

Blog



My first piano lessons and why I quit

I started lessons in second grade and quit after a few months. Here's why and what I learned.

My mom signed me up for piano lessons with a local church organist when I was in second grade. She started me out with 5-finger exercises in C-position and in John Thompson's First Grade Book.

After a few months of watching the clock painfully tick off each second of practice time, I quit. Here's why I abandoned piano lessons for watching Duck Tales, but what I learned.

Don't Discount Practice Minutes, But Focus on Realistic Goals and Musicality.

As a beginning piano student, I felt like my mind and coordination could hardly keep up and do what was expected.

Adding practice time is an adjustment and requires additional discipline and focus that usually needs to be built up over time. Especially early on, piano students do not have enough music to fill up 20 minutes of practice, 5 days a week. Instead, I ask them to practice so many times through each piece. I teach my students practice tips and ask them to incorporate one tip each week. Gradually, they learn both effective practice and build up their practicing muscles!

I obviously was not enjoying piano enough to devote the required practice time. As I teach, I focus on nurturing a love of musical expression with my students. I direct them to practice towards achieving goals and letting their enjoyment of the music motivate them to practice. If you enjoy it, you'll stick with it over the longterm and eventually spend more time practicing.

Pick Good Songs

Getting students to learn a few songs early on and to feel like a "real piano player" quickly is key. Although I quit lessons, my teacher had done a great job of picking songs

I enjoyed. I understand some methods discourage teaching songs in the same hand positions early on. However, personally, I like to get my students feeling a sense of accomplishment, quickly. It motivates them to continue studying.

Focus on Theory and Technique to the Extent That It Promotes the Enjoyment of Music.

Here's where your personal musical goals come into play. If you're interested in composing, then we can focus on theory. But for most kids, they come in wanting to play songs they enjoy. In a short amount of time, my teacher had empowered me with theory basics that enabled me to starting playing piano again on my own a couple years later.

Inspire and Connect.

My teacher failed to inspire or connect with me. Students get inspired through other performers, regular encouragement, feeling part of a musical community, and by opportunities to see their own music impacting others. I connect with local music organizations to provide a musical community and performance opportunities. I develop relationships with my students and encourage them to reach their fullest potential. Before I start lessons, I have an informational interview with each student to ensure we both feel comfortable working together.

Sometimes You're Just Not Ready...But When You Are, It's Amazing.

Like I mentioned earlier, a couple years after quitting lessons, I started playing and practicing again on my own. I began to really enjoy music and the ability to create beautiful sounds motivated me. When my family was able to provide regular lessons again (we lived in Africa for a while), God eventually gave me a teacher who truly inspired me, taught me to play musically, and showed me how to impact others with my music. That one teacher transformed my playing in a just a couple years. I want to be that teacher for you and that's why I teach. But that's another post!



Let's Talk Motivation...

Enjoying music, a personal connection and a few treats along the way...

Enjoying Music

Most students start lessons because there was something about the piano and music that connected with them. It gave them the desire to work at learning it. What was it that caused you to pick up the phone and search “find local piano teachers”? That reason is why you are here—hoping that studying piano will add a measure of personal enjoyment to your life.

Music is the language of emotion. Therefore, I focus a lot on musical expression and technique. If you love how a song makes you feel, then you’ll be motivated to learn the notes, theory, and technique necessary to play the song.

But I also want you to feel a sense of accomplishment and proud of what you’ve learned. Practice does require effort. So, I hold you accountable, challenge you, and encourage you when you succeed.

Personal Connection

Yes, I truly do want to know that your favorite color is green and you like playing with action figures, don't prefer math, but your favorite subject is recess. It helps us connect and build a relationship so we can work together successfully.

A Few Treats Along the Way

This part I am very excited about. I have used Keys to Imagination products in the past, and am thrilled to use their motivation games, again. This year we will be taking a “Walk on the Wild Side” with a full-out safari theme. This comprehensive game includes colorful assignment books, scrapbook stickers, and additional learning opportunities. Students move along the board as they practice each week and visit/collect as many animal as they can. Get your passport ready!