

PIANO LESSONS *for the* REST OF US

Includes
5 books, 13 CD's,
& this
Study Guide

Your Next Step: Hundreds of Shortcuts, Tactics, Cheap Tricks,
Misdirections, Cover Ups, Trade Secrets, Insider Information,
and Ruses for Mastering Piano in 18 Months or Less



piano fun

Home Study Collection
Success Manual

with Robert Laughlin

Introduction

Welcome to your 18 month piano course. You will be working in five different course books. Each month focuses on one certain book. All reading assignments and CD Track references refer to that particular program you will be studying that month. You won't complete any program in a single month, allowing you to skip around, back and forth, as your skills gradually develop.

We only list four weekly lessons each month. Often the lessons in Week Four will be more extensive and/or challenging, keeping in mind that you have slightly more than four weeks in each month.

The learning pace established here is just a suggestion. With 30 minutes piano practice per day, you can get through these materials in 18 months. However, if you wish to work faster by putting more time in, you can. Conversely, you can take this course as slowly as you wish. The actual skill-based tasks should take at least one year to learn. Training your hands take time, no matter how fast you actually learn the information mentally. Because every part of what we teach is recorded, there's no chance of forgetting the material.

Each week there will be a "Warm Up" segment and a "Hands On" segment. In addition you should be working on learning songs. What songs you learn will be your personal choice, but you might want to plan on starting a new song each week, just to build your repertoire. By learning new songs you will be able to take the lessons from each week and make them come alive. Choose music you genuinely like. If you get stuck on a song, set it aside temporarily, and learn something else for the time being.

In addition to sheet music there will be some other things you'll need to provide for yourself, primarily Hanon. You can purchase "Hanon" (The Virtuoso Pianist in Sixty Exercises by C.L. Hanon) at most music stores at a very reasonable cost. Be sure all three volumes are included in the version you buy. You will be working mostly in Volumes 1 and 2.

Other purchases are optional.

- Some music paper if you want to write out some of the examples in music form (try it, it's fun).
- A metronome (I recommend an electronic one as opposed to the wind up kind).
- A notebook for keeping a journal. Each week be sure to write out your goals, note your progress, and plan your future song repertoire. Here is where you keep track of your metronome speeds as well.

Are you ready? Let's get going.

First Month: Basic Blues Techniques

We'll start out with the blues, something that's useful, easy, and fun. The blues can be played on its own, or used to ornament other styles of music.

Week One

Warm Up

Read Continuing Chord Piano section on the Major Chord Drill

Major Chord Drill CD, tracks 1-3

This can be played away from the keyboard as a mental drill as well. Make good use of commute time or workout time.

Hands On

Blues Piano Styles book, Example 1

How to Play Blues & Boogie-Woogie Piano CD, tracks 1-4

Week Two

Warm Up

Read Continuing Chord Piano section on the Minor Chord Drill

Minor Chord Drill CD, tracks 1-3

This can be played away from the keyboard as a mental drill as well. Make good use of commute time or workout time.

Hands On

Blues Piano Styles book, Example 2

How to Play Blues & Boogie-Woogie Piano CD, tracks 5-8

Week Three

Warm Up

Hanon - Exercise One (or review Major and Minor Chord Drills)

Hands On

Blues Piano Styles book, Example 3

How to Play Blues & Boogie-Woogie Piano CD, tracks 9-11

Week Four

Warm Up

Hanon - Exercise Two (or review Major and Minor Chord Drills)

Hands On

Blues Piano Styles book, Example 4

How to Play Blues & Boogie-Woogie Piano CD, tracks 12-16

Second Month: Basic Right Hand Techniques

Now we'll learn ways to make your right hand melodies more interesting.

Week One

Warm Up

Major Chord Drill CD, tracks 4-8

Hands On

Learn Chords to "Georgia" (Continuing Chord Piano)

Simple Right Hand Variations CD, tracks 1-3

Week Two

Warm Up

Minor Chord Drill CD, tracks 4-7

Hands On

Start song "Georgia on My Mind"

(Continuing Chord Piano)

Simple Right Hand Variations CD, tracks 4-5

Week Three

Warm Up

Hanon - Exercise Three

Major Chord Drill CD, track 9 (Bonus drill)

Hands On

Continue with "Georgia on My Mind"

(Continuing Chord Piano)

Simple Right Hand Variations CD, tracks 6-8

Week Four

Warm Up

Hanon - Exercise Four

Minor Chord Drill CD, track 8 (Bonus drill)

Hands On

Continue with "Georgia on My Mind"

(Continuing Chord Piano)

Learn first four right hand techniques

Simple Right Hand Variations CD, tracks 9-13

Third Month: Basic Left Hand Techniques

Last month you worked on ways to make your right hand more interesting. This month we'll do the same with the left hand.

