

HELP YOURSELF!

Note, Interval, and Rhythm Games

BY OUR READERS

In response to Marianne Uszler's editorial in the August 2004 issue, readers are sending in their favorite teaching tips. We're happy to share these, knowing that a great idea from someone else might work for you or get you thinking in another direction.

Send us your own best tips. What have you discovered that works especially well? Have you invented some games or follow-up activities that students love? Do you have a sure-fire way of presenting a particular skill? Maybe your idea is a special twist relating to recital planning, motivational strategies, lesson scheduling, or bookkeeping shortcuts. We're eager to hear them all!

Here are a few to tuck in your teaching-tip kit.

For both of these ideas I use a full flashcard deck of treble and bass clef notes so that there is one treble clef note matched to the same note in the bass. The backs of the cards are not marked with note name answers.

Both games work well through Piano Adventures® Level 2. This is a way to review note names and theory concepts using flashcards, but without the same old routine of name the note and flip the card. My students love it!

MEMORY GAME

Shuffle the deck and place the cards face down on a flat surface. My students and I usually sit on the floor for this, but a table is also fine. The student picks a card, then names the note (for example, treble clef A). She then needs to pick a second card to match (bass clef A). Correct matches are kept, and the student goes again. Incorrect matches go back into play, face down. Play until the deck is matched up.

INTERVAL GAME

For this you need the flashcard deck (as in the Memory Game), but also a die.

Shuffle the cards and put them face down on a flat surface. The student chooses a card and names the note. Then he rolls the die and must find a note on another card corresponding to that interval from the note picked. (In this case, clefs may or may not match.) If he picks a C and rolls a 4, for example, he needs to match it to an F (up a fourth) or G (down a fourth).

Variation: The teacher could call for notes up or down from the interval.

Variation: All even numbers will be up, odd numbers down. Then switch the next time the game is played.

Kelly Penn

Mason, Michigan

This is a tip for teaching proper hand position to beginners.

"Turn your hands palms up and pretend that you are catching a raindrop. Keeping that hand position, turn your hands over, palms down, and place them on the keyboard."

They always have a beautifully shaped hand. If they "slip", all I have to say is, "Catch a raindrop." Works every time.

Joanne Tadych

Mentor, Ohio

Share your favorite tips

for

Teaching • Planning

Recitals • Scheduling

Record-Keeping

Send your tip(s) to Marianne Uszler

Muszler@pianoteaching.com

When any of my younger students doesn't "connect" with a piece of music from the method book, I work with them to "re-compose" the words that accompany the music. This process gives them the authority and ability to approach a piece of music in their own creative way.

One of my seven-year-old students, for example, didn't particularly like one of his pieces. But after choosing some words that reflected his love and fascination with dinosaurs, his eyes quickly brightened with interest and excitement. In this process, he had to investigate the rhythm of the piece so that his words would fit each phrase. This activity consequently strengthened his rhythmic perception. In place of some notes we also added dinosaur "stomps" that he performed admirably with his feet. This allowed him an opportunity to connect with his music kinesthetically. Through these new and original connections, a significant turning point began for this young and newly inspired musician.

Nicholas Elderkin

Lubbock, Texas

I use this in connection with teaching the syncopated rhythm in *Jumping Jazz Cat*, Piano Adventures®, Lesson Book 2B, pp. 16, 17.

Have the student first clap measure 2 without the tie. While clapping, the student could chant "run-ning, run-ning, run-ning, walk". Then add the tie. Or chant "run-ning, run, HO-OLD-ing walk." Make sure you say "hold" loudly to correspond to the accent mark.

I use this in connection with teaching motive recognition in *Coconut Shuffle*, Piano Adventures®, Performance Book 2A, pp. 18, 19.

The student identifies Mm. 1, 2 as the driving motive of the entire piece. The student color-codes motives according to their starting points on D, E, or F. The teacher then plays the MIDI disk or CD and tells the student that when she hears the D Motive, she should put her hands on her head. When she hears the E Motive, the hands go on the waist. For the F Motive, hands go on the knees. If you have a MIDI player, try doing it several times and speed up the tempo. My students absolutely love doing this!

Jee Wong

Seattle, Washington