

HOFFMAN ACADEMY OF *Music*

3695 NW South Road, Portland OR, 97229

503.336.3121

hoffmanacademy@gmail.com

Dear parent,

We are thrilled to begin piano lessons with your child! Here, at Hoffman Academy, we believe that music can be one of the most rewarding endeavors in life. Music can bring your child much joy and enjoyment both now and into adulthood. Music can help teach your child discipline, sensitivity to beauty, and ability to accept and respond to constructive criticism. Music will develop self-confidence in your child as he or she masters a highly complex skill that requires both analytical and creative thinking.

Our Teaching Philosophy

Our teaching is based in the firm belief that *every child* can learn to play the piano successfully given the proper environment, excellent teaching, warm encouragement, and daily, proper practicing. We believe that children only learn well when they feel relaxed, safe, and secure. Therefore, our teachers do not pressure students by placing unrealistic expectations on them. We do, however, expect and encourage every child to practice daily and to always do their best work. Every child has a unique set of talents and strengths, and our teachers strive to treat each child as an individual and to help that child reach his or her full potential. Some children thrive on challenge; others need a great deal of patience and encouragement. Also, each child progresses at his or her own rate. All are welcome and respected at Hoffman Academy. We feel that learning to play an instrument should be a joyful, pleasurable experience, creating in your child a love for music and a desire to continue developing his or her talent through daily practicing.

Your Role as Parent

Parents play an indispensable role in the process of learning to play the piano. Experience shows that when a parent establishes daily practice habits and consistently dedicates her own time to assist and motivate her child during daily practicing, the child will progress very well—often at an astonishing rate. Also, it is very important that a parent attends the piano lesson. This way, the parent knows exactly what and how the teacher expects the child to practice, and much confusion and misunderstanding is avoided. Finally, parents must always work to help their child stay motivated. One way this can be achieved is through sincere, frequent and *specific* praise and generous amounts of warmth and encouragement.

Parent Commitment

Here are the specific commitments required of the parent:

- Attend piano lessons with your child (for children under the age of 11).
- Ensure that daily practicing becomes a habit. At first, about 20 minutes of practice each day should be sufficient. After 6-12 months, required daily practice time will increase to about 30 minutes a day. After two years of study, most students will be expected to practice about 45 minute a day.

- FOR CHILDREN AGES 5-11: Sit with your child during his or her practice time to help them complete their assignment. Children ages 5-7 generally need you with them for 100% of their practice time. (“Messing around” on the piano without a parent is perfectly fine and should *not* be discouraged in any way, however this doesn’t usually constitute “practicing”.) Ages 8-9 need you there about two-thirds of the time. Ages 10-11 need you there about one-third of the time.
- FOR AGES 12+: In the teenage years, children need to acquire greater independence in their practicing. As a parent your role is now to stand “on the side line” and support and encourage. In general, you should not be assisting during their practice time, except perhaps to drop in and listen to provide some company and support.

As you can see, this is a major commitment for the parent extending over many years. You will find, however, that your sacrifice of time and energy will be richly rewarded as you witness the unfolding of your child’s talent.

Required Equipment

- Your child will need to have a full-length (88-keys) piano or keyboard to practice on at home. If you have a piano, it must be in good working condition, meaning that it is in tune and all the keys work properly. If you have a digital piano or keyboard, it must have **weighted keys**, which sometimes is called “hammer action”. Practicing on a keyboard without weighted keys will fail to develop the finger muscles properly.
- You will need to have a metronome, which can be purchased at any music store. You can also purchase one directly from Hoffman Academy, if you like.
- All other books, CDs, and activity sheets will be provided by the Academy.

Additional Tips for Parents

Now, here are a few additional “tips” for how you can help make piano lessons a positive, successful experience for your child:

- During practice time, remember that your job is not to teach, but to assist, motivate, and encourage. Resist the urge to help or correct too much. Sometimes just sitting there silently is a great way to show support and to provide company during the lonely task of practicing. The key to successful practicing is doing it every day and repetition, repetition, repetition. Dr. Shinichi Suzuki says, “Ability equals knowledge plus 10,000 times.”
- Establish the firm expectation in your family that no matter how many times a child plays a song on the piano, there must never be a complaint or a “not again!”. Teach your family that in order to achieve excellence in *any* skill (sports, music, etc.), thousands of repetitions are required. Children should be praised highly for their diligence in repetition.
- Provide frequent informal opportunities for your child to play for an audience. Children may enjoy performing for the family. When guests are in the home, try suggesting, “Let’s have some music!” Then invite your child to play a song that they have mastered and can play with confidence. Have them perform for relatives (live or over the phone). Grandparents will love hearing their grandkids perform!
- Fill your home with music and with conversation about music. Listen to high-quality music of many styles in your home. Sing together often. When children recognize that music is an important part of your family culture they will feel more motivated to study it and to progress.

- Finally, do whatever you can to make piano a **fun and positive experience**. Children will at times experience some discouragement or frustration about practicing, so they will need lots of consistent and loving support from you as they develop the habit of daily practicing. Help by devising various ways to keep practicing fun and interesting. By all means, avoid scolding and lecturing your child about practicing, since this is counter-productive by making children grow to resent piano, instead of loving it. Focus on their progress. Focus on the joy of music. Use positive language and lots of encouragement and sincere praise.

You should also know that I am open to any feedback from you about your child's experience with piano. We at Hoffman Academy are fully committed to do everything we can to make this a positive experience for your family. If you have any concerns, I want to problem-solve them with you. Please feel free to call me (Joseph Hoffman) at 503-962-9970 or email me at hoffmanacademy@gmail.com.

Again, we are thrilled to work with your child. Please let me know if you have any questions, or if there is anything I can do for you.

Warm regards,
Joseph Hoffman, M.M.
Director, Hoffman Academy of Music