

# *Pedagogical Refresher: Child Development; Introducing Musical Rhythm, Reading, & Technique*

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## *For Starters: Child Development Overview*

- **Piaget's Four Major Stages of Development**
  1. Sensorimotor (Birth-2 years)
  2. Preoperational (2-7 years)
  3. Concrete Operational (7-11 years)
  4. Formal operational (11-15 years)
  
- **Preoperational Stage, I. Preconceptual Thought, ages 2-4**
  - Child is moving out of the Sensorimotor stage where they learn about the world around them and how to solve problems through their *sensory and motor experiences*.
  
  - Vital part of their life at this age is symbolic or *make-believe play*.
  
- **Preoperational Stage, II. Intuitive Thought, ages 4-7**
  - Child begins to think in terms of images, symbols, and concepts, *and no longer needs to act out all situations externally to learn and understand*.
  
  - Children at this age still use play to think about and further understand their experiences. Play actually increases their capacity for mental representation.
  
  - Demonstrate an increased ability to remember information immediately and over a long period of time. The retaining of information is increased if the new concept is practiced in different ways and at numerous settings over a long period of time.
  
  - Age of 5-6: capable of applying higher order logic in analysis of form and structures. Can respond creatively to open-ended questions and challenges.
  
- **Concrete Operational Stage, ages 7-11**
  - Emergence of the practical child. Children are beginning to demonstrate logical operations of thought needed to solve problems, but *need concrete objects present*.
  
  - Developing ability to conserve (materials remain the same even when they undergo perceptual change, e.g. same amount of water even though it changes containers).
  
  - Ages 9-10: child's ability to categorize memories and recall information is nearly as efficient as an adult. Able to mentally re-present prior experiences to themselves and to others. Increasing ability to take another's viewpoint and exchange ideas.

## *Introducing & Teaching Musical Rhythm*

- Rhythmic accuracy and expressiveness rank among the most important skills needed by any musician.
- Basic rhythmic *experience* must take place *before* students can be expected to play rhythms accurately.
- **Feel the Beat!**
  - Teach through scaffolding: from known to unknown.
    - Relate the musical beat to their **heartbeat**. Fast, medium, slow.
  - Provide a concrete experience to deepen understanding. Feel the beat with the whole body.
    - Young children do best if we give them complete instructions and verbal reminders, such as calling out motions on the beat like “step, step.” They respond well to verbal challenges in time to the music such as “find a new part of your body to shake” or “switch feet.”
  - Introduce props: rhythm instruments, scarves, home-made instruments.
  - Have children act out being different dramatic characters to represent various dynamics, articulations, and styles within their music. Let students take turns leading.
  - Speed up music, slow it down – teach them to listen carefully to musical cues and make them aware of how tempo influences our mood. Freeze the music!
  - Calm kids down with softer, slower, and quieter music and respond in smaller motions.
- **Experience rhythm by progressing from large to small motor movements.** Experience the pulse first with gross motor skills and then progress into fine motor skills.
- Be flexible in **counting types** to assist each student.
  - Syllabic
  - Nominative
  - Unit
  - Metric
- **Introduce the metronome or steady accompaniment tracks early** in music lessons.

## *Introductory Piano Technique*

- **Arm weight:**
  - “Stone on the Mountain”
  - Heavy Wet Ropes”
  - Teach play and relax to *release* the arm weight.
- **Developing Strong Fingers:**
  - Firm Fingertips – pressing in the chocolate chips
  - “Making O’s”
  - Finger Independence: *Tiger on a Pogo Stick* on scales
- **Flexible Wrists:**
  - Wrist roll up & down like “Cat Backs” – use scarves
  - Rotate wrist right & left like tracing rainbows.
  - Legato pentascales: wrist and forearm aligned behind each finger to create wrist circles. Away from body = circle under; towards body = circle over.
- **Articulation & voicing techniques:**
  - Staccatos = keys are hot; trampoline bounces; & use animals that bounce
  - Use pentascales to introduce legato & staccato contrasts between the hands. Staccatos = hopping bunny; legato = slithering snake.
  - Slurs over detached or staccato notes within pieces: (1) Play legato hand & sing along, (2) slowly tap detached hand along with playing the legato hand, (3) slowly play hands together and isolate the beats where 1 hand lifts and other hand stays legato into the keys.
  - Voicing with animal analogies. Rh louder = elephant; Lh softer = mouse.
    - Introduce early in pentascales using the same finger numbers.
    - (1) RH alone loud, (2) LH alone silent play, (3) play together LH silent, RH loud, (4) gradually add more weight to LH, but staying soft, (5) switch voicing for the hands, (6) add to repertoire.

## *Introducing & Teaching Musical Reading*

- **Learning RH & LH:**
  - Trace their hands extending thumbs out to create an L with the LH.
  - *Mary Had a Little Lamb* – “She pet it with her left (or right) hand.”
- **Student Discovery - Sound before Symbol:**
  - Animals related to soft, loud, short, long
    - Use their bodies to act out these sounds
    - Ear training to check their understanding
    - Alligator mouths for crescendo & diminuendo
- **Learning High, Low, Same:**
  - Students explore and place stuffed animals to the right/left of keyboard to represent high/low sounds. (Low & left both start with L!)
    - Use animals within ear training & kinesthetic activities to reinforce moving right/high & left/low. *Let students have turns as the leader, too!*
  - Stories to experience same/repeated sounds. *Students create their own stories, too!*
  - Ear training – relate to animals and can feel with the whole body.
  - Eye training – *Twinkle, Twinkle* using red & green tabs on C & G.
- **Teach Students to identify PATTERNS (aurally, visually, kinesthetically):**
  - “Miller’s Law” for short term memory: “Magical Number 7, Plus or Minus 2”
    - “Chunk” similar information together to process more information.
  - Examples of “chunks” to label within music: form, themes, chords, scales, etc.
- **Teach the music alphabet in chunks around the black-key groups:**
  - 2-black keys: CDE; 3-black keys: FGAB
    - Explore the piano playing all the C’s, all the D’s, etc.
    - Play groups ascending and descending vocalizing note names out loud.
    - Walk steps and skips on large alphabet cards.
- **Clefs, Landmark Notes, & New Notes:**
  - King Bass Clef: F Name (Frank) for F Clef.
    - Landmark F between his buttons.
  - Queen Treble Clef: G Name (Grace) for G Clef
    - Her dress swirls around landmark G.
  - Learn all the Landmark notes within Bass & Treble clefs:
    - Go Catch Fish, middle C, Go Catch Fish
    - Teach visual recognition of 2nds (line-space) & 3rds (line-line & space-space) to ID new notes around Landmark notes.

***If you have any questions or would like to join a short discussion to conclude this session, please click on the Zoom link.***