

5 Ways parents can create a “Practice Nest”

Location, location, location

When choosing a location for your piano, select a space that is lived-in, welcoming, and well-lit. Keep it close to “the action” but not in the action. Your children will gravitate to the piano more often if it is in a central place in your home. Avoid bedrooms, basements and other “put away” places. Feeling shut-off from the family while practicing will inevitably lead to a reluctance to spend time on the piano.

While choosing an appropriate space, also consider the noise factor; not only from the piano, but also from your family’s day-to-day activities. Your children want to be close by, but not competing with noise from TV’s, dishwashers and washing machines.

Make the space warm and welcoming.

Your children will be encouraged to spend upwards of 30 minutes every day in this space. Is it a happy place to be for this amount of time? Small adjustments to lighting and heating can make a world of difference.

Seek out places with natural light and ensure it is a cheerful and welcoming space that will encourage your child to visit the piano often for their own enjoyment.

Ensure your children have all required materials at hand.

Help your children put together a small basket or bin of everything they may need for home practice. Pens, pencils, highlighters, and post-it notes will give your children a sense of organization that will then spill over into their practice habits.

Your children will also need adequate lighting to see their music, and a comfortable bench at the correct height to practice comfortably and correctly.

Make the “Practice Nest” a communal space.

Children of any age appreciate company while they practice. Having a chair, couch, beanbag chair or pillows nearby where family members will be inclined to sit, listen and enjoy the music immediately sets the tone for happy time on the piano.

Encourage siblings to stop by and listen quietly, and allow yourself even just 10 minutes to sit and listen with undivided attention each time your children practice. A set-up that is conducive to including the family in home practice will encourage everyone involved to make piano practice an activity the entire family can be a part of.

Organization.

Set the stage for organization. Ensure your children’s practice space is uncluttered and organized. Clear out old sheet music and books from the piano bench, use a magazine organizer to hold

current and favorite materials, and minimize knickknacks and other distractions from the top of the piano. If you can, avoid having the piano room do “double-duty” for laundry, toys and other clutter.

Having the books your children need at their fingertips reliably ensures that no time is spent searching for lost or crumpled music.

Get into the habit of placing the piano books in their appropriate space immediately after each piano lesson so they are ready and waiting.

Plus one more!

Adding small surprises to your children’s practice nest (fresh flowers, a hand-written note of encouragement, a small treat, a new sticker pad, a special pen etc.) helps to show that you value the time they are spending on the piano and that you appreciate their efforts and dedication.

Preserving the “specialness” of their practice space encourages positive feelings towards their home music time.

HOME PRACTICE IS SO MUCH MORE THAN MINUTES SPENT

Cultivating good home practice habits is so much more than logging minutes spent on the bench.

Long-lasting practice habits that result in long-term progress come from a commitment to making the piano a vital part of your child’s day-to-day life... not as a requirement, but as a desire.

One giant step towards this goal can be accomplished by making your piano a place he or she looks forward to visiting.