

# Self Taught Piano Lessons

## Real-World Application

Items Needed:

- 3 ring binder
- 5 dividers labeled: Assignments, Workbook, Sight Reading, Lists, Sheet Music
- 67 Fun Songs Primer and 67 Fun Songs by Jon Schmidt, links below
- The Complete Pianist Workbooks by Marilee Leishman, (download each level progressively as needed for free at thecompletepianist.com)
- Accelerated Piano Adventures\* for the Older Beginner: Lesson Book 1 and eventually Lesson Book 2 OR any lesson book from the Alfred or Faber Piano Adventures series (It is recommended to complete 67 Fun Songs Primer before adding a lesson book)
- Print out this document and keep it in your binder. You may put the quick reference sheet on the front of your binder, for an easy practice checklist.

\*Once the student has completed 67 Fun Songs Primer, the student may use the Accelerated Piano Adventures for a weekly Lesson Book. The accelerated method is great for the older beginner, but any Lesson books may be used.

### For your Binder

**The Workbook section will contain:** The Complete Pianist Workbook Level 1 by Marilee Leishman (or whichever level suites the student's abilities)

Link: <http://www.thecompletepianist.com/> Cost is FREE, but you will need to create an account on the website before being able to view, download and print the workbooks. There are 6 Beginner workbooks, 5 Intermediate, and 2 Advanced workbooks. Although 3 more advanced levels will be completed in the near future.

### *More Info on The Complete Pianist:*

Because of The Complete Pianist Workbooks, students will not need to purchase technique, ear training, or theory books. All of that, plus more will be covered in these Workbooks. The workbooks insure that each student is getting a well-rounded complete piano education. The student may find that they have a natural ability toward certain aspects of the piano, over others. The Complete Pianist will help increase and find those abilities as well as strengthen the weaknesses.

These Workbooks were developed by Marilee Leishman as a complete system for teaching or self-teaching the piano. The student and/or teacher will go through each section until the student has mastered the concept, moving on to the next workbook level once all the sections are completed.

The Beginner workbooks each include the following sections:

|                                 |                               |
|---------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| Ear Training and Review         | Theory Training and Review    |
| Rhythm Training and Review      | Technique Training and Review |
| Interval Training and Review    | Flashcard Training and Review |
| Composition Training and Review | Teacher Resources             |

\*Levels 1 and 2 also have a Note and Finger Training Section

\*Levels 2 through 6 contain an Chord, Pattern and Improvisation section

**Sight Reading will contain:** two books - Jon Schmidt's 67 Fun Songs Primer and 67 Fun Songs, as well as additional music. You will start with 67 Fun Songs

Link: 67 Fun Songs Primer By Jon Schmidt and Alisha Peterson

[https://thepianoguys.com/shop/67\\_fun\\_songs\\_primer](https://thepianoguys.com/shop/67_fun_songs_primer) cost is \$15.95

Link: 67 Fun Songs By Jon Schmidt

<https://thepianoguys.com/shop/67-fun-songs-digital> cost is \$15.95

Note: If you purchase the downloadable version you can print as many copies as you need directly from your computer. Punch holes in it and put it in your binder. If you purchase the physical book, you will not need this section in your binder.

*More Info on 67 Fun Songs Primer:*

67 Fun Songs breaks down the first 3 weeks of Jon Schmidt's Note-Learning Method (67 Fun Songs) down to the level that a small child can understand. Although it is meant for young beginners, I will go through the book with my older beginners. I find that the older beginners, progress through it quickly, and once they complete it, they have a thorough understanding of the notes on the grand staff. They are then fully prepared to move on to 67 Fun Songs.

