.... [sentence about how posture affects technique].** A fully illustrated posture page is included at the beginning of the book (page 2) for the student to refer to both with their teacher and at home with a parent. It is easy for the student to forget about good sitting and hand positions, so we have included reminders throughout the book to prompt them.



## Pulse

The pulse, or beat, can be a tricky concept for students and it is one that needs to be continually reinforced. More often than not, poor rhythm is due to difficulty in maintaining a pulse rather than understanding different rhythm values. The student is encouraged to mark the pulse in fun, multi-sensory ways right from the start of the book by tapping, clapping, clicking or walking as their teacher plays pieces in different time signatures.

## Rhythm

Once pulse is established, the student is ready to embark on rhythm. Look out for the Rhythm Time activities throughout the book that consolidate understanding of new note values through clapping activities and composing new tunes using a rhythm that has just been learnt. These activities prepare the student to use the new rhythms in the pieces that follow. Many of the pieces also contain lyrics that help to aid rhythmic development.

It is also important for students to realise the difference between pulse and rhythm. You can illustrate this difference by using the pulse activities on page 16 of the Tutor book. Once the student has learnt to clap the heartbeats for the 2/4 and 4/4 time signatures, introduce a simple rhythm while the student continues to clap the pulse and then discuss the difference between the two.



## Pitch

Recognising high and low notes can be a tricky concept for a child. We've included a number of things to help with this, eg the activities that accompany pieces such as *Bounce high, bounce low* (page 10) or *High lo chickalo* (page 19). We've also given the student opportunities to exploit the full range of the piano by inviting them to move away from the original notation by playing the pieces on the same notes but in different octaves, eg *Misses White* (page 11).

## Note reading

*Get Set! Piano Tutor Book 1* introduces the grand staff from the start so that the student quickly becomes familiar with both bass and treble clefs and is therefore equally comfortable using both. This method was recommended by the famous piano teacher, the late Mrs J. Spencer Curwen (author of *Mrs. Curwen's Pianoforte Method*), and is an approach that still has strong support amongst many teachers today.

The Tutor book begins by introducing D in the treble clef and B in the bass clef. These two notes are easy to remember; one sits at the bottom of the treble stave and the other on sits on top of the bass stave. This minor third interval has been nicknamed the 'mother's call' as it is easy on the ear. Many simple tunes can be enjoyed just using these two notes, meaning that the student can experience playing musical pieces right from the start.

Note reading is a complex process and needs lots of practice. The Find, say and play activities and note-reading quizzes at regular intervals throughout the book are invaluable materials for consolidating note-learning skills. Look out for additional note-reading quizzes on the *Get Set!* website too.

## Technique

The late Joan Last (music educator, author and composer), did much work to encourage a sound technical foundation within her teaching books and materials. She stressed the importance of training the hands and arms into good habits in the early years to allow the student to express themselves musically.



## Technique continued..

We have incorporated technical exercises into both the Tutor and Pieces books, primarily to develop a good *legato* and *staccato* touch, to strengthen fingers, encourage a loose wrist and practise the tricky skill of playing notes together when playing chords.

The scales included in the tutor book are C major similar motion, C major contrary motion and A natural minor. We have chosen the natural minor as many children can instinctively play this. It is also a good foundation for teaching the harmonic and melodic minors in the future. The scales exercises on pages 43 and 44 have been included to encourage correct fingering and also flexibility in the fingers going over and under.

## Aural training

The Listen Up! activities are designed to aid aural skills such as recognising higher and lower pitch, singing from memory, singing with good intonation, recognising and singing the tonic, identifying different articulations and learning and identifying intervals. Playing by ear is another important skill that is introduced in the book. On page 31, for example, the student is asked to play *Snowy days* (a left-hand piece) in the treble clef with their right hand. There are other tunes that can be played by ear, such as *Once a man fell down a well* and many of the folk tunes used at the beginning. All these skills are not only invaluable for the development of general musicianship but are also a key element of aural tests in piano exams.

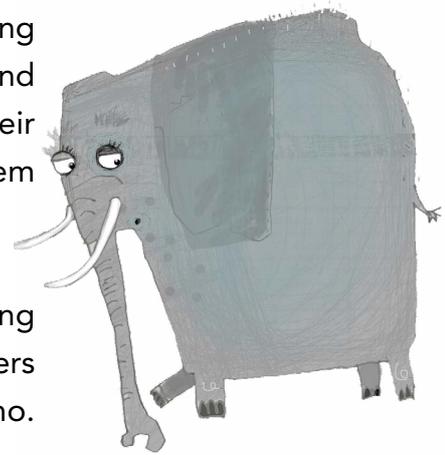
## Music theory

Key elements of music theory have been integrated into the book such as time signatures, key signatures, note and rest values, dynamics, accidentals, tempo markings, articulation, chords, scales and intervals. Regular theory questions and quizzes such as a clef drawing activity (page 7), a dynamics activity (page 11) or a tonic note quiz (page 35) are included throughout the Tutor book. There are also quizzes and crosswords in the Pieces book and additional theory quizzes based on pieces from the Tutor book on the *Get Set!* website to give the student plenty of extra practice.



## Creativity in piano playing

Children love to be creative and they have the whole piano to explore when doing this. *Get Set! Piano* encourages creativity through activities such as composing tunes to go with pictures such as an elephant or fireworks (page 4) which, in turn reinforces the student's understanding of key concepts, in this case high and low notes. On page 9 creativity and music theory are combined when the student is asked to compose their own tune using Bs and Ds and to use the stave provided to help them remember it.



The Rhythm Time activities also provide a starting point for composing tunes. Encourage the student to use notes in the higher and lower registers of the instrument when they do this so that they explore the whole piano.

The title of a piece of music can have a real impact on creative interpretation so it can be useful to talk with your pupils about the titles of the pieces and how they relate to the music.

## Independent learning

*Get Set! Piano* puts learning in the hands of the pupil as we believe that when a child is empowered in this way, they learn lessons that they will remember for life. The Tutor book pages are organised by topic, making it really easy to follow at home as well as in the lesson. There are also plenty of friendly characters such as talking mice to engage the child and provide tips and reminders. The quizzes, activities and questions all encourage the child to learn independently and reinforce the feeling of an adventure in musical learning.

## Multi-sensory teaching

*Get Set! Piano* uses a multi-sensory teaching approach that combines visual, auditory and kinesthetic learning activities. All students have preferred learning styles and by including activities that appeal to a variety of learning styles there is a greater chance of success with all students.

Try to recognise which activities your pupils are most comfortable with and ask them how they prefer to learn so that you can use appropriate activities to suit each student.



## Ensemble playing

Many of the pieces have teacher accompaniments to improve ensemble-playing skills. There are also additional teacher parts available on the *Get Set!* website as well as larger versions of the teacher parts in the book. Playing with others improves listening skills and also helps pulse development as the teacher can help the student maintain a steady beat. Sight-reading skills also benefit as the player is encouraged to keep going.

## Get Set! Piano Pieces and Get Set! website materials

Although *Get Set! Piano Tutor* can be used on its own, it also includes useful cross-references to the Pieces book and the free website materials so that the teacher can easily see where additional, sideward material can be integrated. This extra material is especially useful for younger students or simply for those looking for a fun distraction! The *Get Set!* website includes extra pieces and additional teacher accompaniments, note-finding activities, theory quizzes, certificates, a short teacher guide and videos.



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