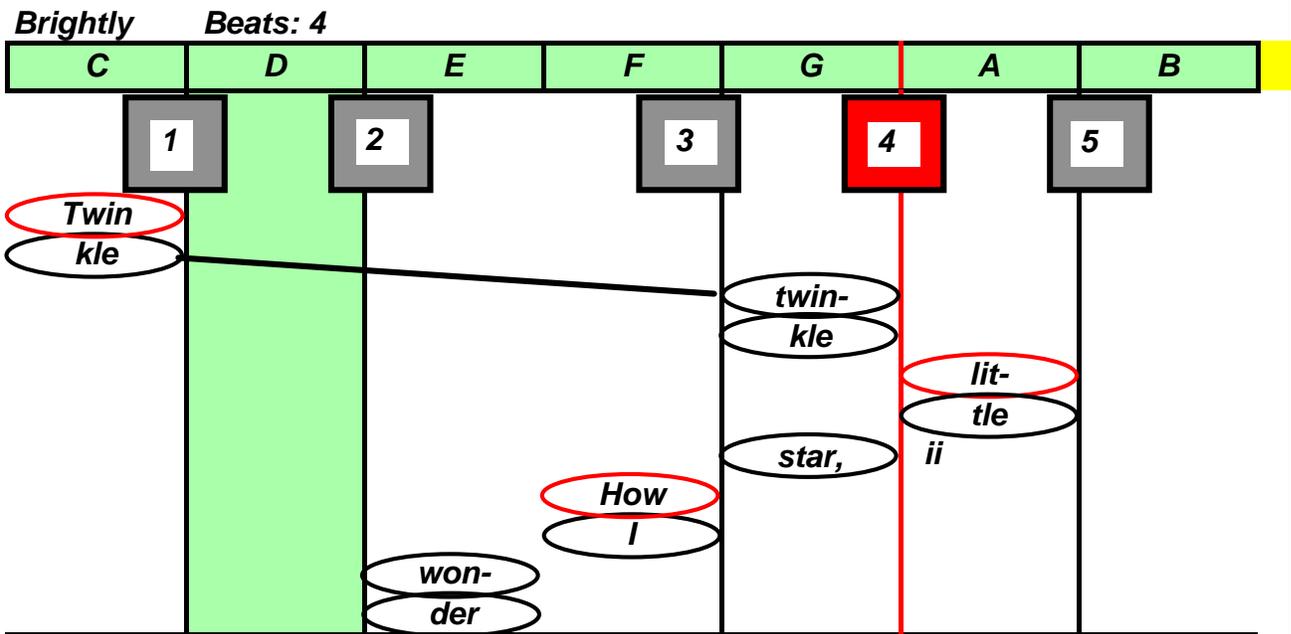


About Finding Which Keys to Play

AKM-10

And Which Fingers to Play Them With



From the Music Innovator's Workshop

INTRODUCTION - This unit focuses on the first of many skills that must be mastered when learning to play the piano. The key diagrams and maps are designed to **SHOW** you which keys to play. The multi-faceted challenge is learning to read the diagrams and then (1) **FIND** a matching key (2) with an appropriate finger (3) fast enough to play the music with the proper rhythm and tempo. Not only does the pianist need to find and play the key, but it must be with an appropriate finger, and it must be done fast enough to play the tune as it should sound. And indeed, this must be a very rapid movement - even for a fairly slow piece. This means that one must be able to read a note, select a key, and select a finger several times every second.

Focus on Melodies. This unit focuses on finding keys on the keyboard for playing melodies. Finding the next key when playing a melody is a major challenge and is a basic movement on the keyboard. Learning to play several notes at the same time is also a basic movement on the keyboard - but it is much more advanced. Learning to play melodies provides the basis for playing several notes at a time. The discussion in this unit is focused entirely on one-note-at-a-time melodies.

About The Diagrams on the Next Page. These diagrams are a reminder of how the notes on a key diagram match the keys that you play on the keyboard, making it fairly easy to **KNOW** which keys you are to play. This simple matching process would make finding keys very easy if it weren't for several factors that make finding the keys more difficult.

