Warming Up at the Piano

Warming up your fingers and hands at the keyboard each day before you practice is a vital part of the practice process! It gets the muscles working, stretched, and relaxed so that we are physically ready to take on the music. Like an athlete who stretches and warms-up before an event, a pianist must have an efficient warm-up routine that utilizes the hands and fingers in different ways to get the muscles moving. Using these warm-ups effectively will create a good foundation for playing difficult passages in the Classical repertoire. Your warm-up should be comprised of 5-6 minutes of exercises detailed below.

First, make sure you’re seated comfortably at the piano:

- Place your feet flat on the ground (or have your right foot resting comfortably on top of the pedal while your left foot is on the ground).
- Be seated near the front edge of the bench. Sit with your back straight (no slouching!) with a tendency to lean toward the keyboard instead of away.
- Ensure that you’re sitting at the right height. When the hands are on the keyboard, the upper and lower arm should create an “L” shape; approximately a 90-degree angle.

After making sure your body is in a comfortable position, let your arms hang down by your sides, shake out and relax your shoulders and arms, then pull your hands up to the piano and rest them on the keys. You’re ready to warm-up!

Reminder: Piano Fingering Notation
Basic Warm-Ups

Scales and Arpeggios

*Note:* as you develop a more advanced piano technique, feel free to play scales and arpeggios in other keys. Begin Module 1 scales and arpeggios in C major and add further keys in later modules as you see fit throughout your warm-up sessions.

Begin your warm-up by practicing a two-octave C major *scale* at a comfortable speed, as notated below. Begin hands separately, then join both hands together:

![Two-Octave C Major Scale](image1)

Once you are comfortable with C major, practice G major and D major scales in two-octaves. Begin hands separately, then join both hands together:

G Major, Two-Octave Scale

![Two-Octave G Major Scale](image2)

D Major, Two-Octave Scale

![Two-Octave D Major Scale](image3)
Once you’ve finished working on scales, practice a two-octave C major arpeggio at a comfortable speed, as notated below. Begin hands separately, then join both hands.

Once you are comfortable with C major, practice G major and D major arpeggios in two-octaves. Begin hands separately, then join the hands:

**G Major, Two-Octave Arpeggio**

**D Major, Two-Octave Arpeggio**
Scales and Arpeggios in Contrary Motion

Practicing scales and arpeggios in contrary motion is a useful way to get the brain working in your daily warm-ups. Contrary motion appears throughout the Classical piano repertoire and emphasizes hand independence and hand symmetry. Practicing contrary motion is helpful for building and maintaining a strong piano technique.

A contrary motion scale is exactly what the name suggests: two hands moving in opposite directions at the same time. This may be difficult initially, but it will become much easier with time and practice.

Begin with a two-octave C major scale in contrary motion:

Then, move to a two-octave C major arpeggio in contrary motion: