

# KeyNotes Piano Studio

## Studio Handbook and Policies

Revised: March 2026



# KeyNotes

piano studio

[www.keynotespianostudio.com](http://www.keynotespianostudio.com)  
(850) 322-8746  
[info@keynotespianostudio.com](mailto:info@keynotespianostudio.com)

## Welcome Letter

Dear Parents and Students,

Welcome to our thriving studio! We are delighted that you have chosen KeyNotes Piano Studio to begin or continue an exciting journey through music. Since 1996, we have offered exceptional instruction in piano, voice, composition, improvisation, and guitar—either in our beautiful home-based studio or worldwide via the Internet.

Because we deeply believe in the intrinsic value of a musical education, we take very seriously the responsibility and trust you have placed in us. We assure you that you and your loved ones will receive the highest level of music instruction possible.

This handbook has been carefully designed to help you make the most of your musical journey. A significant amount of effort—and three decades of teaching experience—have gone into its creation. Please read it thoroughly and consider implementing the ideas it contains. As always, we are available to answer any additional questions or concerns you may have.

Thank you,

Jaime García-Bolao, NCTM, FRSM

*Jaime García Bolao*

## The Partnership for Musical Success

Success in learning an instrument is a collaborative journey. While we take responsibility for guiding the curriculum and providing high-quality instruction, progress truly flourishes when all three parties—**Student, Parents, and Instructor**—work together in harmony.

### 1. The Student

A student's primary role is to bridge the gap between lessons through **consistent, thoughtful practice**.

- **Frequency over Duration:** Aim for at least five to six days of practice per week. While one rest day is encouraged, try not to take it on your lesson day.
- **The "Golden Hour":** Whenever possible, practice shortly after your lesson. This is when the new concepts are freshest and the risk of "forgetting" is lowest.
- **Accountability:** Keeping a simple practice log (digital or physical) helps us track progress together and identify where you might need more support.

### 2. The Parent(s)

Parental involvement is the single greatest predictor of a student's long-term success. Regardless of your own musical background, your support transforms lessons from a "chore" into a rewarding lifestyle.

- **Create the Space:** Ensure the student has a well-lit, quiet environment and a well-maintained instrument. A distraction-free zone is essential for deep focus.
- **Active Encouragement:** Especially for younger learners (ages 3–6), "supervision" should feel like "participation." For older students,

showing interest by being an "active audience" once a month can provide a massive boost in confidence.

- **Prioritize the Schedule:** Consistency is key. By helping your child establish a dedicated time for music in their daily routine, you emphasize that their musical growth is a priority.

### 3. The Instructor

As your instructor, my commitment is to remain at the forefront of music education. I view teaching as a lifelong learning process.

- **Professional Affiliations:** I am an active member of the **Music Teachers National Association (MTNA)**, the **Florida State Music Teachers Association (FSMTA)**, and the **Tallahassee Music Teachers Association**. I also serve as an adjudicator for the **American College of Musicians**.
- **Continuing Education:** I attend several national and state conferences annually to integrate modern pedagogy and technology into our lessons.
- **Certified Excellence:** Since 2015, I have held the **Nationally Certified Teacher of Music (NCTM)** designation in Piano. This credential, issued by the MTNA, is based on rigorous standards of teacher competency and requires yearly renewal to ensure my methods remain current and effective.

## New Student Consultation & Admission

Before officially beginning our journey together, we hold an introductory interview for each prospective student. This session is **complimentary and carries no obligation**.

### Purpose of the Session:

- **Getting Acquainted:** It's important for the student and instructor to find a good "rhythmic" fit. We want to learn about the student's

musical interests, their current abilities, and what motivates them to play.

- **Setting the Foundation:** This is the perfect time for parents to ask questions and become familiar with our studio policies, learning resources, and long-term expectations.
- **Tailored Planning:** By understanding a student's goals from day one, we can customize a curriculum that keeps them engaged and excited.

