

Lesson 20

Keeping Your Place in the Music

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David Dempster

Course	Read & Play Music
Book 2	Read and Play Simple Tunes with Two Hands
Lesson 20	Keeping Your Place in the Music

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LESSON 20:

KEEPING YOUR PLACE IN THE MUSIC

There is a challenge some students find in reading and playing music, especially music for two hands. I'm going to describe the challenge and give you a solution you can apply if you are running into the same thing.

MUSIC THEORY

BUILD YOUR KNOWLEDGE

Most of the music examples I've given you in this book have been short snippets, used for training purposes.

In real life, music is usually much longer. One piece of music can take up a whole page, and it can even continue for a number of pages.

The challenge some students run into is keeping track of where they are in the printed music. The student reads a few notes, looks down at his hands to play them correctly, and then looks back up at the printed music. But now he can't find which measure he had reached. He has lost his place.

As you gain more and more experience in reading music and playing the piano, you will find you don't need to look down so often. Your hands will know what to do without looking.

But at this early stage in your training, you're probably finding you have to look down a lot as you're starting playing a new piece.

If you're losing your place in the music, spend a little time on the exercises below. I've found that even a few minutes with these exercises can solve the problem.

An example of a longer piece of music

You've already played part of the tune below with two hands. Now you're going to play more of it. Play it just once through, and see if you notice any difficulty of losing your place in the music.

Apply Know-Before-You-Go for Two Hands, and see if you can play it once through with no mistakes. Do that now.

It Came Upon a Midnight Clear

The musical score is for the piece "It Came Upon a Midnight Clear" in 3/4 time. It is presented in two systems, each with a treble and bass clef. The first system shows the first eight measures, and the second system shows the next eight measures. Fingerings are indicated by numbers 1-5 above or below notes. The melody is in the treble clef, and the accompaniment is in the bass clef.

Don't repeat the tune at this point. Even if you made some mistakes, go on to the exercises below. You'll get to play the tune again after the exercises.

PRACTICAL

BUILD YOUR SKILL

Exercise 1:

Read a treble clef note

In this exercise, you don't play anything. We'll get to that in a moment.

1 Place both hands

1. **Place** both hands on the keyboard, somewhere near the middle, but **don't play anything**.

2 Pick a printed note

1. Look at the printed music below. **Pick** any one of the notes on the **treble clef staff**.

The image shows two systems of musical notation for piano in 3/4 time. Each system consists of a treble clef staff and a bass clef staff. The treble staff contains a melody with notes on the lines and spaces, and the bass staff contains a bass line with notes on the lines and spaces. Fingerings are indicated by numbers 1-5 above or below notes. The first system has 8 measures, and the second system has 8 measures.

3 Look down

1. Now **look down** at your hands. **Don't play anything yet.**

4 Spot the printed note

1. Look back up at the music, and **spot the same note.**

5 Repeat with different notes

1. **Pick** a different note on the **treble clef staff**, **look down** at your hands, **look up**, and **spot the same note.**
2. **Repeat** with a different note each time, until you can do it accurately and easily.

Exercise 2:

Read and play a note with your right hand

Now you're going to play each note you pick.

1 Place both hands

1. **Place** both hands on the keyboard, somewhere near the middle, but don't play anything.

2 Pick a printed note

1. Look at the printed music below. **Pick** any note on the **treble clef staff**.

3 Look down

1. Now **look down** at your hands.

4 Play

1. **Play** the note you picked with a finger of your **right hand**.

5 Spot the printed note

1. Look back up at the music, and **spot the same note**.

6 Repeat with different notes

1. **Pick** a different note on the **treble clef staff**, **look down** at your hands, **play** the note, **look up**, and **spot the same note**.
2. **Repeat** with a different note each time, until you can do it accurately and easily.

Exercise 3: Read a bass clef note

In this exercise, you don't play anything. We'll get to that in a moment.