Week One

Warm Up

Drill 3, Major Chord Drill CD, tracks 11-24

Make this an ongoing exercise until its thoroughly learned.

These drills can be used with or without a piano.

Hands On

Continuing Chord Piano book (Left Hand Variations chapter)

Learn Chords to three Sample songs

Simple Left Hand Variations CD, track 1

Week Two

Warm Up

Hanon - Exercise Five

Hands On

Continuing Chord Piano book (Left Hand Variations chapter)

Learn three Sample songs

Simple Left Hand Variations CD, track 2

Week Three

Warm Up

Drill 3, Minor Chord Drill CD, tracks 9-21

Make this an ongoing exercise until its thoroughly learned.

These drills can be used with or without a piano.

Hands On

Continuing Chord Piano book (Left Hand Variations chapter)

Learn chord patterns in 4/4

Simple Left Hand Variations CD, tracks 3-4

Week Four

Warm Up

Hanon - Exercise Six

Hands On

Continuing Chord Piano book (Left Hand Variations chapter)

Learn chord patterns in 3/4

Simple Left Hand Variations CD, track 5

Fourth Month: Introduction to Play by Ear

We're going to start learning the major scales this month. Then we'll explore the secrets of playing by ear.

Week One

Warm Up

Hanon – Exercise Seven

Hands On

Read Chapter One, How to Play Piano by Ear

Listen to CD: Play by Ear Workshop Program – Part One, CD tracks 1 - 4

Week Two

Warm Up

Start C major scale in Vol. 2 Hanon 39, or any scale book, Right Hand only

Hands On

Listen to CD: Play by Ear Workshop Program – Part One, CD tracks 5 – 6

Learn the first song on Song List One, page 7, “Down in the Valley”

Use the practice CD that comes with the book, CD tracks 1 - 6

Week Three

Warm Up

Continue C major scale, Vol. 2 Hanon, or any scale book, Left Hand only

Hands On

Continue learning the next two songs on Song List One by ear.

Use the practice CD that comes with the book, CD tracks 7 - 11

Week Four

Warm Up

C major scale, BOTH hands, up and down, four octaves, correct fingering

Extra: Review Hanon Exercises 1 - 7

Hands On

Continue learning the last two songs on Song List One by ear.

Use the practice CD that comes with the book, CD tracks 12 - 15

Extra

Any extra time you have this month, work on your repertoire. Are you keeping up with your goals?

Fifth Month: Blues Piano Styles (continued)

Back to more hands-on playing. You should enjoy these boogie sounds.

Week One

Warm Up

Review the material you covered in the Major and Minor Chord Drill CD's.

Hands On

Example Six in the book. Tracks 17-18 on How to Play Blues and Boogie Woogie CD. This is challenging. Make sure you learn it from memory, not the music in the book.

Week Two

Warm Up

F major scale, using the study sequence outlined last month

Extra: Start using a metronome with your scales. Set it as slow as you need in order to play scales perfectly. Perhaps try the two hands separately at first.

Hands On

Example Seven: Preliminary Boogie Woogie Pattern. CD tracks 19 – 20.

Example Eight: Right Hand Boogie Chords. CD tracks 21 – 22.

Week Three

Warm Up

Hanon – Exercise Eight

Continue perfecting the F major scale. Increase metronome speed, if ready.

Hands On

Blues Example Nine: Putting the Two Hands Together. CD Tracks 23 – 24.

Week Four

Warm Up

Start the G major scale in the same way you've learned the other two.

Hands On

Blues Example Ten: True Eight-to-the-Bar Pattern. CD tracks 25 – 26.

Extra

Review songs you're learned. Start a new one.

You should have at least eight songs in your repertoire by now.