## Lesson Etiquette & Environment

To ensure every lesson is productive, focused, and safe, we ask that students and families follow these studio guidelines.

### Parent Observation

We maintain an **open-door policy** and encourage parents to observe lessons.

- **The Benefit:** Observing helps you stay informed of your child's progress and gives you the "tools" needed to support them during mid-week practice.
- **The Environment:** To keep the student's focus on the music, we ask that observers remain quiet. Please refrain from interjecting during the instruction.
- **Siblings:** We love musical families! However, to maintain a professional learning space, please ensure that siblings in the room remain quiet and occupied.

### Safety & Supervision

The safety and comfort of both the student and the instructor are our highest priorities.

- **Adult Presence:** For the protection of everyone involved, a parent or guardian (aged 18 or older) **must remain on-site** for the duration of the lesson.
- **Policy:** At no time should a minor student be left alone with the instructor. This aligns with modern youth protection standards and ensures a transparent, professional environment.
- **Emergencies:** If an emergency requires the supervising adult to leave the premises, the lesson will conclude immediately, and we will work together to schedule a make-up session.

## Digital Resources & Recording

To enhance the learning experience, **lessons are recorded.**

- **Review & Refine:** These recordings serve as a powerful practice tool, allowing students to review specific techniques or instructions between lessons.
- **Privacy:** All recordings are kept secure and are intended solely for educational purposes within the student-teacher-parent triad.

## Practice Guidelines & Communication

### Weekly Assignments

Each week, students receive a tailored assignment plan. This isn't just "playing through songs"—it's a mix of:

- **New Repertoire:** Building fresh skills.
- **Polished Pieces:** Working on artistry and memorization.
- **Creative Projects:** Composition, theory exercises, and technical "workouts."
- **Concept Reinforcement:** Targeted activities to master specific musical ideas.
- **Consistency is the secret to progress.** Completing the full assignment each week ensures we can move forward during our next session without having to "re-learn" old material.

## Suggested Practice Framework

While every student learns at a different pace, these timeframes are proven benchmarks for steady growth. The goal is **daily contact** with the instrument to build understanding and muscle memory.

Level	Recommended Commitment	Frequency
Levels 1–2A	20+ minutes	6 days / week
Levels 2B–3B	30+ minutes	5+ days / week
Level 4 & Above	40+ minutes	5+ days / week

**Pro Tip:** Quality beats quantity. Twenty minutes of focused, distraction-free practice is much more effective than an hour of "noodling" while watching TV!

## Staying in Touch

Open communication is vital. If you're stuck on a difficult measure or have a question about a theory page, please don't wait until next week to ask!

### Text (Preferred)

**Phone: (850) 322-8746**

Texting is the fastest way to reach us. We check our messages between lessons and can often give you a quick "yes/no" or a helpful hint right away.

### Calls

If you prefer to speak over the phone, please leave a voicemail. Because we are usually at the bench with a student, we don't answer live calls during studio hours (**Wed–Sun, 9:00 AM – 8:00 PM**), but we return messages at the end of our teaching blocks.

### Email & Web

- **Email:** [info@keynotespianostudio.com](mailto:info@keynotespianostudio.com) (Best for non-urgent policy or scheduling questions).
- **Website:** [www.keynotespianostudio.com](http://www.keynotespianostudio.com) — Visit our digital hub for recital directions, the studio calendar, and downloadable resources

### Newsletter

*The KeyNotes Chronicle* is our monthly newsletter designed to keep everyone informed and inspired. Each issue features practical tips to support effective practice, an updated calendar with important dates and events, and a special **Student of the Month** spotlight celebrating achievement and dedication.

## Cancellation & Make-up Policy

To maintain a consistent learning pace and respect the studio's schedule, we have established the following guidelines for missed or rescheduled lessons.