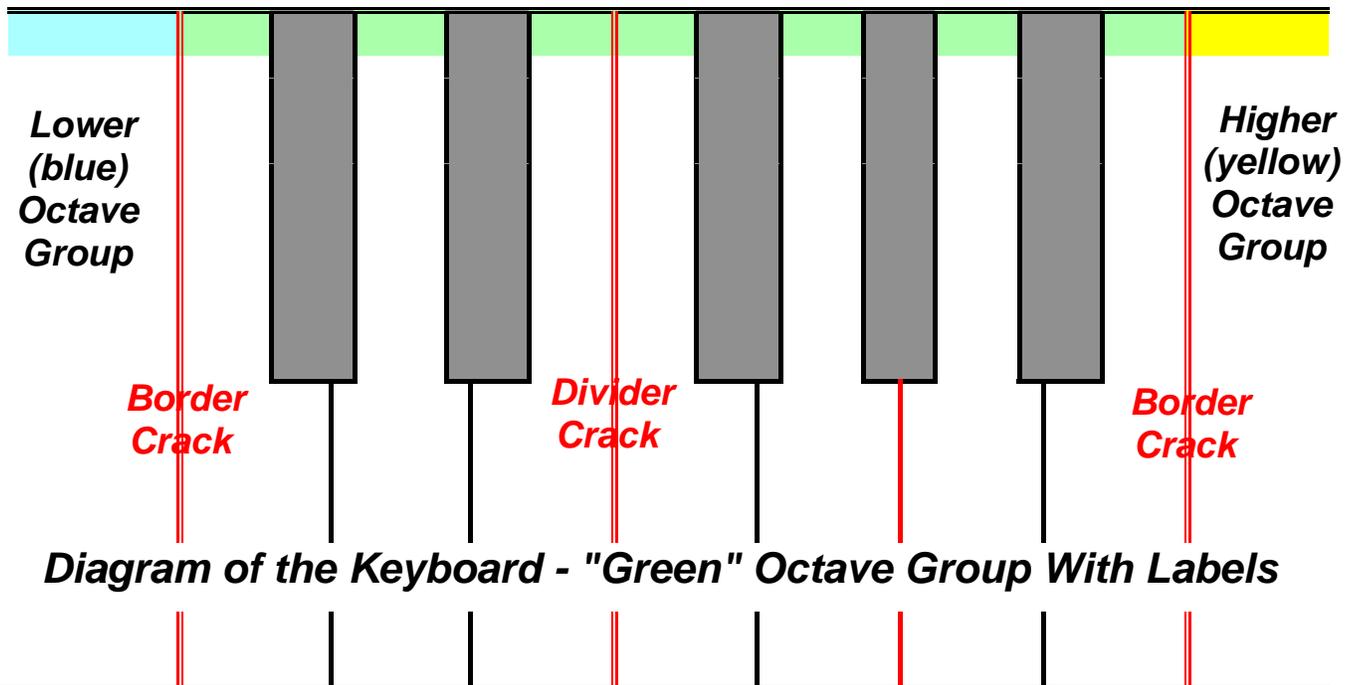
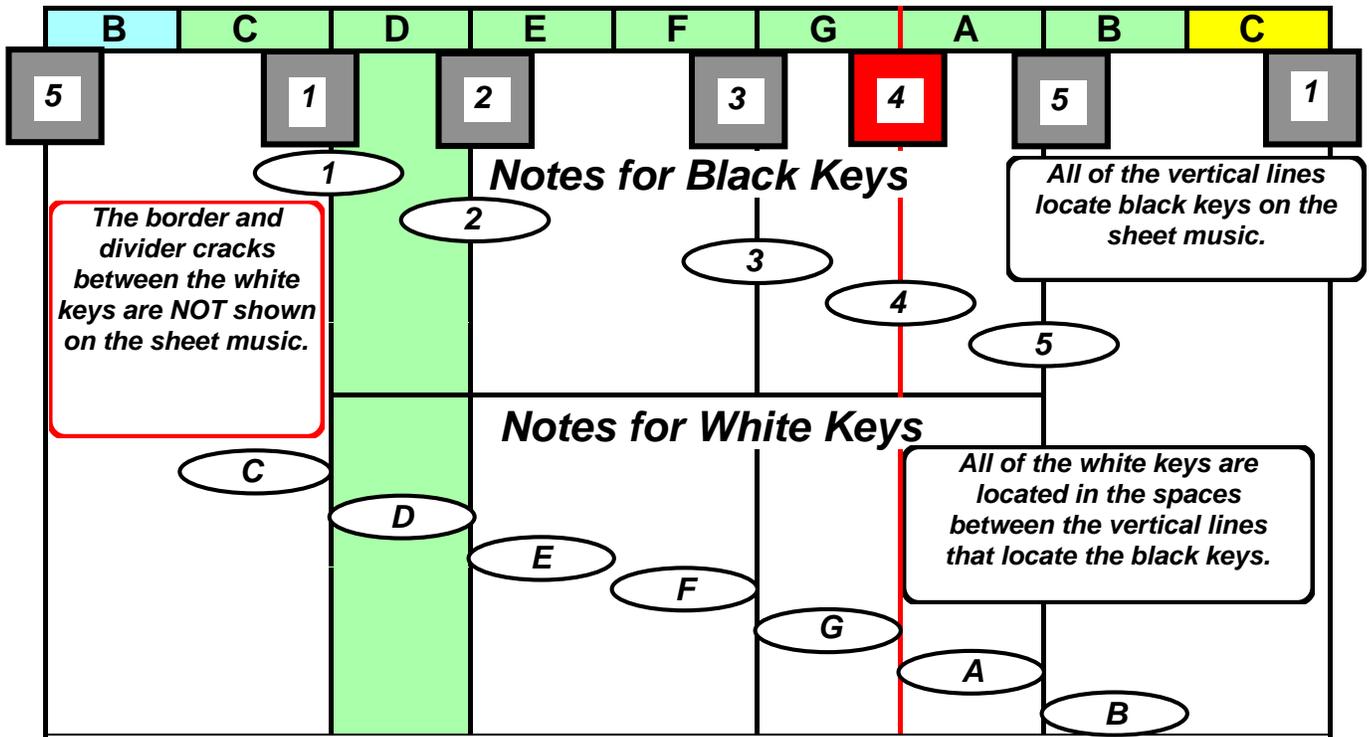
The Visual Dilemma. **YOU CAN'T LOOK AT THE KEYS AND THE NOTES AT THE SAME TIME!** This is huge. None of the other major instruments is saddled with this problem. Singers don't have this problem. Violinists, cellists, fluteists, and clarinetists all can look at their notation while playing. But pianists who constantly look up at the notes and down at the keys while playing from sheet music, constantly risk losing their places in the notation. Of course, fast music can't be played this way at all.

