

# Piano & Keys — Workbook

This workbook turns the course into daily practice you can do at the keyboard this week. Work through it in order: set up your instrument and technique, build fluent reading in both clefs with rhythm and scales, construct and voice chords so you can accompany from a lead sheet, then improvise and play real pieces with expression. Use the templates to log practice with metronome tempos, drill note reading, map the diatonic chords of any key, and plan accompaniment textures so progress is steady and measurable.

## Getting Set Up: The Instrument, Posture, and Hand Technique

Set up your instrument and bench correctly, learn the layout of the keys, and build the relaxed, curved-hand technique and arm-weight touch that everything else depends on.

### Worksheet: Instrument and Bench Setup Check

Record your instrument and adjust your seating so your forearms are level and your hands fall into a natural curved shape. Fix anything that is off before you practice, posture set early prevents strain and slow playing. Instrument type (acoustic / digital weighted / unweighted keyboard) and number of keys

---

Are the keys fully weighted hammer-action? (if no, note your plan to access weighted keys)

---

Bench height set so forearms are parallel to the floor and elbows level with the white keys (yes/no, adjustment made)

---

Distance from keys so elbows stay slightly in front of the body (yes/no)

---

Feet flat on the floor, right foot near the sustain pedal (yes/no)

---

Where Middle C is on your instrument (describe the landmark you use to find it)

---

### Exercise: Find Your Way Around the Keys

Use the black-key groups as your map. Do this away from any written music, naming notes out loud so navigation becomes a reflex.

- Walk up the whole keyboard playing and naming only the C keys (the white key just left of each two-black-key group).

---

- Now play and name only the F keys (the white key just left of each three-black-key group).

---

- Play Middle C with your right thumb, jump up one octave to the next C, and repeat to the top, keeping the same finger.

---

- Pick three random white keys and name each by stepping from the nearest C or F landmark, how fast can

you name them?

---

### Exercise: Relaxed Hand and Arm-Weight Drill

Build the curved hand shape and the weight-and-release touch from day one. Do this slowly and check for tension after every note.

- Let your arm hang loose at your side, notice the natural curved hand shape, then bring that exact shape to the keys without flattening it.
  - Rest the right hand on C to G (fingers 1 to 5), let the arm go heavy so the keys sound from weight alone, then release.
  - Play a slow five-finger pattern (1 2 3 4 5 4 3 2 1) and after each note check you can gently wiggle your wrist, if not, you are gripping.
  - Scan for hidden tension: are your shoulders down, jaw loose, and breathing steady? Reset any that crept up.
- 

### Checklist: Technique Foundations Check

- ] Forearms level, elbows roughly level with the keys, sitting tall but not rigid
- ] Fingers naturally curved, playing on the pads/tips with a soft dome at the knuckles (no collapsed palm)
- ] Wrist level and flexible, never locked or dropped
- ] Sound comes from relaxed arm weight dropping into the key, not from finger force
- ] Shoulders stay down and breathing stays steady through the whole exercise
- ] Can find C and F anywhere by the black-key groups without counting from the end

### Reading Music: The Grand Staff, Rhythm, and Keys

Read fluently in both clefs using landmark notes and intervals, count rhythm accurately with a metronome, and learn the major and minor scales and key signatures that organize all the music you will play.

### Exercise: Note-Reading Flashcard Sprint

Train reading until a note triggers the right finger with no slow translation. Use physical cards or a free app (Tenuto or a note-reading trainer) and play each note as you name it. Do short daily bursts.

- Treble clef: drill the line notes (E G B D F) and space notes (F A C E) until instant, naming and playing each.
  - Bass clef: drill the line notes (G B D F A) and space notes (A C E G) the same way.
  - Lock three landmarks per clef (Middle C, treble G, bass F) and find neighboring notes by stepping from them.
  - Time yourself naming 20 random notes across both clefs, log the time, and try to beat it tomorrow.
- 

### Exercise: Count and Clap the Rhythm

Get the timing into your body before adding pitch. Tap the rhythm on your knee while counting out loud, locked to a slow metronome, then play it.

- Identify the time signature, how many beats per bar and which note value gets the beat?
  - Clap and count a passage out loud (1 and 2 and 3 and 4 and), placing eighth notes exactly on the and.
  - Hold whole and half notes for their full value, are you cutting long notes short? Count them all the way through.
  - Find any dotted notes, ties, or syncopation and count those bars slowly until they lock to the click.
-

## Worksheet: Build a Scale and Read Its Key Signature

Construct a major scale from the step pattern, derive its relative minor, and note the key signature so you can recognize the key at sight. Then apply standard fingering.

Chosen major key and its notes (apply whole-whole-half-whole-whole-whole-half from the root)

---

Key signature (how many sharps or flats, and which ones)

---

Relative minor (start on the sixth degree) and its notes

---

Right-hand fingering with the thumb-under crossing (e.g. 1 2 3 1 2 3 4 5)

---

Left-hand fingering with the finger-over crossing (e.g. 5 4 3 2 1 3 2 1)

---

Metronome tempo at which you can play it cleanly hands separately, then hands together

---

## Checklist: Reading and Scales Check

- Can name and play any line or space note in both clefs within a couple of seconds
- Use landmark notes and interval reading rather than counting from the staff edge every time
- Identify the time signature and count a passage out loud, locked to a metronome
- Hold long notes and observe rests for their full counted value
- Can build a major scale and its relative minor from the step pattern
- Play the scale with correct thumb-under / finger-over fingering, hands separately and together

## Harmony at the Keyboard: Chords, Voicings, and Accompaniment

Build triads and sevenths from chord symbols, rearrange them with inversions and smooth voice leading, and turn a lead sheet into real accompaniment with left-hand patterns and the sustain pedal.