1 Place both hands

1. Place both hands on the keyboard, somewhere near the middle, but **don't play anything.**

2 Pick a printed note

1. Look at the printed music below. **Pick** any one of the notes on the **bass clef staff**.

The image shows two musical staves. The top staff is in treble clef and the bottom staff is in bass clef. Both are in 3/4 time. The music consists of a sequence of notes with fingerings indicated by numbers 1, 2, 4, and 5. The bass clef staff has notes on the lines and spaces, with fingerings 5, 4, 2, 3, 2. The treble clef staff has notes on the lines and spaces, with fingerings 1, 2, 4, 2, 4, 2.

3 Look down

1. Now **look down** at your hands. **Don't play anything yet.**

4 Spot the printed note

1. Look back up at the music, and **spot the same note.**

5 Repeat with different notes

1. **Pick** a different note on the **bass clef staff**, **look down** at your hands, **look up**, and **spot the same note.**
2. **Repeat** with a different note each time, until you can do it accurately and easily.

Exercise 4:

Read and play a note with your left hand

Now you're going to play each note you pick.

1 Place both hands

1. Place both hands on the keyboard, somewhere near the middle, but **don't** play anything.

2 Pick a printed note

1. Look at the printed music below. **Pick** any note on the **bass clef staff**.

The image shows two musical staves in 3/4 time. The top staff is in treble clef and the bottom staff is in bass clef. The music consists of a sequence of notes with fingerings indicated by numbers 1-5. The bass clef staff has notes on the lines and spaces, with fingerings 5, 4, 2, 3, 2. The treble clef staff has notes on the lines and spaces, with fingerings 1, 2, 4, 2, 4, 2.

3 Look down

1. Now **look down** at your hands.

4 Play

1. **Play** the note you picked with a finger of your **left hand**.

5 Spot the printed note

1. Look back up at the music, and **spot the same note**.

6 Repeat with different notes

1. **Pick** a different note on the **bass clef staff**, **look down** at your hands, **play** the note, **look up**, and **spot the same note**.
2. **Repeat** with a different note each time, until you can do it accurately and easily.

Exercise 5:

Read and play a note with two hands

Now you're going to play with two hands.

1 Place both hands

1. Place both hands on the keyboard, somewhere near the middle, but **don't play anything.**

2 Pick a pair of printed notes

1. Look at the printed music below. **Pick a pair of notes, one from the bass clef and one from the treble clef** that are to be played at the same time.

The image shows two musical staves, one in treble clef and one in bass clef, both in 3/4 time. The music consists of eight measures. The treble clef staff has notes: G4 (finger 1), A4 (finger 2), B4 (finger 4), A4 (finger 2), G4 (finger 1), F4 (finger 2), E4 (finger 4), D4 (finger 2), and a whole note G4. The bass clef staff has notes: G3 (finger 5), A3 (finger 5), B3 (finger 5), A3 (finger 5), G3 (finger 5), F3 (finger 4), E3 (finger 2), D3 (finger 4), and a whole note G3. The two staves are identical in notation.

3 Look down

1. Now **look down** at your hands.

4 Play

1. **Play** the pair of notes you picked. Apply Know-Before-You-Go for Two Hands: place your left finger on its note, then place your right finger on its note, then play them both at the same time.

5 Spot the printed notes

1. Look back up at the music, and **spot the same pair of printed notes**.

6 Repeat with different pairs of notes

1. **Pick** a different pair of notes, **look down** at your hands, **play** the notes, **look up**, and **spot the same pair of notes**.
2. **Repeat** with a different pair of notes each time, until you can do it accurately and easily.