Losing Contact With the Keys. Another challenge for the pianist, not faced by players of other instruments is that the hands must constantly find new locations on the keyboard. This also is huge. There is no fixed position for the hands on the keyboard as there is on most other instruments. On the keyboard, the fingers frequently must physically break contact with the instrument, with the hands moving to an entirely different location, and do this frequently with rapid movements.

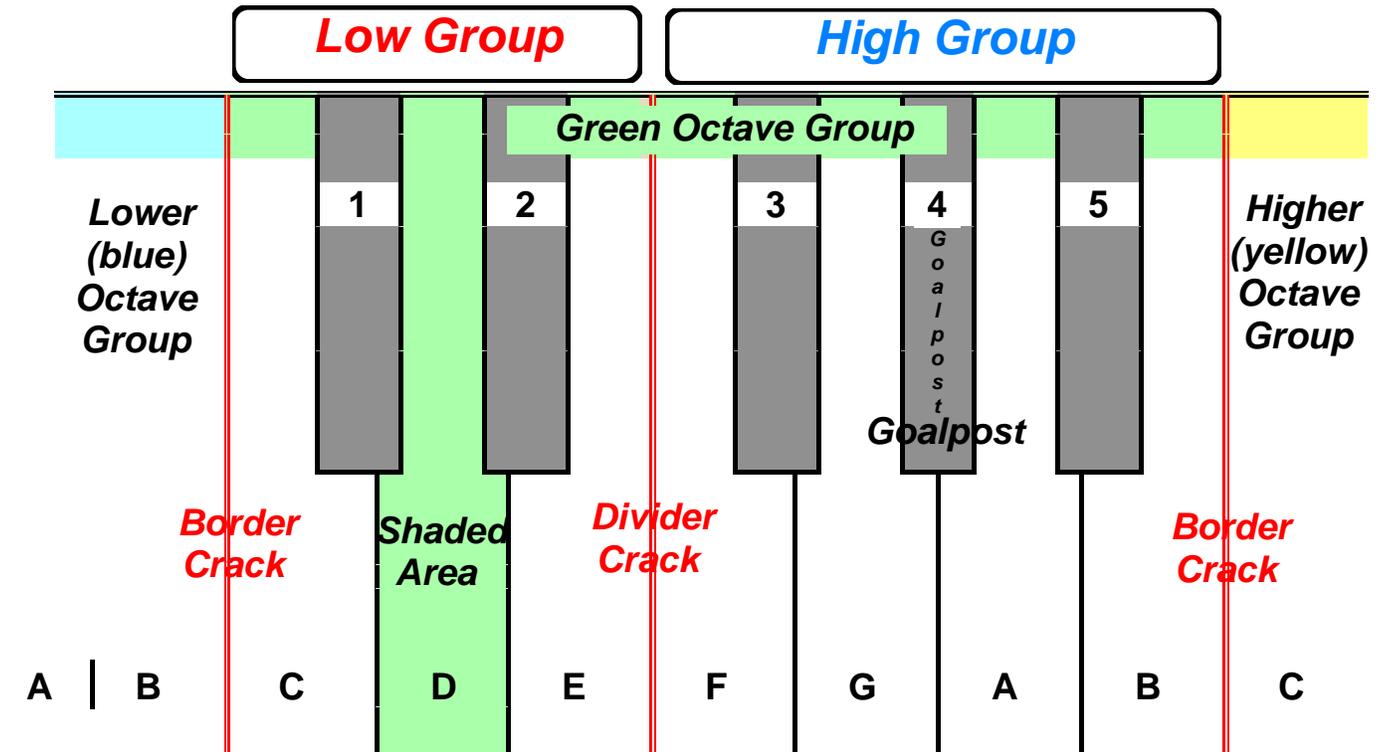
A Major Challenge. What this all amounts to is that learning to find which keys to play requires a good bit of knowledge and practice before one can find the keys quickly enough to play a melody with the proper rhythm. The following pages will provide you with the information that you need to meet this challenge at the beginning of your piano study. A large part of the solution is learning the language of the keyboard. Another part of the solution is learning to find the keys without looking at the keyboard by visualizing the keyboard while you are looking at the notes. The following pages will provide you with what you need to know. The time that you spend practicing the piano will help with the rest.

