

## TALKING TECH

## Software for Levels 1, 2A, and 2B

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In the last newsletter, I talked about software that complements the Primer level of *Piano Adventures*®. That was a bit tricky because software is ill equipped to teach beginning skills—how to sit at the piano properly, hand position, and tone quality. But software to reinforce Levels 1 and 2? A piece of cake!

The concepts presented in *Piano Adventures*® 1, 2A, and 2B revolve primarily around notes and rests, counting, and intervals, chords, and scales. These are the areas where computer software shines.

## Concepts Presented in Levels 1, 2A, and 2B

◆ NOTES AND RESTS	
Treble F A C E	Half rest
Treble C Position	Whole rest
Sharp/Flat	Eighth rest
Beamed eighth notes	
Dotted quarter note	
◆ INTERVALS	
Half and whole steps	
Second through Sixth	
◆ HAND POSITIONS	
Treble C	
G D A	
Minor 5-Finger Patterns	
◆ OTHER CONCEPTS	
Legato/Staccato	Cross-hand arpeggio
Transposition	Damper pedal
Phrase	

Carefully chosen computer software can help immensely with most of these concepts. (I find it comforting that it cannot teach everything.) Those topics under “other” are ours alone. To teach correct touch, a singing phrase, and careful pedaling one needs a human voice and hand. But for everything else, the following programs will help instill these skills in your students.

Essentials of Music Theory [www.alfred.com](http://www.alfred.com)  
 Interactive Musician [www.alfred.com](http://www.alfred.com)  
 ECS Early Music Skills [www.ecsmedia.com](http://www.ecsmedia.com)  
 ECS Note Speller [www.ecsmedia.com](http://www.ecsmedia.com)  
 eMedia Piano & Keyboard Method [www.emediamusic.com](http://www.emediamusic.com)  
 Instant Play Piano Deluxe [www.musiccoach.com](http://www.musiccoach.com)  
 Maestro Fortune Cookie [www.wrldcon.com/maestro/comp-info.html](http://www.wrldcon.com/maestro/comp-info.html)  
 MiDisaurus [www.town4kids.com](http://www.town4kids.com)  
 Mrs. G's Music Room Available through various vendors  
 Music Ace [www.harmonicvision.com](http://www.harmonicvision.com)  
 Music Goals by Eye & Ear [www.musicgoals.com](http://www.musicgoals.com)  
 Music Goals Rhythm [www.musicgoals.com](http://www.musicgoals.com)  
 Music Lessons I [www.mibac.com](http://www.mibac.com)  
 Musition 2 [www.risingsoftware.com](http://www.risingsoftware.com)  
 Noteplay [www.alfred.com](http://www.alfred.com)  
 PBJ Computer Activities [www.pbjmusic.com](http://www.pbjmusic.com)

Piano Is Fun [www.pianoisfun.com](http://www.pianoisfun.com)  
 Pianomouse [www.pianomouse.com](http://www.pianomouse.com)

Any of these programs will assist you and your students. You should definitely look into Music Goals and take advantage of their free 21-day trial. If you see Instant Play Piano Deluxe at your local warehouse store (I recently found mine at Costco for \$29), check it out—there's a lot of value there. Don't miss Piano Is Fun—it's a great program!

Now here are the programs I was afraid you might miss.

If you used to have an Apple IIe in your studio, you might remember a program called Theory Games from Alfred. Good news—it's back! Alfred's Theory Games Software 2.0 was just released in a Windows/Macintosh hybrid CD. The games will be familiar, the graphics are delightful, and this program is particularly well suited to the topics of *Piano Adventures*® Levels 1, 2A, and 2B. Because it is geared to Alfred's own method, the page references are to those books, but it complements the Faber series as if it were their own. With frogs jumping over logs, fish getting devoured by fierce sharks (if you're wrong!), and turtles throwing darts at balloons, this is truly painless learning. You'll know your students are mastering the skills, and your kids will be thrilled to find out it's “Theory Games” day.

For rhythm and notation, I like Rhythm Factory from ECS. While it's no longer listed on the ECS website (which is quite a mystery—it's newer than most of their products), it is available through many vendors including Lentine's ([www.lentine.com](http://www.lentine.com)). Rhythm Factory is cleverly designed as an actual factory. You walk in the door and choose between TIME and NOTATION. I chose TIME and was first sent to the BEAT MACHINE. It does an excellent job of explaining the concept of pulse, then provides some good exercises for keeping an even pulse. The BEAT SPLITTER divides the beats into downbeats and upbeats and requires the student to demonstrate that s/he knows the difference. The TEMPO WAREHOUSE quizzes tempo markings.

In the NOTATION section, the student first visits the PAINT SHOP where s/he learns about note values in common time. In the puzzle section of the PART SHOP, s/he is given parts of notes (the note head, stem, beam, and so on) and must construct what's required.

MiDisaurus Notation is a must-own program for your software library. It's divided into three sections—Articulation, Dynamics, and Notation—and does an especially good job with younger students. In the Articulation section, the little tykes (and bigger ones, too) will be drilled on accents, legato/staccato touch, ties and slurs, and the fermata. Dynamics presented are forte, piano, fortissimo, pianissimo, mezzo forte, and mezzo piano. In the Notation section, students will learn about lines and spaces, sharps, flats, and naturals, and key signatures.

With just a little guidance, the equation is simple: You + *Piano Adventures*® + well-chosen software = 1 studio filled with terrific students! ■■■