*More Info on 67 Fun Songs:*

67 Fun Songs - The revolutionary Jon Schmidt Note-Reading method "How to Note-Read on a Two Year level in Ten Weeks or Less"

Jon and many teachers saw weaknesses with the traditional methods of teaching note-reading. With the help of over twenty years of teaching, Jon has developed an amazing technique for teaching notes that leaves "Every Good Boy Does Fine" in the dust and has them note-reading on a two year level in 10 weeks or less. It is called, "The Jon Schmidt Note-Reading Method" Regarding this revolutionary note-reading method, Piano Pedagogy master, Barbara Shelton emailed the following:

"I have taught piano for many years. I have been frustrated for a long time with the way my students learned the notes. I heard you speak about your method and decided to try it. There was no comparison between those first few students I tried your method on and the students before I tried it...Their sense or understanding of the keyboard is completely different from the previous students. They don't even have to look at the keys. They are set free to play anything, and they progress quickly. They enjoy playing piano. There is no frustration...I think that all of the frustrated teachers need to know this method...Thank you for the great note learning idea. I has helped my teaching immensely."

Barbara Shelton, Master of Piano Pedagogy.

**Lists will contain:**

The list section is a place for the musical student to keep track of everything. They can create a list of songs he/she knows by ear, lists of pieces they've performed or memorized, piano goals or pieces they'd like to learn and any other lists pertinent to the individual. Having the songs written down in one place will be so beneficial in the future, when the student may or may not be able remember past pieces. The student can keep any of those polish songs in a sheet

protector (to keep nice over time) in the Sheet Music section of the binder.

**Sheet Music section:** Place here any loose sheet music, such as polish songs or longer term pieces you are committed to learn or have learned.

Link: <http://www.thecompletepianist.com/> also contains FREE sheet music that you can download at the correct level.

*More Info on Polish Songs:*

Polish songs can be any piece of music that the student will learn at a polished level with correct notes, rhythm, fluency, technique, articulation and dynamics. At first the polish songs will be chosen from 67 Fun Songs. But once the student has learned the anchor notes they will be able to polish songs that are a level or two above their sight reading level. Songs that are slightly above a student's ability to sight read are good for longer term learning, because they are difficult enough to keep interest and push the student to a higher level of playing ability. Even if a song is in another book, it may be a good idea to copy the song and place it in the Sheet Music section. That way, the student will easily be able to find the pieces they have worked so hard on.

### **Real World Application**

Learning an instrument takes times and consistent, diligent effort.

- If you purchase a keyboard, make sure it is full sized, that has a damper pedal, and is touch sensitive
- Find a consistent daily time to practice - this is often the most difficult part for many students. This should be a time when you have about 20-30 minutes of uninterrupted quiet time to devote to piano practice. The time of day will be different for everybody. Also the length of practice will vary based on your level of ability. Your level of success will be greatly determined by the amount of time you put into your practicing, much like anything else.
- Get the consistency going first, even if it's not a very long amount of time, just do it for a little bit each day. Once you have the habit of practicing regularly down, then you can focus more on the quality of the practicing.
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### **What to practice**

**A beginner can start out with 15-20 minutes, and work up to 30-40 minutes of daily practice.**

**Workbook - Time length varies depending on the workbook section - approx.5-10 min.**

- Go through one of the sections of the workbook - You may watch the video explanations for each section of workbooks 1 and 2 here <http://www.thecompletepianist.com/> More videos are being made available every month. For further updated videos on workbooks 3 and above, subscribe to TheCompletePianist Youtube channel.
- It may take a few weeks to complete each section. The Technique section, for example, is one of those sections that will usually take longer than a week to master, especially in

the higher levels.

### **Sight Reading - Sight read slowly and carefully for about 5-10 minutes**

- Start by doing your Sight Reading - Using the 67 Fun Songs Primer and then 67 Fun Songs books, Sight Read some lines, slowly and carefully. Simply press the correct notes. Don't worry about rhythm at this point, just input the correct note into the piano, like a computer keyboard. The point behind this beginning type of sight reading is to train your brain and fingers to play the notes correctly the first time. This accuracy from the beginning will really carry through later on in your ability to sight read and play your music with accurate notes.
- Once you have completed the 67 Fun Songs books, you will Sight Read any music that is one or two levels below your current lesson book ability (a song that takes you about a week to master). You can use a method book lesson series that you did not learn out of, or anything really, that is the right level. At this point, you will want to sight read as best you can with correct rhythm. You can always use your 67 Fun Songs books to sight read through again, but this time with correct rhythm.

