

“STUDIO INFORMATION and TEACHER GOALS”
for the 2011-2012 Teaching Year
Studio of Shelagh McKibbon-U’Ren, R.M.T., U.M.T.C.

Thank you for your interest in piano lessons. My goal is to help each Student build and develop a strong foundation in music. All areas of music (sight-reading, ear training, technique, theory, performance, etc.) are taught. I want my Students to understand and read music properly, so that they will be able to play music with confidence. I help my Students aim for the highest achievements possible through the Royal Conservatory of Music. I will also work with those Students who wish to learn simply for “fun”.

My goal is to help create an interest and curiosity that will encourage the student to want to learn. I strive to make lessons interesting and fun. Realistically, no student or teacher can expect that lessons will always be exciting. There will be times of stress and discouragement - this is a normal part of developing a skill. However, I try to be sensitive to these times in the student's life.

My goal is to teach my students to teach themselves – to foster independence in approaching music. I teach my students how to practice. A large responsibility lies with the student to do as the teacher has instructed, but I am very aware of my responsibility to provide the proper type of instruction. It is also important that the Parent/Guardian takes a part in accepting their responsibility for encouraging and enabling the student to practice regularly and as instructed.

The learning process for each Student is different. I work with the Student to help them develop their own musical abilities. I am very flexible in my teaching. I do not mind working at a “slow and steady” pace and I also do not mind “pushing” a Student to work to their best potential. It is important to me that Parents/Guardians are also respectful of their child’s unique learning styles.

Progress depends on many factors, including age, reading ability and strength, quality of practice time, number of songs that the Student is willing to practice each week, their ability and willingness to follow all practice instructions, and their concentration skills. Encouragement and positive praise, both at the lesson and at home, are a very important part of the learning process.

At the Beginner (or “Pre-Conservatory”) Level, if your child only wishes to practice 2 to 4 songs each week, their progress will be slow. The more songs that a child is willing to practice each week, the faster their progress should be. I ask each Student at the Pre-Conservatory level how many songs he/she wishes to have each week. This allows the Student to develop responsibility for, and ownership of his/her own practicing expectations. If you wish for the Student to progress at a faster rate, please let me know and together we can encourage the Student to commit to a greater practicing expectation.

All students are required to practice regularly! Practice times vary from one level to the next. It is also expected that the Student will follow the directions written in his/her music and/or dictation book during their practicing sessions, and complete **all written work** as assigned. It is very important that the Student (especially the beginner Student) gets into the habit of doing “aloud” work out loud. When a Student practices and counts aloud, or says the letter names aloud (and not just “in their head”), they are reinforcing the concepts being taught and they will develop a stronger musical foundation.

The following practice times are a guideline only. The quality of the practice session is much more important than the quantity of time spent practicing.

- Beginner Students (Alfred’s Prep A/B) are expected to practice 3 to 5 times a week. Practicing should take approximately 5 to 15 minutes per practice session. Each song should be repeated at least 4 times at each practice session.
- Level 1/Alfred’s Prep C Students are expected to practice 4 to 5 times a week. Practicing should take approximately 20 to 30 minutes per practice session. Each song should be repeated at least 4 times at each practice session.
- Level 2 and Preparatory A & B Royal Conservatory of Music Students are expected to practice 4 to 5 times a week. Practicing should take approximately 30 to 45 minutes per practice session. Each song should be repeated at least 4 times at each practice session.
- Grades 1 and 2 Royal Conservatory of Music Students are expected to practice 4 to 5 times a week. Practicing should take approximately 45 minutes per practice session.
- Grades 3 to 6 Royal Conservatory of Music Students are expected to practice 4 to 6 times a week. Practicing should take approximately 60 to 75 minutes per practice session.
- Grades 7 to 10 Students are expected to practice daily. Practicing should take approximately 75 to 90 minutes.

It is very important that the Student is practicing on a suitable instrument. If the Student is not practicing on a Piano or a Full-Size Digital Keyboard (Electric Piano with weighted keys), the Student will experience difficulties musically. Pianos need to be tuned yearly. If you do not have a Piano Tuner, I recommend Al’s Piano Shop – 613-345-6578.

It is also very important to have regular eye exams, even when your child’s vision seems to be fine! Regular check-ups can detect "silent" conditions that could lead to blindness (such as glaucoma) so that they can be treated early. Children who are having trouble learning or reading at school may have a vision problem that can be found with a check-up and corrected.

A proper music education must start with the proper books (just as learning how to play hockey requires the purchase and upgrading of the necessary equipment). There are a minimum number of necessary books required at each level. As I cannot predict the musical progress of each student, I cannot guarantee how long a set of books will last. It will be necessary to purchase new books as the student completes each level. It may be necessary to purchase additional books if a student is struggling in an area in their playing or writing. I will arrange to purchase the necessary books required by the Student. The Parent/Guardian is expected to reimburse me within 14 days.

As a piano instructor, I try to support and care for all my students and families in a special way. One-on-one education is very concentrated, and the bond between teacher and student can grow quite strong. Nevertheless, I reserve the right to dismiss a student for consistent lack of preparation, excessive absences, disrespectful attitude, failure to pay tuition in a timely manner, and not adhering to the Studio Policies.

My role is to provide piano instruction to interested pupils who will, with their Parents/Guardians, support that instruction with regular attendance, consistent practicing and completion of assignments. Failure on the part of students and parents/guardians to provide that support may result in discontinuance of lessons.

It is also important that the Parent/Guardian understands that just as you cannot have a swimming lesson if you don't bring your swimsuit; and you cannot have a figure skating lesson if you don't bring your figure skates; you cannot have a piano lesson if you don't bring your piano books. If the student does not have their lesson books when it is their lesson time, the lesson is forfeited.

Thank you for understanding that my teaching is my full-time employment and that I am self-employed. I rely on this income to support my family. Enrolling for lessons is a purchase of "teacher and studio" time. I endeavor to run my studio in a fair and professional manner. As a Registered Music Teacher and as an active member of the Ontario Registered Music Teachers Association (ORMTA), there are also rules that I must follow in my Studio.

If a lesson time becomes available, you will receive a "**Registration Package**" and you will have the opportunity to review this package before confirming your registration.

The important points are:

♪ *Private Music Lessons are based upon a \$20.00 per 30-minute lesson fee.*

♪ *For students registering for lessons mid-year, you will be required to submit post-dated cheques covering the remaining months in the teaching year. Each cheque will cover the lessons in one calendar month and will be dated for the 1st of each month. Your "Registration Package" will include a list of lesson dates for each month, and the lesson amount due for each month.*

♪ *If you prefer to pay in Cash, you will have the option of signing a "**Cash Payment Agreement**" form. This agreement will require you to:*

- *contract to pay for lesson fees in advance 2 months at a time.*
- *contract to give the payment to your Teacher for the next 2-month session on or before the last lesson of each 2-month session.*
- *contract to pay a late fee of \$5 for each week, or part thereof, that the lesson fee is late.*
- *contract to agree to give 2 months written notice in the event that you need to terminate the lessons.*

♪ *For students who pay with post-dated cheques: if it is necessary to terminate lessons mid-year, advance notice of **ONE CALENDAR MONTHS** must be given in writing to your Teacher. (For example, if lessons are to be terminated April 30th, your Teacher must receive written notification by February 28th.) Post-dated cheques for the months dated after the final lesson will be returned to the*

parent/guardian upon receipt of appropriate notice and once the final lesson date has been agreed upon (and assuming that all invoices are paid in full).

♪ Your lesson fee does not ensure that you will receive a lesson at a time that is convenient to you each week. Your lesson fee ensures that your lesson time slot is reserved for your lesson each week and a commitment to attend your lesson at that time is expected. Therefore, you will not receive a rescheduled lesson time nor will you receive a credit/refund whenever it is not convenient for you to attend your lesson at your lesson time for any reason (illness, family holiday, school activity, bus cancellation, etc.).

♪ All students can join the “Swap List” – a list of parents and students who are willing to “swap” lesson times in order to accommodate an illness, family vacation or school activity. It is the parent’s responsibility to contact someone on the Swap List if you need to swap your lesson time. The Swap List is emailed to parents and updated as required.

For students taking lessons at Ange-Gabriel:

♪ Lesson times are often adjusted during the teaching day to accommodate Classroom Teacher requests, etc. If a student has been marked absent at school for any reason, lesson times may also be adjusted. Parents, if you would like to bring your child to the school for their lesson only, please contact the Teacher beforehand to confirm the lesson time for your child. The Teacher will not wait around at the school once all students who are at school with their books have received their lesson. (This is especially true on Bus Cancellation days. Lessons on these days can also be arranged at the Teacher’s Home Studio. However, the parent **MUST** contact the Teacher before 10:00 a.m. if you would like the student to have their lesson at the Teacher’s Home Studio on a bus cancellation day.)

If you are interested in registering for Piano Lessons, please complete the “**Waiting List Form**” and return it to me as soon as possible. When a lesson time becomes available, I will contact you.

Do not hesitate to contact me if you have any questions!

Shelagh McKibbon-U’Ren R.M.T., U.M.T.C.

Registered Music Teacher

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