### Student Illness

Health comes first. To protect all students and the instructor, please reschedule your lesson if the student has a contagious illness. \* The Benefit: We will prioritize scheduling a make-up session so the student doesn't fall behind.

- Modern Alternative: If the student is feeling well enough to play but is contagious, we can always pivot to a Virtual Lesson via Google Meet or FaceTime during your regularly scheduled time.

### Inclement Weather

In the event of hazardous driving conditions or local weather warnings:

- Notifications: You will receive a text as soon as possible if we need to cancel due to weather.
- Rescheduling: We will work together to find a make-up time, or we may opt for a virtual session if Internet service is stable.

### Rescheduling & Cancellations

We strive to attend every scheduled lesson. If we must cancel for any reason, a make-up lesson will always be provided at a mutually convenient time.

- 24-Hour Notice: To cancel or reschedule, please provide at least 24 hours' notice via text or phone at (850) 322-8746.
- Advanced Notice: For changes more than 48 hours in advance, feel free to email: [info@keynotespianostudio.com](mailto:info@keynotespianostudio.com).

- **No-Show Policy:** Lessons missed without any prior notice (no-shows) are not eligible for a make-up lesson, refund, or credit.

## Performance Opportunities & Recitals

At **KeyNotes Piano Studio**, we believe music is a language meant to be shared. Every student—child or adult, beginner or advanced—has multiple opportunities to perform in professional settings throughout the year.

### Our Signature Events

- **Annual Studio Recitals (December & May):** These are the highlights of our year, held at the world-class facilities of the **Florida State University College of Music** and other venues throughout Tallahassee. These formal events allow students to showcase their progress, gain inspiration from their peers, and build stage confidence.
- **Halloween Recital (October):** A fun, themed performance that allows students to share their music in a relaxed, festive atmosphere.
- **Masterclasses:** Once per semester, we hold masterclasses and group classes, where students can perform "works in progress" and receive constructive feedback in a supportive group setting.

### Adult Piano Performance Forums

We offer a dedicated space specifically for our adult learners. These voluntary meetings are a wonderful way to connect with other adult pianists, share music, and find inspiration in a low-pressure environment. While adults are always encouraged to participate in our formal recitals, these forums offer a more intimate alternative.

### Festivals & Competitions

For more ambitious students, we provide guidance and preparation for local, state, and national festivals and competitions.

## Senior Recitals

To celebrate a decade of dedication, every graduating senior who has studied with the studio for ten years or more is entitled to a **Solo Senior Recital** at the FSU College of Music. The studio covers all costs associated with these milestone events.

## Performance Policies

- **Participation:** While recitals are not mandatory, they are a vital part of musical growth. We strongly encourage every student to participate. (Note: Scholarship recipients are required to perform).
- **Recital Fees & Scheduling:** There is **no separate fee** to perform in studio recitals. To account for the extensive time and resources required to organize these professional events, the performance and its preparation are valued as two lessons. Consequently, **the studio is closed for the two weeks immediately following a major recital** to allow for a post-performance break.
- **Receptions:** Most of our performances conclude with a reception. It's a wonderful time for our studio community to celebrate and socialize!

## Recital Etiquette: For Performers & Guests

A recital is a celebration of hard work and artistry. To ensure every student has the best possible experience, we ask all performers and audience members to follow these professional standards of concert etiquette.

### For the Performers

**Concert Attire** Dress clothes show respect for your audience and your own hard work.

- **Suggestions:** Dress pants with a button-down shirt (ties/suits are great!), or knee-length (or longer) dresses and slacks.

- **Avoid:** Flip-flops, athletic shoes, platform heels, or noisy/dangling jewelry.
- **Pro Tip:** Practice in your recital outfit—including your shoes—at least once before the big day!

### On Stage Presence

- **The Bow:** We will practice this in lessons! Performers should bow both before and after their performance to acknowledge the audience.
- **Take Your Time:** When you reach the piano, adjust the bench and take a moment to breathe. Don't feel rushed to start until you are ready.

