

Studio Policies & Guidelines

General Lesson Information

Instructors' Responsibilities

As teachers, it is our responsibility to bring out students' individual musical talents within a well-rounded education, providing a positive and enthusiastic atmosphere for learning & catering the lesson materials to match their specific goals and overall stylistic preferences. We will also strive to ensure that all lessons begin and end on time in order to respect the scheduling constraints of today's busy families.

Students' Responsibilities

Students agree to do their best to arrive to each lesson punctually and with their assignment books/binders and music. To make good progress, practice is necessary (See more in the sections on practice recommendations and "What to Expect from a Music Lesson"). We want you to completely understand every assignment; please read your assignment before each practice session, and always feel free to ask questions (including calls or emails during the week if something is tripping you up!). Parents may also sit in on any lessons they like (though they are not required to do so).

Piano Students must have at least a full-size (88 weighted keys) digital or acoustic piano available for regular practice. You can start lessons without one, but you can't continue for long without something suitable on which to practice. Please feel free to email for guidance in this area.

Commitment

When students enroll, they are reserving their place in the studio for the entire year. Though many students continue through the entirety of the summer, (barring some vacations, etc.),

all continuing students are expected to register for a minimum of six (6) summer lessons. (Summer = the 10 weeks between June & mid-August) This minimum summer enrollment reserves your place in the studio for the following school year. There are many other reasons why summer lessons are massively beneficial (i.e., helping to protect the intellectual progress & retention in which you've invested), and you can read more about those reasons [here](#).

NOTE: Although it behooves students to make a commitment to their lessons as described above, this is not to be construed as a contractual obligation for any specified period of time. You are free to cancel your lessons at any time and for any reason. Our only request is that you do so **two weeks in advance**, barring emergencies. This eliminates the problem of your paying for lessons you don't intend to have while also aiding in the budgeting process for the studios.

Scheduling & Tuition

Payment Schedule & Methods

Studio Tuition should be paid on a monthly basis (**due by the 25th of each month for the upcoming month**). Each month, the tuition is the same amount (see your tuition package for details). Check and card payments are accepted, and we have an online payment system as well. Monthly payment plans are the minimum standard.

Late or Returned Payments: Tuition is officially past due on the **5th of the month**, and there will be a \$10 late charge assessed at that time. **Accounts that are past due as of the 15th of the month will result in lessons being discontinued until the account is current, and you may risk losing your lesson time.** If a check is returned, there will be a \$25.00 charge (plus any bank charges that may be incurred).

PLEASE NOTE: Flat-Rate Tuition (adopted by professional studios worldwide) is calculated by looking at our annual calendar, and all payments are divided **equally** each month as a result (whether you end up with 3, 4, or 5 lessons in that given month, it all evens out in the

end). Weeks in which there are no lessons during the year (e.g., Thanksgiving, Spring Break, etc.) are not a part of the tuition package. Please [click here](#) for a visual of what we are describing, and see the [Online Calendar](#) on our website (plus, emailed reminders) each year for those exact dates.

Annual Registration Fee: In addition to the monthly tuition described above, each student pays a \$35 annual registration fee (due in the Fall, with a monthly proration for those who start later in the year). *Different Materials Fees may be included with Kindermusik and some Group Classes throughout the year. See those pages and consult with instructors for more details.*

Cancellation Policy

Inclement Weather: Any missed lessons due to weather will be provided with makeup options (or an online lesson when viable), & we will certainly communicate if/when these days occur. [Click here](#) for our full Inclement Weather statement.

If an instructor needs to miss or reschedule a lesson, he or she will work to find an easy solution that does not inconvenience the student's schedule. Options might include having a substitute teacher in place for that session.

Canceled Lessons: No payment credit will be provided for students who miss lessons for any reason. To provide further clarity for those unfamiliar with music lessons and the guidelines of the NCMTA: the tuition you pay reserves you a coveted position within our school and a time reserved in our scheduling block; Music Lab, Piano Lab, and its instructors cannot function as a professional studio without the regularly scheduled income from the time slots being reserved by those enrolled with us. It is also infeasible (and a LOT of extra work!) for instructors to change their schedules every week for even 4-5 students, and there are much better ways for everyone to make up for missed time! Read on...

Options for Making Up for Missed Lesson Time

We are so pleased to be able to offer a wide variety of viable options for today's busy families (more so than any other studio we've encountered), in addition to the hard work we have passionately poured into the creation of our AMPED Program Series. We list these options below in the order that we believe will be the most useful and feasible for most students.

Option 1: The AMPED Series.

Take advantage of the ridiculous number of opportunities to get MORE than your tuition's worth! [Click here](#) to read more. Any one of our supplementary classes/workshops/events is easily worth two missed lessons, and they are all free to our students, regardless of whether or not you have missed any lessons. We will be sending out a complete calendar of events for the school year.

Option 2: Group Classes

Please feel free to inquire further, but the summary is that our Group Classes allow for yet another great option where you can arrange to attend one of these classes at some point if you aren't able to make your regular lesson appt.

Option 3: Lesson Swap Program

We know that sometimes sports or other activities that are seasonal may change their schedules at times, causing families to need (at least temporarily) to switch their lesson appts. This is a case where plenty of advance notice would be the norm. We can assist in sending out your request for a lesson-swap to other student families, as this can sometimes be very helpful. A request may be for a specified/shorter amount of time, or it may be a request for a permanent switch. It's a beautiful thing when a switch is both easy & mutually beneficial!