Sixth Month: Play by Ear (continued): Three Chord Songs

Playing by Ear gets a little more challenging this month.

Week One

Warm Up

Review Hanon 1 – 4. Try to get the metronome between 90 – 100.

Hands On

Read Chapter Two of Play by Ear book.

Listen to CD: Play by Ear Workshop Program – Part One, CD tracks 7 - 9

Learn “Saints Go Marching In” (Song List Two) by ear.

Refer to practice CD (15 songs) that comes with the book, CD tracks 16 - 18

Week Two

Warm Up

Learn the B flat major scale as before.

Hands On

Learn next two songs, Song List Two.

Refer to practice CD (15 songs) that comes with the book, CD tracks 19 - 22

Week Three

Warm Up

Review Hanon 5 – 8. Try to get the metronome between 90 – 100.

Hands On

Learn final two songs, Song List Two.

Refer to practice CD (15 songs) that comes with the book, CD tracks 23 - 26

Week Four

Warm Up

Learn the D major scale as before.

Hands On

Try a few of the Two Chord and Three Chord Songs listed on page 15, Piano by Ear book.

Seventh Month: Finish Continuing Chord Piano

After this month you should know how to play at least 100 combinations of right and left hand accompaniment variations.

Week One

Warm Up

Hanon Exercise Nine with metronome.

Start on E flat major scale.

Hands On

Right Hand Variations numbers 6 – 9, pages 19 – 20.

Right Hand Variations CD tracks 15 – 18.

Week Two

Warm Up

Hanon Exercise Ten with metronome

Continue perfecting the E flat scale.

Hands On

Left Hand Variations: Arpeggio techniques. Continuing Chord Piano book, page 28 CD tracks 6 - 16

Week Three

Warm Up

Hanon Exercise Eleven with metronome.

Start the A major scale.

Hands On

Left Hand Variations: Bass and chord techniques.

Continuing Chord Piano book, page 29 CD tracks 17 - 24

Week Four

Warm Up

Perfect the A major scale

Review E flat major scale

Start increasing metronome speed

Review Hanon 9 - 11

Hands On

Review all Right Hand Techniques

Start combining Left Hand and Right Hand techniques,

using all the songs in the Continuing Chord Piano book.

Then branch out to songs in your own list.

Pay particular attention to “Georgia on My Mind.”

Extra

You will find more of these left and right hand techniques in our program “The Season” (not part of this package).

Eighth Month: Piano by Ear – Song List Three

Now we're really starting to challenge you with more difficult songs to play by ear. How well do you know your basic chords by now?

Week One

Warm Up

Hanon Exercise Twelve with metronome.

Hands On

Read Chapter Three of How to Play Piano by Ear.

Listen to CD: Play by Ear Workshop Program – Part Two, CD tracks 1 - 2

Memorize any of the chords from the Top Twelve List of Chords that you do not already know.

Week Two

Warm Up

A flat major scale

Hands On

Learn the first song on Song List Three, page 16, "Jingle Bells"

Use the practice CD that comes with the book, CD tracks 27 - 29

Week Three

Warm Up

E major scale

Hands On

Learn next two songs, Song List Three

("Michael Row" and "Aura Lee") .

Refer to practice CD (15 songs) that comes with the book, CD tracks 30 - 33.

Week Four

Warm Up

Review all the major scales up to this point.

Hands On

Learn last two songs, Song List Three.

("Auld Lang Syne" and "We Wish You")

Refer to practice CD (15 songs) that comes with the book, CD tracks 34 - 38.

Ninth Month: Finish Blues and Boogie-Woogie

This wraps up the basic blues and boogie course. You will continue to work with your improvising.

Week One

Warm Up

D flat major scale

Start Hanon Exercise 13

Hands On

Example 11: Another Left Hand Boogie Pattern

CD tracks 27 – 28

Example 12: A Third Left Hand Boogie Pattern

CD tracks 29 - 30

Week Two

Warm Up

B major scale

Hands On

Example 12: A Third Left Hand Boogie Pattern

CD tracks 29 - 30

Week Three

Warm Up

Hanon Exercise 14

Hands On

Examples 13 and 14: Blues/Boogie Right Hand Pattern

CD tracks 31 - 36

Week Four

Warm Up

G flat (F sharp) major scale

Hands On

Example 15: The Blues Slide

CD Tracks 37 – 38

Reading

Appendix A: Start memorizing other 12 bar patterns.