### During the Program

- Arrive at the designated call time to find your seat and receive final instructions.
  - When not performing, lead by example: listen quietly and support your fellow musicians.
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## For the Audience

**Atmosphere of Respect** The recital hall is a place for active, quiet listening. Please ensure cell phones are turned off or set to silent, and refrain from whispering, unwrapping candy, or using electronic devices during the performances.

### Entry & Exit

- **Stay for the Duration:** It is vital to stay until the very end of the program. Leaving early is disruptive and unfair to the students performing later in the lineup. Please plan to stay for the full event.
- **Late Arrivals:** If you arrive after the music has started, please wait in the lobby and enter only during the applause between pieces.

**Young Children & Families** We love having families attend! However, a piano recital requires intense focus. If a young child becomes restless or vocal, please quietly step into the lobby so the performer is not distracted.

### How to Applaud

- **Traditional Applause:** Show your support with warm applause after the performer bows.
- **Multi-Movement Pieces:** For suites or sonatas, it is customary to hold applause until the *entire* work is finished.
- **Professionalism:** While we are excited for our students, please avoid whistling or shouting. A hearty "*Bravo!*" or "*Brava!*" at the end of a performance is a wonderful way to show extra appreciation.

### Photos & Videos

- **No Flash:** Flash photography is strictly prohibited during the music as it can cause a student to lose their place.
- **Recording:** You are welcome to film or take photos as the student approaches or leaves the stage and while they are performing. However, please be mindful of those around you.

## Community & Academic Growth

### Beyond the Studio: Live Music

Listening is just as important as playing. Tallahassee is a rich musical hub, and we encourage all students to attend live performances.

- **FSU College of Music:** With over 500 performances and three operas annually, most are free to the student! Links to their schedules are provided on the [Studio Website](#).
- **Instructor Performances:** When I perform locally, I often give complimentary tickets to my students and their families.

## Evaluations & Conferences

**Student Progress Reports:** Once a year (in May), students will receive a comprehensive evaluation reviewing materials covered, progress made, and goals for the next term.

- **Instructor Feedback:** We value your input! Every May, we provide an anonymous online questionnaire so students and parents can evaluate our teaching.
- **Conferences:** We will hold 15-minute "check-in" conferences during regularly scheduled lesson times twice a year to discuss progress in person.

## Tuition & Summer Policies

### Monthly Tuition

Tuition is billed by the month and is due at the first lesson of each month.

- **Payment Methods:** Venmo, Zelle, Check (to KeyNotes Piano Studio), Cash, or Credit Card (3% fee applies).
- **The "Fifth Lesson" Bonus:** Some months have five lesson days. Students are not charged extra for these. Instead, they "balance out" the months where the studio is closed for holidays (Thanksgiving, Winter Break, and Spring Break). This keeps your monthly payment consistent year-round. **Please note that tuition is based on four lessons per month.**

### Summer Sessions

Music is a year-round discipline. Suspending lessons for three months can result in a significant loss of progress.

- **Expectation:** Students are expected to complete **4 or more lessons** during the summer.
- **Flexibility:** Scheduling is much more flexible in the summer, and online lessons are a great option if you are traveling.

- **Commitment:** Please note that students who do not enroll for the summer term forfeit their spot in the studio for the fall.

## Savings & Scholarships

### Referral Program

As a small business, your word-of-mouth is our best advertisement.

- **The Reward:** For every new student you refer who enrolls, you will receive **one full month of tuition credit**. There is no limit to how many credits you can earn!

### Scholarship Opportunities

We offer a limited number of merit-based scholarships (Whole, Half, and Quarter Note awards) for students who have studied with us for at least twelve months.

- **Process:** By invitation only. Candidates are evaluated by a volunteer committee based on a comprehensive exam.
- **Recognition:** Winners are announced at the May Recital Awards Ceremony.

