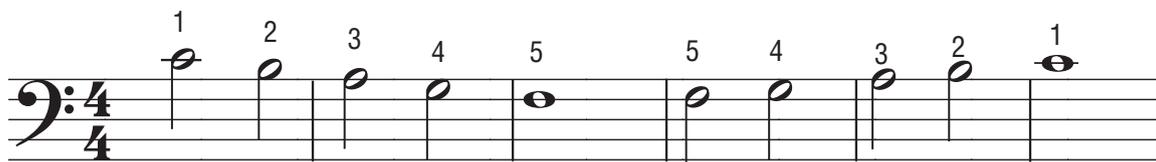


Ready to Progress?

Give Yourself a Hand!

■ Chances are, if you're a beginning pianist with an electronic keyboard, you've been playing mostly right-hand melodies, relying on the auto accompaniment feature to fill in bass lines. Learning to use both hands can open up a whole new world in your playing, enabling you to tackle more advanced pieces. Developing a strong left hand is one of the most important elements to progress as a pianist.

Just like with the right hand, middle C is the anchor for the left-hand notes. Start by placing your left thumb on middle C, resting your other four fingers on the keys to the left. With the left hand, the note order is backward as you proceed down the scale. Thus, a good trick is think of reciting the alphabet backwards as you descend: C, B, A, G, F.



Once you've established where the left-hand notes are, it's time to combine them with your right hand. Place your right thumb on middle C, without removing your left thumb. Lay your other four fingers on the adjacent notes (D, E, F, G). Now you're in the standard "ready" position, a bit like placing your fingers ready to type on a computer keyboard.

It's time to combine both hands. Start from the bottom—the little finger of the left hand, resting on F—and play each note all the way up to the little finger of your right hand (G). When you get to middle C, play it twice, using the left thumb first on the way up, and the right thumb first on the way down.



Now you're using two hands! Practice combining both hands with the following exercise. Start by playing middle C with both thumbs at once, then with both index fingers (left on B, right on D), then move on to your ring, fourth, and little fingers.

Don't worry about the rhythm. Just concentrate on playing the notes with both hands at the same time, releasing the keys when you play the next notes. When you get to the little fingers, turn right back and work your way to the thumbs on middle C once again.



Concentrate on developing your coordination and smoothness, then start working on simple two-part melody and bass tunes. Before you know it, you'll be on your way to becoming a fluent two-handed piano player.