Appendix B: Read about blues improvising.

Tenth Month: Start Power Chords

This will be a very busy month. We're going to ornament your musical life with much more colorful sounding chords. It will be a great make over.

Week One

Warm Up

Hanon Exercise 15

Hands On

Read Section I: Where Chords Come From.

CD tracks 1 - 5.

Practice forming chords by formulas and scales.

Section IIA: Variations on the Major Chord. CD track 6

Write out and practice the four major chord variations on all 12 major chords.

Week Two

Warm Up

Hanon Exercise 16

Hands On

Section IIB: Variations on the Minor Chord. CD track 7

Write out and practice the four minor chord variations on all 12 minor chords.

Week Three

Warm Up

Start chromatic scale, Vol. 2 of Hanon.

Hands On

Section IIC: Variations on the Seventh Chord. CD track 8

Write out and practice the four minor chord variations on all 12 minor chords.

Week Four

Warm Up

Review Hanon Exercises 1 - 16.

Hands On

Start exercises on C – Am – Dm – G7 (“Heart and Soul”) CD track 9.

Eleventh Month: Start Intros and Endings

Intros and Endings is a companion volume to Power Chords. Many of the examples in these two programs feed off of one another.

Week One

Warm Up

Chromatic scale in minor thirds (Hanon 40)

Hands On

Section A. The Dominant Chord

CD Tracks 1 - 8

Week Two

Warm Up

Hanon Exercise 17

Hands On

Section B: Arpeggios. CD tracks 9 – 12

Week Three

Warm Up

Hanon Exercise 18

Hands On

Section C: Last Phrase as Intro.

CD tracks 13 – 15

Week Four

Warm Up

Chromatic scale in minor thirds (Hanon 40) This exercise is difficult. Keep working with it.

Hands On

Section D1: “Amen” Intro. CD track 16

Section D2: “Heart and Soul” Intro. CD tracks 17 – 22.

Twelfth Month: Piano by Ear (continued)

Learning Songs from Recordings

A lot of theory and reading this month. Heed the “hands-on” suggestions carefully.

Week One

Warm Up

Hanon Exercise 19

Hands On

Read Chapter 4 in the book.

CD Workshop Program Part 2: CD track 3 - The Secret Language of Chords

Try to assign Roman Numerals to chords in the songs that you play.

Week Two

Warm Up

Continue chromatic scale in intervals exercises (Hanon 40).

If you’ve mastered this scale in minor third intervals, try some of the others.

If not, keep working on the minor thirds. It’s tricky.

Hands On

Read Chapter 5: Transposing

CD Workshop Program Part 2: CD track 4 - Transposing

Try playing a few songs from Song List One in the key of G.

Week Three

Warm Up

Hanon Exercise 20 (This is the last of them!).

Hands On

CD Workshop Program Part 2: CD track 5 - Learning Songs from Recordings.

Make a list of five songs to learn from recordings (CD’s, tapes, records) in your collection. Choose easy examples (folk, blues, children’s). Not jazz, show tunes, modern.

Week Four

Warm Up

Review chromatic scales (Hanon 40).

Review Hanon Exercises 1 - 20.

Hands On

Read Chapter 7 in the book. (Skip Chapter 6 for now.)

Workshop Program – Part Three CD, tracks 1 – 2.

Start working on your list of five songs to learn from the recordings.

Specific activities listed in Chapter 7.

One Year Inventory

You Should Now Know

- A. First 20 Hanon exercises
- B. All major scales
- C. The chromatic scale
- D. Have a repertoire of 25 to 50 songs you know well
- E. Basic skill techniques of piano playing
 - 1. Blues and boogie woogie skills
 - a. Play without reading sheet music
 - 2. Combining Right and Left Hand Variations
 - 3. Be able to pick out some songs by ear
- F. Unearthed your own insights about piano

Now you’ll be heading into the intermediate and advanced techniques.

Thirteenth Month:

Blues Improvising Techniques CD

This program is for anyone who understands the basic 12 bar blues progression and the blues scale. Because you’ve completed the Blues Piano Styles program, you are ready. Also we’re going to start getting creative with Hanon.