## Studio Harmony: Success & Transitions

### Termination of Lessons

While we don't use lengthy contracts, we do require **two months' advance notice** for the termination of lessons. This allows us to conclude the student's current projects and gives us time to fill the opening in our schedules.

### The Success Plan (Probation & Dismissal)

If a student struggles with behavior, practice habits, or attendance, we will implement a **Success Plan**:

1. **Initial Conversation:** The instructor will reach out via email to discuss the friction points and propose solutions.
2. **Support Period:** If things don't improve in 4–6 weeks, we will hold a mandatory parent-student-instructor conference to build a roadmap for improvement.
3. **Dismissal:** Only if these steps fail to resolve the issue will lessons be discontinued. In this rare case, any unused tuition for the month will be refunded.

## The Instrument: Your Essential Tool

### Piano Maintenance

A piano is a living instrument made of wood and felt. To keep it sounding its best:

- **Tune Regularly:** Most pianos in Florida require tuning **twice a year** due to humidity changes.
- **The Pitch:** Aim to keep your piano at "Concert Pitch" (A = 440 Hz).

### Investing in Quality

If you are currently looking for an instrument, we highly recommend investing in a quality acoustic piano or a high-end digital piano with weighted keys.

## Recommended Brands:

**Top Tier (\$\$\$):** Steinway, Blüthner, Fazioli, Boston.

**Reliable & Popular (\$\$):** Yamaha, Kawai (Excellent for most students).

- **Local Resources: Jim's Pianos** here in Tallahassee is a great place to start your search.

## Lessons at the Studio

This document outlines studio policies to ensure a calm, respectful, and productive environment for all students and families. Please review carefully.

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## Parking

- Please park on the driveway or anywhere on the cul-de-sac **except directly in front of the mailbox**, as blocking it prevents mail delivery.
  - If you park on the driveway, park to **one side only** so another car can fit beside you. It is acceptable if one side of your vehicle is partially on the grass.
  - If you park on the driveway, please **turn off your engine and lower music volume immediately**. The studio is directly behind the white door, and sound carries easily, which can disrupt ongoing lessons.
  - If you need to keep your engine running or listen to music while waiting, please park on the cul-de-sac instead.
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## Arrival Timing

- Please plan to arrive **about 5 minutes before** your scheduled lesson time.

- Do **not knock or ring the bell before your scheduled lesson time**, even if you see the previous student leaving. We teach back-to-back lessons, and early arrivals interrupt instruction.
- Time between lessons is reserved for transitions, self-care, and responding to emails and messages.
- At your scheduled lesson time, we will come out to greet you as the previous student exits.
- We rarely run late. If we are, you will receive a text notification.
- If you arrive late, the lesson will still end at the scheduled time, as lessons run consecutively.

**Rule of thumb:** Please aim to arrive *right on time*—not early and not late.

## During Lessons

- Piano lessons require focused listening from both student and teacher. We strive for an environment as close to **complete silence** as possible.
- Please silence all mobile devices. Vibrate mode is discouraged, as it can still be distracting.
- If you need to take or make a call, please step outside the studio into the living room or front yard.
- Parents and guests should not interrupt, correct, or instruct the student during the lesson. Direct teaching and behavior guidance are the instructor's responsibility.

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## Amenities & Waiting Area

- **Wi-Fi** is available for all students and guests. The network name and password are posted in the waiting area.
- Coloring pages, crayons, and a selection of games are available for waiting students, siblings, and parents.
- A bathroom is available for student and family use.

## Complimentary Snacks & Drinks

- Free snacks and drinks are available for students and guests in the waiting area.

- Please enjoy responsibly and be mindful of allergies and cleanliness.
  - Dispose of all trash properly before leaving.
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## After Your Lesson

- Please double-check that you have all personal belongings before leaving.
- Once you exit the house, kindly move your vehicle promptly so the next student has space to park.

Thank you for helping maintain a respectful, quiet, and welcoming studio environment for everyone.