



MELODY PAYNE

MUSIC FOR A LIFETIME

*policies & frequently
asked questions*



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Welcome to my piano studio! I'm so happy you're here! If you want to enroll your child in piano lessons, I'd love for us to get started building those skills that can help your child enjoy music for a lifetime! Please take a few minutes to read the following information so you and your child know what to expect in piano lessons, and so you can get the most out of your time in my studio. If you have questions not covered in this guide, let me know and I'll be happy to answer them. I'm looking forward to helping your children work towards meeting their musical goals!

who may enroll in piano lessons?

- Students in kindergarten and above may enroll in piano lessons, depending on their readiness.
- Lessons are 30 or 45 minutes weekly.
- Private lessons, mini camps, and 2 recitals are scheduled from August through April.
- See the calendar for specific dates.

how do we enroll?

- Enrollment will be considered after a personal audition (mini-lesson) with the student to assess the child's readiness for piano lessons, and meeting with the parents to chat about piano lesson expectations.
- Enrollment applies to the entire studio calendar year (August through June).
- New students may enroll at any time during the year, and tuition will be prorated to reflect the number of lessons the student will receive.
- Parents complete and digitally sign an **online enrollment form** (new students only) and submit the \$100 yearly enrollment fee.
- Submitting the online enrollment form (new students only), enrollment fee, pricing & payment guide, and lesson request form by June 15 reserves your child's place in my studio for the upcoming year.
- This nonrefundable fee covers all books and materials for the year, which I will provide, with the exception of a book bag, a metronome, and any music apps you might purchase. The enrollment fee also covers recital fees, other events, studio supplies needed for lessons, and more!

what kind of piano do we need?

- All students need an acoustic piano that is tuned at least once a year (it is very discouraging for your child to play an out-of-tune instrument!), or a digital piano (not a keyboard) for daily practice.
- An acoustic piano is highly preferred because the sound and touch cannot be replicated by a digital instrument.
- I'll be happy to recommend a piano technician to you so you can have your piano tuned once yearly.
- A digital piano is acceptable if it meets the following requirements:
 - 88 keys
 - Touch sensitive
 - Weighted keys
 - Sustain/damper pedal
 - Bench of an appropriate height
 - Entirely self-contained or on a keyboard stand (not a table or desk), with an appropriate bench
 - Located in an area of the home that promotes consistent practice
 - If you want help purchasing an appropriate digital piano, I will be glad to provide links to a variety of suitable options.



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what will my child learn?

Lessons are taught in a positive and encouraging environment and are tailored specifically to each student's individual needs and goals. These personalized lessons include a variety of musical styles and activities, including:

- Reading music
- Painting pictures with sound and communicating ideas and stories through music
- Playing music from different styles, including classical, pop, country, praise and worship, jazz, and many more!
- Playing from lead sheets/chord charts/"fake" books
- Understanding music theory, sight-reading, ear training, harmonization
- Composing simple songs and using music notation software programs to print a professional-looking copy
- Using technology to enhance lessons and practice time (iPhone/iPod/iPad apps, music websites, etc.)
- Learning and reviewing through hands-on games and other activities
- Learning to practice efficiently and in a healthy way so students can become independent musicians
- Most of all, lessons are structured to encourage all students to have FUN making music!

how much should my child practice?

- A regular time should be set aside each day for practice to become a daily habit and to consistently reinforce concepts and avoid cramming the day before the lesson.
- Treat practicing like other homework and expect it to be done daily. Unprepared lessons cost the same as prepared ones, but their value and enjoyment are substantially compromised!
- I stress quality practice over quantity, but the following recommendations will help your child achieve satisfactory results. Your child should practice at least 5 days a week.
 - 5-7 years old: 15-25 minutes
 - 8-10 years old: 25-35 minutes
 - 11-14 years old: 35-45 minutes
 - 15 and older: 45-60 minutes
- Customized weekly assignment sheets will be emailed to you after each lesson. Print the assignment sheet and place it in your child's piano binder to reference during daily practice sessions.
- Students should write their practice minutes on the assignment sheet and bring it to the next lesson.
- Your child's interest in piano will probably not be 100% consistent; but to be successful, you will need to be consistent in your encouragement and commitment to music lessons. Your child may say, "I don't want to practice" or "I want to quit", etc. In most cases, simply acknowledge your child's comments, and go on with your normal routine just as you would if your child said "I don't want to brush my teeth".

