

Piano Star – Teacher’s Guide

Piano Star is a toolkit for teachers to use in the first years of their students’ piano-playing journey. Unique in including pieces from a vast array of composers, *Piano Star* is designed to be used alongside any mainstream piano method whenever additional material is required. In addition, the books provide material to support ABRSM’s Initial Grade and Prep Test, as well as alternative repertoire for Grade 1 and even Grade 2 (using the *Duets* book). With the exception of *Duets*, the books all include fun additional activities, from making up rhythms and improvising to exploring the piano.

Piano Star 1: 24 pieces for young pianists up to Prep Test level

This book is perfect to give side-wards reinforcement for students after their very first landscape method book (where the book focuses primarily on left hand F to C and right hand C to G). There are a few pieces that also include right-hand A and, in the left hand, notes down to tenor C. There are pieces with quavers and some creative syncopated rhythms, but the emphasis is on simplicity throughout. Half the pieces are hands separate (played between the hands), and this progresses to small fragments of the piece played hands together, with a number of pieces towards the end where hands together is more extensive.

Piano Star Five-Finger Tunes: 25 pieces for young pianists

This is a special book that can be used after *Piano Star 1* or before *Piano Star 2* (alongside or after a first portrait method book) to help with the tricky skill of playing in a wide variety of hand positions as a prerequisite to moving out of hand positions all together. It covers 10 positions over two octaves, and much success with general music reading has been achieved using this title. The pieces are excellent not only for developing knowledge of the keyboard, but also for developing the skills of accurately playing dynamics and simple articulation. Pieces are never overloaded with tricky content, but are tuneful and accessible, some with fun rhymes, and 11 come with some really beautifully written duet parts.

Piano Star 2: 26 pieces for young pianists Prep Test level

A step up from *Piano Star 1*, this book is something to use at the end of a first portrait method book. Music is hands together throughout, and there is detailed articulation in terms of staccato, slurs and accents. It’s also very useful for quick study pieces when a student is taking Grade 1, or even Grade 2. It’s particularly strong in helping children navigate the keyboard with small hand-position changes and hand-crossing up and down the keyboard. Key signatures are now used, up to one sharp and one flat. Several pieces are great for consolidating reading sharp and flat accidentals. Imaginative titles picked from a child’s world, like ‘Action Stations’ and ‘Sprinkling Stardust’, encourage expressive playing.

Piano Star 3: 24 pieces for young pianists Prep Test level to Grade 1

The journey to Grade 1 is a long one! This book works well alongside second tutor books, just before embarking on Grade 1, and can be used alongside preparation for that grade, so that a rich diet of repertoire is maintained and reading skills improve. Creative expressive playing is encouraged in a number of pieces, including ‘Squirmy Worms’ and ‘The Fridge Monster’. Music is predominantly up to a key signature of one sharp or flat, with a couple of pieces in D major. Time signatures are mostly simple, with some 6/8 and even one piece in 9/8. Between Grades 1 and 2 this book is also very useful for quick study material.

Piano Star Grade 1: 25 pieces for young pianists

Your student may be studying for Grade 1 or has just taken it; or perhaps is doing Grade 2 and needs some light relief; or is at Grade 3 level and is looking for some weekly quick study pieces. In all these cases, this book provides some very attractive and varied repertoire. Particular attention in the book is given to developing a 'story telling' ability in piano performance, with titles such as 'Moon Walk' or 'Taking a Naughty Dog for a Walk'. Style is also tackled, with a rag, a lullaby, a blues, and Classical styles from a 15th-century tune to Mozart. There's a wide range of keys and a few pieces in 6/8 metre.

Piano Star Skills Builder: to initial Grade and beyond

If you have a student preparing for the ABRSM Initial Grade exam, then this book provides everything you need to complete all the supporting tests. It will also help consolidate skills as a student heads towards Grade 1. There are 10 stages, each including scale, aural and reading material. Some of the activities are exactly linked to the exam requirements, while others stretch beyond, to broaden and deepen a student's musical development. Scales enjoy teacher-part accompaniments; sight-reading is addressed creatively with fragments from Classical music; aural activities are packed with fun rhymes. All the while the student is learning everything they need for the supporting tests without even realising it! Non-exam material includes composing activities, writing and composing rhythms, and concert pieces including 'My Strange Zoo' and 'Beep Beep!'.

Piano Star Duets: 26 duets at early beginner to Grade 2 level

The great thing about this book is that it can be used over an extended period of time – around three years for most students. It starts with five-finger tunes (when your student is halfway through a first tutor book) and goes right through to a piece heading for Grade 4 (if you play the teacher part of 'Weird Polka'). The book provides duets for two students to play and others for a pupil and teacher or more advanced student to perform together. For good measure, there's even a trio thrown in. Essential for all students are the top tips for playing duets. With pieces with quirky content, story-telling pieces, a dash of improvisation, show-off pieces and lullabies, this book will introduce pupils to the joys of duet playing.

Piano Star Theory: An activity book for young pianists

This book brings to life what can sometimes be a dry subject, and will help all students develop their understanding of musical notation. It can be used alongside any piano tutor or method. There are two key aspects to mention: firstly it's specifically written for *pianists*, and so focuses on the note values, pitches, time signatures and other symbols a young pianist will encounter in the first year or so of study. Secondly, it provides a context for their learning, with activities that link to practical music-making. For example, as pitches are introduced there is practice in writing them and spotting them in short pieces, and students are encouraged to write their own tune, with guide rhythms and pitches given, which they can then play on the piano. After learning to write stems correctly, there's a song to sing to reinforce key points. Having learnt about dynamics and simple articulation, students add them to pieces in the book and play them, following the signs. With quizzes throughout to consolidate learning, fun rhymes, clear explanations, and even a board game to play, as well as some additional pages online, this is a perfect way to build understanding and confidence in young pupils.