## Worksheet: Build Chords From Symbols

Practice constructing chords on the spot using stacked thirds and the quality rules, rather than memorizing each as a separate shape. Fill this in for several chords from a song you like.

Chord symbol (e.g. C, Am, G7, Cmaj7, C/E)

---

Root note

---

Notes in the chord (root, third, fifth, plus seventh if any)

---

Quality (major / minor / diminished / dominant 7 / major 7 / minor 7)

---

Which inversion or bass note the symbol calls for (e.g. C/E = E in the bass)

---

## Exercise: Inversions and Voice Leading

Learn each chord in all positions, then connect a progression so your hand barely moves. Smooth changes are the test of good voicing.

- Play a major triad in root, first, and second inversion, saying the lowest note each time.

---

- Take the progression C, Am, F, G and find the voicing of each chord that keeps your right hand in the same five-key zone.

---

- Where two neighboring chords share a note, keep that finger down and move only the others, which common tones did you find?

---

- Play the progression slowly with no gaps, can you switch chords without your hand leaving its zone? If not, re-voice.

---

### Worksheet: Arrange a Lead Sheet

Take one song's chord symbols and decide how to play them. Choose a left-hand pattern and texture that match the feel you want, then plan the pedal.

Song title, key, and the chord progression

---

Feel you are going for (tender ballad / driving pop / folk / bluesy)

---

Left-hand pattern chosen (block chords / arpeggios / Alberti bass / root-fifth / boom-chuck)

---

Right-hand texture (melody only / melody plus chord tones / rhythmic chords)

---

Sustain pedal plan (where it changes, using legato/syncopated pedaling just after each new chord)

---

### Checklist: Chords and Accompaniment Check

- Can build any major, minor, diminished, or seventh chord from its symbol using stacked thirds
- Know each triad in root, first, and second inversion
- Use voice leading so notes move the smallest distance and common tones stay put
- Can read and arrange from a lead sheet, choosing a left-hand pattern that fits the song
- Change the sustain pedal just after each new chord (legato pedaling), with no muddy overlap
- Left hand grounds the harmony while the right hand voices chords smoothly under the melody

### Playing in Styles: Improvisation, Classical, and Contemporary

Improvise confidently over chords with the pentatonic and blues scales, bring written music to life with dynamics and phrasing, play contemporary pop and blues from chords, and lock in a daily practice routine that keeps you improving.

### Exercise: First Improvisation Over a Backing

Set up a repeating chord backing and solo using only safe scale notes. Leave space and use call-and-response, every note in the scale is guaranteed to fit.

- Loop a simple progression in the left hand (e.g. C and Am alternating) or use a backing track so the right hand is free.

---

- Play only the C major pentatonic (C D E G A) over it, slowly, listening to how each note sits against the chords.

---

- Make a short phrase, leave silence, then answer it with a second phrase, treat the solo as a conversation.

---

- Land your longer or final notes on a chord tone (root or third) for resolution, then try adding the blues scale's blue note for grit.

---

## Worksheet: Shape a Piece With Expression

Take a short written piece and plan its dynamics, phrasing, and tempo so it sounds musical, not mechanical. Mark the score, then play it shaped.

Piece title and tempo marking (e.g. Andante, Allegro) and what mood that sets

---

Dynamic plan across the piece (where it is p, mp, mf, f, and where crescendos/decrescendos occur)

---

Phrases marked (where each musical sentence rises to a peak and eases off)

---

Articulation (which passages are legato under slurs, which notes are staccato)

---

Hard sections to loop separately and the slow tempo you will start them at

---

## Exercise: Learn a Contemporary Song From Chords

Apply your chord-and-groove skills to a current song. Build it up in layers from the harmony to a full texture at tempo.

- Find the chords and identify the key and progression (watch for the 1-5-6-4 four-chord pattern).
  - Play the chords slowly as block voicings just to lock the changes, then add a left-hand foundation that fits the feel.
  - Choose a right-hand texture (arpeggios for a ballad, rhythmic eighth-note chords for pop-rock), and add the sustain pedal.
  - Raise the tempo gradually to the real speed, keeping the chord changes clean, what tempo did you reach today?
- 

## Checklist: Styles and Practice Habit Check

- Can improvise a short, in-time melody over a backing using the pentatonic or blues scale
- Leave space and use call-and-response, landing key notes on chord tones
- Read and apply dynamic markings (pp to ff) and crescendos/decrescendos in a written piece
- Shape phrases with a peak and play legato/staccato as marked
- Can learn a contemporary song from chord symbols with a groove, not note by note
- Follow a daily practice plan (warm-up, technique/reading, repertoire, creative play) and log metronome tempos

## Your Action Plan

1. Set up your instrument and bench so forearms are level, and learn to find C and F anywhere by the black-key groups.
2. Build the curved hand shape and arm-weight touch, practicing a relaxed five-finger pattern hands separately, then together, slowly.
3. Drill note-reading flashcards in both clefs daily until a note triggers the right finger automatically.
4. Clap and count rhythms out loud with a metronome before playing them, holding long notes for their full value.
5. Learn one major scale and its relative minor with correct fingering, then a new key each week.
6. Build triads and seventh chords from their symbols using stacked thirds, and learn each in all three inversions.
7. Take a progression like C, Am, F, G and voice it with smooth voice leading so your hand stays in one zone.

8. Arrange a lead sheet: choose a left-hand pattern and texture for the feel, and add legato sustain pedaling.
9. Improvise over a looped backing using the pentatonic scale, leaving space and landing on chord tones, then add the blues scale.
10. Run a daily 25 to 40 minute routine (warm-up, technique/reading, repertoire, creative play) and log your metronome tempos to track progress.