weekly attendance

- Because a specific weekly lesson time is set aside for each student, a student who does not attend a lesson will simply miss the benefit of that lesson. I will then use that time or other times to plan for the student's progress, work on additional assignments for that student, etc.
- There are no refunds, discounts, or makeups given unless I am unable to teach the set number of lessons offered throughout the year.
- If your child cannot make it to a regularly-scheduled lesson, feel free to take advantage of the "Lesson Swap" opportunity which is explained below.
- Remember that your tuition pays for more than your weekly lesson. See "**Where Does My Tuition Go?**"
- For more information, please read this excellent article: "**Make-up Lessons from an Economist's Point of View**"



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what if my child is sick?

- Students who are sick should not come to piano lessons.
- If your child didn't go to school that day, your child should not come to piano.
- I reserve the right to send a student home if s/he appears to be unwell.
- Please consider using the swap list instead of missing a lesson.
- If students are only mildly ill, contact me and we will do a Skype, FaceTime, or Zoom lesson at the regular lesson time.

lesson swap rules

- If you opt in on the online enrollment form, you will receive a copy of the swap list.
- I must be asked about a swap before arranging it. I must be informed about the swap within 24 hours of arranging it.
- The parent who arranges the swap must email me with the details of the swap and cc the parent with whom they are making the swap.
- No make-up lessons will be given if any confusion from a swap arises.
- Should 2 people arrive at once, I will teach the one whose lesson is normally at that time.
- Exchanges are not obligatory, they are reciprocal. If someone says NO to a swap request, please respect that. If someone exchanges with you, please be kind and return the favor when possible.
- The swap list is NEVER to be used to solicit funds for schools or any other organization for any purpose including any kind of SPAM. Those who do so will be permanently removed from the list.
- Don't forget that Skype or FaceTime lessons during the student's regular lesson time are also an option if you can't make it to a lesson.

zoom, skype, & facetime lessons

- Zoom, Skype, and FaceTime work well for students who cannot make it to lessons due to illness, inclement weather, etc.
- If you have a laptop or iPad that you can move close to the piano, please create a free Zoom account. This will allow me to connect with you and have a lesson over WiFi.
- Lessons do meet during inclement weather, except in rare circumstances. If you feel uncomfortable driving to my studio, contact me in advance and we will meet for your lesson via Zoom, Skype, or FaceTime.
- I will provide you with setup details for both platforms.
- **2020-2021 addendum: All lessons will be held via Zoom until further notice.**

will my child perform in recitals?

- All students in grades K-12 are required to perform in two fun yearly recitals.
- Recital Dress Code for Girls:
 - Dress or nice top with a skirt that comes at least to the knee when standing and sitting down (modesty is extremely important!), hair pulled back from the face so the performers can be seen from the side as they perform, dress shoes or cute sandals (not flip flops), tights or hose are optional but look very nice.
- Recital Dress Code for Guys
 - Khakis or slacks, dress socks and shoes, dress shirt, sweater, or polo shirt. Jacket and tie are optional but look very nice.
- Clothing that is NOT acceptable includes sweatshirts, sneakers, athletic shoes of any kind, white athletic socks, flip flops, denim, hoodies, T-shirts, shorts, short dresses, short skirts, strapless clothing, spaghetti straps, low cut tops, and any other similar articles of clothing.
- Parents and other guests should dress in business casual clothing.



