

Pianist Health and Injury Prevention

Do's and Don'ts for Practice, Teaching, Performance, and Listening

Piano study places physical and mental demands on the body. The following guidelines are designed to help pianists develop healthy habits, prevent injury, and support long term musicianship.

Practice

Do's

- Adjust bench height so forearms are approximately parallel to the floor
- Sit with feet flat on the floor and a balanced, upright posture
- Keep shoulders, arms, and hands free of unnecessary tension
- Use arm weight and efficient movement rather than force
- Divide practice into focused segments with regular breaks
- Gradually increase practice time and technical difficulty
- Stop and adjust practice if discomfort or fatigue appears
- Communicate with your instructor about physical concerns

Don'ts

- Do not practice through pain, numbness, or tingling
- Do not lock joints or grip the keys excessively
- Do not practice for long periods without breaks
- Do not suddenly increase practice time before performances
- Do not assume discomfort is a normal part of piano study

Performance

Do's

- Warm up gently before rehearsals and performances
- Check bench height and seating on stage
- Pace practice in the days leading up to performances
- Use mental preparation strategies in addition to physical practice
- Report unsafe or uncomfortable performance conditions

Don'ts

- Do not over practice immediately before performing
- Do not ignore physical tension caused by stress or anxiety
- Do not sacrifice healthy technique for short term results

Teaching

Do's

- Model healthy posture and efficient movement at the piano
- Teach technique that emphasizes ease and coordination
- Set age appropriate and realistic practice expectations
- Encourage breaks and healthy practice habits
- Create a supportive and respectful learning environment

Don'ts

- Do not encourage students to play through pain
- Do not use force based or tension driven approaches
- Do not apply the same physical expectations to every student
- Do not dismiss physical or emotional concerns

Listening

Do's

- Be aware of sound levels during long rehearsals or performances
- Take breaks during extended listening periods
- Use seating that supports good posture
- Adjust position to reduce physical strain

Don'ts

- Do not sit for long periods without movement
- Do not remain in uncomfortably loud environments when possible
- Do not ignore physical tension while listening

General Health and Support

- Pain is not a normal or expected part of piano study
- Healthy technique supports artistic growth and longevity
- Open communication with faculty is encouraged
- Campus health and wellness resources are available for support

Health and safety principles are introduced during the piano seminar at the beginning of the semester and reinforced throughout the semester through applied lessons, studio activities, and performance preparation.