

FAQ: Adult Lessons at The Lake Shore Music Studio

We appreciate each adult's individual goals for studying piano.

We understand you have a full life with various demands on your time.

We understand adult piano students have varying styles of music they are interested in playing.

Our goal is to create a nurturing, collaborative environment for music making and learning together that will enhance your personal enjoyment of playing the piano.

The Lake Shore Music Studio's preferred mode of learning is in small groups.

We specialize in group piano teaching and have devoted our musical careers to studying and practicing this mode of learning because we believe it provides the richest music learning experience.

Group lessons are interactive while allowing for personal attention to individual repertoire and growth.

How long are the lessons?

Our one hour format allows us to cover a wider variety of topics at each lesson.

How many people are in the group?

Group lessons typically have from 2 to 4 people in them.

What instruments do students play on?

We have 3 acoustic pianos (2 grands and one upright) and one full size digital piano.

What kinds of things do you do?

Students typically begin the class independently, warming up on technique and reviewing their own current pieces.

As a group the instructor will present or review broad musical concepts such as chords, scales, important structures of music etc. Students have time to process and absorb what has been presented, ask questions and reinforce each other's learning.

Students discuss musical pieces being studied in order to understand rhythm challenges, analyze melody patterns, phrase structure, and fingering issues to make new repertoire easy to learn.

Students have time during each lesson to work on pieces individually before the class concludes.

How do you do work together in one room?

Everyone develops a sense of working within their own “sound space”.

While students are working independently, the teacher observes what the students are doing, helping students with individual challenges. Typically other students may be experiencing similar issues, so we might stop and discuss the solution with everyone. In this way everyone benefits.

We might divide a song everyone is learning, into Right hand section and Left hand section, with students trading off which they play. This builds confidence and helps students get a better sense of what each hand is doing individually while still experiencing the sound of the whole song.

Sometimes we play “pass the song” – one student begins the song. At the bridge or contrasting section, another student will take it up, then passing it back to the original student or another one for the repeat of the first section. This helps us practice a smaller unit of notes, making it easier for our fingers and brains to remember.

Often students will try a song from a book on their own at home and play it for the class. This typically elicits genuinely supportive interaction and often inspires other class members to learn the same song.

We may take a favorite Beatles song (for instance) and play it together in the ways described above, or learn how to read the chords from a “fake book”. When the teacher adds some chords and plays along as well, we really rock!

Working as an ensemble or duet allows students to enjoy a bigger sound and learn more sophisticated pieces working on each part piece by piece.

Improvisation is an integral aspect of our approach, building confidence and creating more competent musicians who understand the structure of music and how they can participate according to their own skill level.

What are some of the other benefits?

1. It’s fun working together!
2. Our students are more comfortable playing with each other, and most importantly, in front of other people (no more closet pianists).
3. Students enjoy the act of practicing together in the lesson and at home.
4. If students have had a week of travel or family obligations and haven’t been able to practice as much, we can always get something accomplished in the lesson. There is always a forward movement in the class.
5. The teacher gets the benefit of the perspective of all students’ questions and is more aware of what

students are actually thinking and how they are processing what is being taught.

6. Students get to experience learning from different learning modes (aural, visual and kinesthetic) and get reinforcement from whichever way they learn the best.

What types of music do you focus on?

We study classical, but we also include Broadway, folk, pop, jazz and blues, American songbook, and any other type of music students are interested in that lend themselves to the piano and that we can learn from.

What are some things you might work on besides playing songs?

We learn how to apply chords to a song such as Ode to Joy according to the musical formulas, how to embellish the accompaniments, how to read a fake book, transposing a song into all keys, recognizing melodic patterns and sequences, creating music using question and answer phrasing, basic 12 bar blues, pentatonic improvisation, other scale structures like Dorian and Phrygian mode, whole tone scales, how to make a rock song sound more authentic, creative and practical ways to practice technique, concepts of rhythmic division and how to count rhythm patterns, ways to effectively practice for quicker results, how to have fun sharing holiday music with friends, strengthening the ability to play by ear, and memorizing quickly through understanding the patterns in the music.

What do students like the most about studying piano in a group?

“As adult students, we take lessons because we like music and want to learn more about it, not because we have parents who want us to. So we are interested in learning about music and it has been very nice to share learning about Mazurkas, Blues Scales, and Whole Tone Scales, etc. with a group partner.

Preparing to play a piece for your group partner each week is motivating and also makes practicing more fun at home. I also like that a group partner isn't always working on the same pieces that I am.

There is quite a bit of satisfaction and positive energy when you can see your group partner develop their skills and become better sight-readers, or really masters a specific piece, so there is a feeling of growing together in music that is very enjoyable.” -- John

"The adult group lessons are great. You get exposed to lots of music you wouldn't think of

I have one specific goal for piano lessons. I just want someone to show me the notes to play Mozart

Sonata in C. I've only studied for 3 months as a child. I don't want to learn anything extra about music. Would I be a good candidate for these group lessons?

You might be better suited with an individual lesson. We offer these as our schedule permits. However, once you got started, you might find some broader aspects of music that would interest you as well.

What if I miss a lesson?

Your tuition reserves a place in this class for you. Missed lessons are not made up. You may contact the instructor to see what was covered, but the reinforcing nature of the lessons will enable you to get back on track the next week.