### **Polish Song or Performance level Piece - 5-10 minutes, depending on level**

- At first, the polish songs will be pieces out of 67 Fun Songs. You will select a piece you have already sight read, and learn it with the correct rhythm, getting fluency and learning to play it to the best of your current ability. Once you have it down, you will pick a new polish song. These may take as little as a week and up to a few months to master, especially once the student is past the Primer book. (You are welcome to write down any songs you polish in the lists section of your binder)
- After you have completed 67 Fun Songs primer, you can pick a performance level piece that is one or two levels above your current lesson book level. The polish song or performance level piece, should be a song that takes a few months to master. Make sure to keep a copy of these pieces in your Sheet music section of your binder.

### **Lesson Book - 5-10 minutes, depending on level.**

- Once you have completed 67 Fun Songs primer and have a good understanding of the notes on the grand staff, you are ready to add a Lesson book. You will skip past all the note learning, since you have that down, and will carry on from there. You will still be sight reading out of 67 Fun Songs to further hone your sight reading ability, but are at this point ready for a method book series.
- You should be able to master one or two songs a week, it may take possibly two weeks of consistent practice to learn a piece. If it takes longer than that, the level is too difficult and the student should go down a level.
- Since the Sight reading at the beginning focuses so much on notes, I like the lesson book focus to be more on rhythm and once you are getting to more difficult pieces, other polishing aspects. So make sure the counting is mastered before moving on to the next song. Rhythm is just as important as the notes. If the rhythm isn't acknowledged, the song is just a bunch of notes being punched into the piano or keyboard.

## **Update any Lists**

- At the end of your practice session, remember to update your lists, goals etc. This will help keep your motivation going! It's exciting to watch those lists grow.

## **Practice Techniques**

- Many students will play all the way through a song once or twice and call that good. But "practicing" means to perform (an activity) or exercise (a skill) repeatedly or regularly in order to improve or maintain one's proficiency.
- When practicing a song, it is much better to select a small section and repeat it multiple times. Our fingers and brains have short memories, and need small sections repeated to make better and quicker improvements.
- Vary the repetitions - When repeating a section of the piece, you should vary how you practice it. In essence trying to improve upon it each time. If you are still learning the notes, start out with **hands alone**, then Slowly play it **hands together**, using the sight reading/note reading skills you have become so good at. Once you start to get a little bit more fluid at the section, play around a little more with it. **Focus on counting** - you may write in the counting and count out loud. Make sure it has a **steady beat**. Check your **fingering**, are you playing with fingers that make the most sense, or are you making it harder for yourself to play the section. Play it **SUPER SLOW**. Try it **faster**. Add any **articulation** and **dynamics** that are applicable to the song. If there is one chord or section that continues to be a problem, **play up to that chord/note or section and stop right on it**, do that multiple times until you are able to continue on without mistake. Play the short section **three times correctly**. The goal will be to play it multiple times correctly in a row.

## **And Remember to Use your new Talent**

- If you are not taking lessons from a piano teacher, you may not have opportunities to play in Recitals or do competitions. You will have to create your own opportunities to shine and share your talents.
- Find ways to serve with your new playing abilities. You can play in church or teach someone else the things you have learned.
- Audition for talent shows or any other venues you can find to share, they can be as simple as playing for family and friends.
- Record pieces that you have worked hard on. You can use a video camera or record it using audacity if you have the equipment for it. Just find a way to remember and see how far you've come.

What an awesome desire you have to improve yourself and learn a new musical skill!

Great job!