Week One

Warm Up

Hanon Exercise 1 in the key of F. Start exercise on the F note. Play B flat’s instead of B’s. Exercise should sound pretty much the same. Right hand only. Same fingering.

Hands On

CD tracks 1 - 5

Week Two

Warm Up

Hanon Exercise 1 key of F, add the left hand.

Hanon Exercise 2 in the key of F. Right hand only. Same fingering.

Hands On

CD tracks 6 - 9

Week Three

Warm Up

Hanon Exercise 1 in the key of G. Right hand only. Same fingering.

Hanon Exercise 2 key of F, add the left hand.

Hands On

CD tracks 10 - 13

Week Four

Warm Up

Hanon Exercise 1 key of G, add the left hand.

Hanon Exercise 2 key of G.

Hands On

CD tracks 14 - 17

Fourteenth Month: Power Chords (continued)

You're going to love these new chord textures and colors.

Week One

Warm Up

Hanon Exercise 1 in the key of B flat. Right hand only.
Same fingering.

Hands On

Chapter III – Voicings
CD track 10

Week Two

Warm Up

Hanon Exercise 1 key of B flat, add the left hand.
Hanon Exercise 2 in the key of B flat. Right hand only.
Same fingering.

Hands On

Chapter IV A – Slash Chords
CD Track 11

Week Three

Warm Up

Hanon Exercise 1 in the key of G. Right hand only. Same
fingering.
Hanon Exercise 2 key of B flat, add the left hand.

Hands On

Chapter IV B – Augmented and Diminished Chords CD
track 12

Week Four

Warm Up

Hanon Exercise 1 key of D, add the left hand.
Hanon Exercise 2 key of D.

Hands On

Chapter V – Inversions
CD track 13

Fifteenth Month: Finish Intros and Endings

This wraps up your studies of a very important element of your playing.

Week One

Warm Up

Now that you get the idea of playing Hanon exercises in other keys, you are free to transpose all 20 of the exercises into all twelve keys. That's a total of 240 exercises! All right that may be going a little overboard for the casual pianist. However, if you are looking for extra challenges, there they are. For best results it's always good to keep a set of weekly goals, and to try to stick to them. From this point onward, you are going to be more or less on your own for your warm ups.

Hands On

Chapter D 3 – The Ink Spots Intro
Chapter D 4 – Fancy Lead In Intro
CD track 23 - 24

Week Two

Warm Up

See above

Hands On

Endings A, B, and C
CD tracks 25 - 28

Week Three

Warm Up

See above

Hands On

Ending D – Blues Scale Endings
CD tracks 29 – 30

Week Four

Warm Up

See above

Hands On

Ending E – Chord Progression Endings
CD tracks 31 – 34
Endings F – Special Endings
CD tracks 35 – 37

Extra

Be sure you are starting to incorporate these intros and endings into the songs that you are gradually adding to your repertoire.

Sixteenth Month:

Piano by Ear: The Circle of Fourths

This month we are going to concentrate on one of the most helpful musical tools you will ever meet—The Circle of Fourths. There's an entire CD of Circle of Fourths Exercises that you will use for your warm ups this month. And while you are training your hands to play fourth chord progressions, you will be learning why these chord progressions are so important, and how to incorporate them into your own playing.

Week One

Warm Up

Circle of Fourths Exercises : Major chords: CD tracks 1 - 5

Hands On

Read Chapter 6 of Piano by Ear
CD Workshop Program, Part 3: CD track 3

Week Two

Warm Up

Circle of Fourths Exercises : Minor chords: CD tracks 6 - 9

Hands On

Read Chapter 6 of Piano by Ear (again!)
CD Workshop Program, Part 3: CD tracks 4 - 5

Week Three

Warm Up

Circle of Fourths Exercises : Seventh chords: CD tracks 10 - 13

Hands On

CD Workshop Program Part 3: CD tracks 6 – 7
Memorize the Circle of Fourths Progression mentally.
Follow the Practicing Suggestions given in Chapter 6 of Piano by Ear

Week Four

Warm Up

Circle of Fourths Exercises : Minors to Sevenths: CD tracks 14 - 17

Hands On

CD Workshop Program Part 3: CD tracks 8 – 9
Continue with last week's Circle of Fourths exercises from the book

Extra

Circle of Fourths Exercises : Minor sevenths to sevenths: CD tracks 18 – 20
Review specific activities listed in Chapter 7

Seventeenth Month:

Finish Blues Improvising Techniques

After this month you will be an improvising monster on the blues. Do a lot of listening to the audio at the piano.

