

HELP YOURSELF!

Using CD/MIDI Disks Rhythm Tricks

BY OUR READERS

More Than Play-Along

In my studio, I use the *Piano Adventures*® CDs in many ways. I may ask students to drum the beat, hands together, while listening to the CD, accenting the first beat with a larger gesture. The student might also drum the rhythm, hands separately or together, with the CD. I use a higher-pitched drum for the right hand, and a lower-pitched drum for the left.

Sometimes I ask the student to play the *first beats* of every measure along with the CD. This helps students coordinate the “down-and-up” or “down-and-up-and” wrist motions (as suggested by Max Camp). A variation is to play beat 1 to beat 1, alternating measures or lines of music.

For example: Play 1 2 3 / 1 - - / 1 2 3 / 1 - - /

I might have the student listen to the CD while watching the music. When I stop the CD on a specific beat, the student must identify the measure and the beat. I also use ribbon sticks to have the student conduct a sideways figure 8 along with the CD.

If this fits the piece, a student may learn to play primary chords along with the CD, and get a chance to accompany a soloist instead of *being* the soloist. Swinging, marching, or tapping to the beat (or first beats only) is always helpful.

Students can also improvise to the accompaniment without the piano part, or play variations on the melody. They can even create an original piece using similar melodic and harmonic shapes.

REUSE THOSE CDS! When students move to a higher level, have them learn a teacher part from a lower level that is within their reach.

John Bisceglia
Seattle, Washington

Editor's Note: Check out “Get More for Your Money” (page 13) in the August 2004 newsletter. You'll find special CD/MIDI-related activities linked to specific Piano Adventures® books and levels.

Keep That Beat!

I bought one of those bright, colorful lollipop drums, and my students gaze at it lovingly! They *beg* me to tap out their rhythms on the drum before they play a piece. Many rhythm problems have disappeared!

The lollipop drum is in the Music in Motion catalog, and I've also seen it at educational retail stores like Learning Express. I use the medium size because little fingers can handle it easily. It seems to me that using a drum works better than clapping. I know it's the same concept, but when we clap, their eyes start to glaze over, whereas they *love* to play on the drum. I usually let them tap out the rhythms while I

point, but sometimes they get to be the “teacher” and I tap it out and see if they can catch my mistakes. That's when I know they've got it!

Marie
From www.PianoTeaching.com

I use a pair of souvenir maracas in my studio. I show students how to use the right hand for the notes in the treble clef and the left hand for bass clef notes. This has been great fun and helps a lot. We even use the maracas with the accompaniment CDs to work out rhythm and/or tempo problems.

Mary Dieker
Canton, Missouri

I've found that students will not be able to play with a metronome unless they can speak or move to it. I start them out saying the alphabet of seconds, up and down with no break in between, with the metronome set at 88. They say one letter to each tick. As they get comfortable with this, I gradually speed up the tempo. You can also use this technique to teach thirds, at first letting them “think” the skipped letter with every other tick. Ditto with fourths and fifths, if you like.

Lisa Kalmar
From www.PianoTeaching.com

Chair Rhythms

This game is fun to do with a group. Set out four chairs from left to right. Each chair represents 1 beat of a 4-beat measure. Tell the students that you're going to clap or play a 4-beat rhythm pattern (for example, ta titi ta rest). Have them echo-clap the pattern. Then ask someone how many sounds did s/he hear? (4) Have that student choose three others to join in notating the pattern on the chairs using their own bodies. One person would sit on the first chair (ta), two would share the second chair (titi), one would sit on the third chair (ta), and no one would be on the fourth chair (rest). *Voila!* They've notated the rhythm with their own bodies! Once the pattern is complete, the remaining students all clap and count the pattern as I move my hand above each “chairperson”.

(If you have lots of students in the group, 16th notes are really fun. Kids sometimes have to sit on laps.)

Gretchen Taylor
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