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tuition & billing

- Tuition is billed per studio year, August through June, and is divided into 9 equal monthly payments or two equal semester payments.
- Invoices will be emailed approximately one week prior to each tuition payment due date.
- Types of payment accepted: cash, check, debit card (Square Cash App), credit card
- Tuition includes much more than the lesson time I spend with each student:
 - Preparing for each lesson, purchasing books, creating worksheets and games, planning and preparing for recitals, camps, group lessons, and parties, my professional experience and continuing education
 - Piano, studio, equipment, and website fees and maintenance, memberships in professional organizations that provide performance opportunities for students and educational opportunities for teachers
- Sight-reading and lending library materials, administrative duties, and so much more!
- Click the link to view a wonderful brochure that describes **how tuition benefits each student**.
- A \$50 charge, plus any additional associated fees, will be assessed for all tuition checks returned by the bank.
- Non-payment of tuition or consistent late payment will result in immediate termination.
- Tuition rates are raised annually and take effect August 1 of each year.

drop-off & pick-up

- If you arrive more than three or four minutes before your scheduled lesson time, please wait outside or in your vehicle before entering the studio. Dropping off and picking up your child on time shows respect for the time that I make for myself, my family, and my other students.
- If you drop off your child too early or you are unable to pick up your child on time, a \$5 charge will be added to the monthly tuition fee for every 5 minutes that you arrive too early or too late.
- If you arrive late for your scheduled lesson time, you will receive the remainder of the lesson and should be picked up according to the normal schedule.
- Please park in the driveway behind my car, or along the fence, but do not block the driveway.

media policy

- Pictures and videos of students may be posted on the studio website and included in studio publications and studio-related social media with no names attached.
- Photos taken by the teacher OR that are shared with the teacher by other parents or students of gatherings or performances become the property of the studio and can be used at the discretion of the teacher in regards to the studio.
- The studio follows online safety rules in this matter.

flex weeks

- Flex weeks are weeks of unscheduled time off that I may choose to use in the event of an emergency or illness in my household.
- These flex weeks are days off that you are not and will not pay for as I will make sure that I am present and ready to teach the scheduled number of weeks during the year.
- In the event that I need to use a flex week, I will inform you via email or text.



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technology in the studio

- I send all studio information via email. You'll need a valid email account that you check regularly.
- Email and text are the best ways to reach me. If you need to cancel a lesson at the last minute, please text because I do not check email or voicemail during teaching hours.
- Students should bring their iPad, iPod, iPhone, or other device to weekly lessons.
- Cell phones, laptops, and other electronic devices must be silenced during lessons.
- If parents must have a cell phone turned on for business purposes, please leave the studio for calls.
- My piano teaching blog and my online store at MelodyPayne.com contain the teaching resources I have created to use during weekly lessons. Your child has the benefit of using these resources for free!

discontinuing lessons

- Enrolling for lessons reserves your specific lesson time and tuition payments from August - June.
- However, I understand that everyone stops taking lessons at some point. The decision to end lessons should be made with careful consideration and discussion between parent, student, and teacher so lessons can end positively.
- For this reason, I require 30 days' written and paid notice prior to discontinuing lessons. To stop lessons, send an e-mail to me at MelodyPaynePiano@gmail.com by the 1st of the month to stop enrollment for the following month.
- No refunds are given for lessons that are not taken.
- At the discretion of the teacher, a student will be dismissed from my studio for any of the following reasons, including, but not limited to:
 - Consistent late payments, practice habits that are not in line with studio requirements, lack of motivation and progress, excessive absences or tardiness, failure to abide by studio policies, consistently not bringing materials to lessons, refusing to follow the weekly assignment, continual misbehavior, inappropriate or disrespectful behavior towards myself, my family, or my home, or theft.

is there anything else we need to know?

- Parents should observe the first few months of lessons for children ages 10 and under so that you can help them with their home practice.
- Be sure your child comes to lessons with clean hands and fingernails trimmed.
- My studio includes a private restroom and a parent waiting area. If younger siblings attend the lesson, they should remain quiet.
- No gum, food, or drinks are allowed in the studio.
- Shoes are not allowed in the studio. When you enter the studio, place your shoes in the designated area. You are welcome to bring slippers or socks to wear while in the studio. You'll see me in slippers all winter!
- If you have questions about your child's progress or need to discuss something related to lessons, I can be reached by email or text. I'm always happy to talk with you about your child.

we're ready to sign up! what do we do next?

- Parents of new students need to complete and digitally sign the [online enrollment form](#) (click the link to access it).
- Once I receive the enrollment form, we'll schedule a mini-lesson.
- Then you'll pay the enrollment fee, and we'll schedule our weekly lessons.
- I can hardly wait to help your child get started on a fun and amazing musical journey!