Week One

Warm Up

If you haven't done so already, start using a metronome during your warm up exercises. Start with a relatively slow count until you master a certain exercise. Then bump up the speed incrementally. Mastering an exercise means you can play it three times in succession with absolutely no mistakes. Then go on. Always note each exercise and metronome setting in your piano journal.

Hands On

Review Example 4 in the Blues Piano Styles book. All improvising examples are based on this blues pattern. CD Blues Improvising Techniques, CD track 18, The Blues Slide

Week Two

Warm Up

It should go without saying that you can use the metronome when you play examples from the CD's as well as songs you are in the process of learning.

Hands On

CD Blues Improvising Techniques
CD tracks 19 - 22

Week Three

Warm Up

Your choice

Hands On

CD Blues Improvising Techniques
CD track 23 - 26

Week Four

Warm Up

Your choice

Hands On

CD Blues Improvising Techniques
CD track 27 - 29

Eighteenth Month: Finish Power Chords

After this month you've finished the program. Congratulations. But don't stop playing. And check with us for more programs that may be of interest to you.

Week One

Warm Up

Seek out warm-up exercises from other sources.

Hands On

Power Chords CD, track 14

Chapter 6: Jazz Voicings. Learn and practice the minor chord substitutions (minor ninth chords) for both the first and third inversions

Write out and play all 12 minor ninths in first inversion, and all 12 minor ninths in third inversion.

Week Two

Warm Up

You probably know by now what your strengths and weaknesses are. Try designing some warm up exercises of your own. Address them to your weaknesses, not your strengths.

Hands On

Chapter 6: Jazz Voicings. Learn and practice the seventh chord substitutions (thirteenth chords) for both the first and third inversions.

Write out and play all 12 thirteenths in first inversion, and all 12 thirteenths in third inversion.

Week Three

Warm Up

The Standard Jazz ii V I chord progressions in Chapter 6 of Power Chords make excellent exercises. It may take several months to learn these exercises well. It would be beneficial to do a little of these every day until you have them automatic.

Hands On

Chapter 6: Jazz Voicings. Learn and practice the major chord substitutions (6/9 and maj7 chords) for both the first and third inversions.

Write out and play all 12 6/9's and maj7's in first inversion, and all 12 6/9's and maj7's in third inversion.

Power Chords CD, track 15

Week Four

Warm Up

As above.

Hands On

Learn the Basic ii V I in Chapter 6.

Learn the Basic ii V I in all 12 keys

Power Chords CD, track 16

Ongoing

Hands On

Finally learn to put these new chord voicings all together in the jazz ii V I chord progression.

Learn first the A version starting the minor ninth in first inversion.

Then learn the B version starting the minor ninth in third inversion.

Wow, You Did It!

Eighteen months have elapsed since you started this program, more or less. Do you feel like you finished something, or are you just beginning something new? The answer is, you're doing both. By now you should realize that thanks to consistent exposure to piano playing--and some guidance--you are comfortable at the instrument and that you actually have some control over the destiny of the music you play.

Not many people get to experience this concept, including classically trained pianists. Whereby they may have acquired technical virtuosity and awesome sight reading skills, they are usually chained to the printed sheet music and doomed to play only what others have played before them. Missing is creativity, spontaneity, freedom, and control.

You are their envy. You can play from fake books, you can fill in your own arrangements, you can improvise on the blues, and you can even play by ear. No amount of classical training can bring about those results.

And you are to be congratulated. Certainly this courseware helped to make it possible, but you are the one who put the time into learning the material. Sure it was fun. But there was also a lot of time invested, and some work, and times of frustration. But you made it happen.

And now you see what it is that drives musicians. The utter joy of making music compensates for the hours of preparation hundreds of times over. You may look back on this experience in a few years and never remember the growing pains. Only the joys of creating music will linger in your memory.

Again, congratulations, and may you never stop learning and growing musically.

Robert Laughlin

For more piano fun, visit our website at:

www.pianofun.com

The New
School of
AMERICAN
MUSIC