The first exercise consists of two staves. The treble clef staff has a whole rest in the first measure, followed by notes G4, A4, B4, C5, D5, E5, F5, G5, A5, B5, C6, D6, E6, F6, G6, A6, B6, C7, D7, E7, F7, G7, A7, B7, C8, D8, E8, F8, G8, A8, B8, C9, D9, E9, F9, G9, A9, B9, C10, D10, E10, F10, G10, A10, B10, C11, D11, E11, F11, G11, A11, B11, C12, D12, E12, F12, G12, A12, B12, C13, D13, E13, F13, G13, A13, B13, C14, D14, E14, F14, G14, A14, B14, C15, D15, E15, F15, G15, A15, B15, C16, D16, E16, F16, G16, A16, B16, C17, D17, E17, F17, G17, A17, B17, C18, D18, E18, F18, G18, A18, B18, C19, D19, E19, F19, G19, A19, B19, C20, D20, E20, F20, G20, A20, B20, C21, D21, E21, F21, G21, A21, B21, C22, D22, E22, F22, G22, A22, B22, C23, D23, E23, F23, G23, A23, B23, C24, D24, E24, F24, G24, A24, B24, C25, D25, E25, F25, G25, A25, B25, C26, D26, E26, F26, G26, A26, B26, C27, D27, E27, F27, G27, A27, B27, C28, D28, E28, F28, G28, A28, B28, C29, D29, E29, F29, G29, A29, B29, C30, D30, E30, F30, G30, A30, B30, C31, D31, E31, F31, G31, A31, B31, C32, D32, E32, F32, G32, A32, B32, C33, D33, E33, F33, G33, A33, B33, C34, D34, E34, F34, G34, A34, B34, C35, D35, E35, F35, G35, A35, B35, C36, D36, E36, F36, G36, A36, B36, C37, D37, E37, F37, G37, A37, B37, C38, D38, E38, F38, G38, A38, B38, C39, D39, E39, F39, G39, A39, B39, C40, D40, E40, F40, G40, A40, B40, C41, D41, E41, F41, G41, A41, B41, C42, D42, E42, F42, G42, A42, B42, C43, D43, E43, F43, G43, A43, B43, C44, D44, E44, F44, G44, A44, B44, C45, D45, E45, F45, G45, A45, B45, C46, D46, E46, F46, G46, A46, B46, C47, D47, E47, F47, G47, A47, B47, C48, D48, E48, F48, G48, A48, B48, C49, D49, E49, F49, G49, A49, B49, C50, D50, E50, F50, G50, A50, B50, C51, D51, E51, F51, G51, A51, B51, C52, D52, E52, F52, G52, A52, B52, C53, D53, E53, F53, G53, A53, B53, C54, D54, E54, F54, G54, A54, B54, C55, D55, E55, F55, G55, A55, B55, C56, D56, E56, F56, G56, A56, B56, C57, D57, E57, F57, G57, A57, B57, C58, D58, E58, F58, G58, A58, B58, C59, D59, E59, F59, G59, A59, B59, C60, D60, E60, F60, 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Tune 1: Christmas carol

Here's the same piece of music you played earlier. Try playing it again now, and see if it's easier now that you've done those exercises in keeping your place.

Apply Know-Before-You-Go for Two Hands.

It Came Upon a Midnight Clear

The image shows two systems of piano accompaniment for the Christmas carol "It Came Upon a Midnight Clear". Each system consists of a treble and bass clef staff. The music is in 3/4 time. The first system has fingerings: Treble clef (1, 2, 4, 2, 4, 2) and Bass clef (5, 4, 2, 3, 2). The second system has fingerings: Treble clef (1, 2, 4, 2, 2) and Bass clef (5, 4, 2, 3, 2).

Tune 2:

Cowboy song, played by your left hand

Just to give your left hand a bit more work to do, here is a tune to be played with your left hand. Again, see if those exercises help in keeping your place in the music.

Red River Valley

The musical notation is presented in three staves, all in bass clef and 4/4 time. The first staff begins with a 5 and a 2 below the first two notes. The second staff has a 2 below the second note. The third staff has 4s below the eighth and ninth notes.

What's next?

Time to play!

To find Lesson 21, click the green box:

Go on to your next lesson



or go to your Book 2 Course Materials page at

www.dempstermusic.com