

Guide for parents

If you're thinking of getting your child started with learning a musical instrument, then welcome aboard! Here's a short guide to help you understand more about what's involved in lessons:

Lessons happen weekly during term-time, although some students elect to continue over holiday weeks depending on teacher and student availability. Most students average around 35 lessons per year. Lesson lengths are as follows:

- Beginner to grade 3 level: 30 minutes
- Grades 4 to 6: 45 minutes
- Grades 7 to 8: 1 hour

Making music demands a minimum investment in time, and so to this end the following can serve as a good guide for **practising** and thus getting results you can be proud of with your playing (each of these assume 5 practise sessions a week minimum):

Level	Maintenance	Some progress	Great progress
Beginner to Grade 1	10 mins	15 mins	20 mins +
Grades 2-3	10 mins	20 mins	25 mins +
Grades 4-5	15 mins	20 mins	30 mins +
Grades 6-7	20 mins	30 mins	40 mins +
Grade 8	30 mins	40 mins	1 hour +

The good news is that if you can commit to managing your **practising** in this way, most people can make excellent progress with their playing and derive much satisfaction from their work, as well as have a lot of fun!

Most **Styles of music** can be accommodated within lessons, as the core elements of learning (**sight reading, theory, aural skills, basic technique**) remain the same regardless of style.

Students can sit **exams** if they want to, although this is down to personal choice as some prefer to play just for themselves. The core of what we do remains the same, as for styles of music above – exams should be a natural outcome of good learning.

The main thrust behind lessons for beginners is to build the **skills** necessary to approach and successfully play pieces which students find fun and inspiring. This is the opposite to the YouTube approach which is more of a 'monkey say, monkey do' learning by rote approach which is slower, more frustrating and neither progressive nor transferable to other pieces of music.

Termly student '**soiree**' **concerts** are a chance for all students, from beginner to advanced, to show other students and their close families what they have been working on in a fun, inclusive and non-judgemental environment. Tea, juice and home-baking from participants guarantee that these are great fun events!

Some **parents** even decide to **learn** at the same time as their children – indeed back in London I had a father and son who started together, with the father promising he would keep going as long as the son did. When I left London they were both doing their Grade 8 and the father was hanging on by the tips of his fingers, to use a piano pun! Learning together can be especially helpful for young students as much of the fundamentals of playing are based on problem solving, which adults tend to

be much better at than children. It's also a lot of fun to be able to play **together** at home, especially if others in the house play different instruments.

If you approach your practising and lessons with the right **attitude** and **determination**, learning and playing music for yourself and with others can be a lifelong companion for you and others around you.