Option 4: Skype Lessons or Video-Recorded Lessons

Sometimes, students can't make their lesson appt. because of travel issues or a slight bout of the sniffles (or even because a parent is sick or gone unexpectedly and can't bring them), or inclement weather, or any number of random reasons that don't allow them to make it to the studio, and yet, they are capable of having the lesson at their regularly scheduled time. In that case, another great option is a Skype (or Facetime, etc.) lesson with the teacher.

You would be amazed at how fun and effective these can be, as well as a great tool for helping keep the continuity in the learning process from week-to-week. These can happen with very short notice, since we have equipment in the studios that the teacher can use on-the-spot during the student's lesson time.

If a student can't use the Skype option (doesn't have access to internet, etc.) and has challenges using other options for making up missed time, then the teacher can use the lesson time to record a **video lesson** and send it for the student to view and utilize when they are able.

Option 5: Flex Weeks

When you look over our studio calendar for the year and factor in your flat-rate tuition, you will immediately realize that you are not paying for the holiday weeks (of which there are four). At your instructor's discretion, some part of those four weeks of the year may also be used for prescheduled makeup time. Your instructor may schedule a special set of group classes, events, private sessions, or a combination of all of the above on particular days and will be in touch with you as needed. We can predict that these will be slipped in *very* sparingly and for unique reasons (i.e., special needs of a student, or a big upcoming performance/audition preparation).

Reminder: If you need to cease lessons altogether, we simply ask for no less than two weeks' notice. Any tuition that has been paid beyond that two weeks will be refunded.

What Tuition Includes

Tuition covers not only the actual lesson time spent with the student, but prep time outside the lesson, as well as maintaining a state-of-the-art music studio.

This includes, but is not limited to:

- An individualized plan for each student's course of study
- Development of teaching materials, often including pieces composed or arranged specifically for the student

- Professional Organization Memberships (creating larger access to resources, events & scholarships for students)
 - Our Music Lending Library, Sheet Music & Theory Materials
 - Online Subscriptions and Apps for Students
 - Support Outside of the Lesson Time
 - Masterclasses, the Adult Amateur Performance Group, Recitals, Music Parties, & other student events
- hosted and/or arranged specifically by our studios at no additional charge.

Practice Recommendations

It is recommended that all students below age 6 practice with their parents/guardians for at least 15-20 min./day, 6 days per week, and all students ages 6-10 have at least two (2) hours of private, scheduled practice time per week. This breaks down to 30 minutes, four days a week (or about 24 min., 5 days/wk). This number should rise gradually along with the maturity level & increased detail & amount of a student's music-making. This is the bare minimum for reasonable progress, an ideal starting point, with some additional time thrown in "just for fun,"—to improvise, try new things, etc. Ask your teacher for additional guidance catered specifically to your needs & circumstances.

Materials

Students must have the following with them when practicing AND when coming to their lessons (A designated "music bag" can help to keep them all together!):

1. ALL music being worked on in lessons.
2. Any scale sheets, homework, flashcards, & exercises given.
3. A pencil (not a pen).
4. A three-ring binder, in which to keep all materials mentioned above.
5. Assignment Sheets or Book (which you will acquire from us; this will be for weekly assignments, important practice tips, note-taking, etc.)

What to Expect from a Music Lesson

First, a reminder from “Practice Recommendations (see [above](#)): A music lesson is where one is given the tools with which to actually learn music. Nobody can study something as complex as music for just one hour or less per week and expect to get very far: most of the actual retention time is spent during the other 6 days.

But this is the point where many teaching philosophies stop, in our opinion. It is fine to tell the student that he or she must practice for a certain amount of time each day (varying a bit according to age, goals, etc.), and it’s great if they actually put in that time. However, this leaves out another crucial element: knowing *how* to practice. The student must be taught the right way to go about it—the different types of practice at the various stages of learning a piece, which lead up to its performance; the importance of rhythm and tempo (taking it slowly enough at first, gradually building); how to pace yourself and memorize in sections, etc...

Our basic point is this: Not just the assigned music, but the tools with which to work on the music are an important element in the teaching at Music Lab, and we think, a clue to the success of many of our students when they apply this quality approach throughout the week. It is a partnership; the student cannot be expected to learn fluently without proper guidance, nor can teachers be expected to work miracles without the student’s following of the guidelines.

Not every lesson will be the same, but each will generally include some portions of the three main elements: Technical (finger or vocal) work, Repertoire (pieces), and Theory (ear-training, note-reading, rhythm, improvisation, etc.). All students will have the opportunity to explore a variety of styles & , of course, you will have a greater say in precisely what styles & musical topics.

Now would be a good time to reiterate that any and all guidelines are written down in the student’s weekly Assignments (see “Materials”) so that there is absolutely no question of

what the teacher has prescribed for the week. The student is not expected to have a perfect memory, after all, but simply to read what has been written. A few more quick guidelines:

***It is important that there be no distractions during your home practice (just as if you were studying for math class): no phone, TV, other people playing/talking in the room, etc. Also, if any day of practice would be the most important, it would be the day following the lesson (while the memory of the lesson itself is more fresh).**

***Pianists: when playing properly (with curved fingers), the fingernails should not click (for MANY reasons!). Nails should be trimmed prior to practice & lessons (if not, we may have to take time out of the lesson to clip them!).**

***We would rather save larger discussions (longer than 1-2 min.) regarding schedule changes, student progress, billing questions, etc. for outside of the lesson time (usually via email or phone if another appt. follows yours, which is generally the case) and reserve lesson time for music study specifically. We are happy to receive questions at any time and are prompt to respond via email, text, or phone.**

Music-making can be one of the most rewarding and enjoyable experiences of a person's life no matter what age you begin or restart! All one needs is a desire to learn and a willingness to jump in, put in real effort, and be pleasantly surprised at what begins to happen. ☺ We look forward to helping you create this experience!