**Key Diagram Sheet Music
Compared With a Diagram of the Keyboard**

Key Diagram Sheet Music



Directions of Movement on the Keyboard



← Directions →

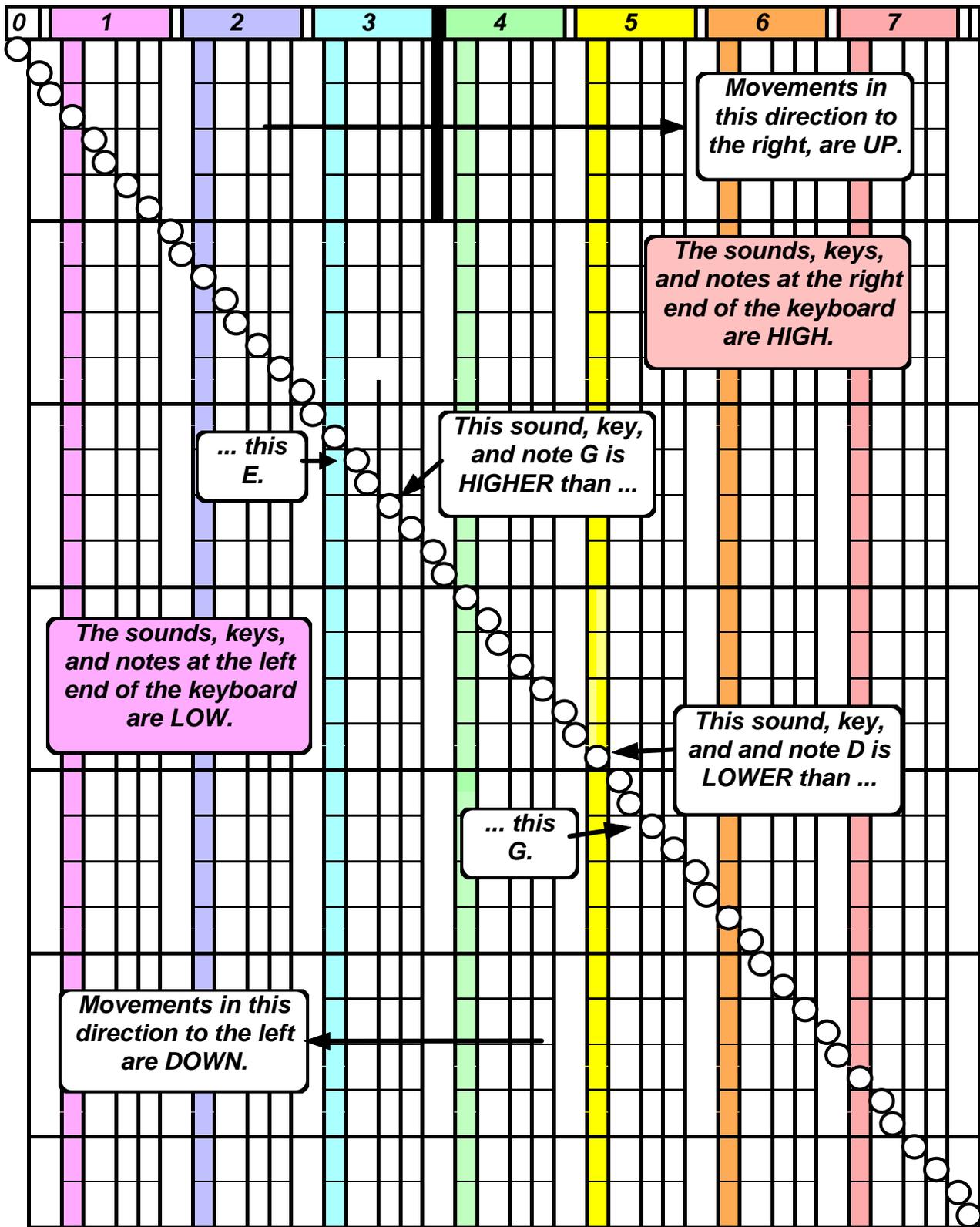
It is easy to get confused by the directions on the keyboard. We all have learned what "up" and "down" mean. BUT - that's NOT what they mean on the keyboard. This is also true for "high, higher, low, and lower."

On the keyboard, these words all refer to the SOUNDS played by the keys. And to get the higher sounds on the keyboard, we must go to the RIGHT; to get the lower sounds we must go to the LEFT.

The LOWEST sound is played by the A key at the far LEFT end of the keyboard, and the HIGHEST sound is played by the C Key at the far RIGHT end of the keyboard.

Therefore, all movement on the keyboard in the direction of that lowest A key is going DOWN to a LOWER key. All movement in the direction of the highest C key is going UP to a HIGHER key.

Terminology for the Directions, Movements, and Locations of the Keys, Notes, and Sounds on the Piano



This chart shows notes for all of the white keys of the piano keyboard.

Finding a White Key Using a Neighboring Black Key

This is a good way for students to find the white keys on the keyboard before learning to name the 7 white keys. (The addresses of the 5 black keys can be learned much more quickly than the names of the 7 white keys.)

Everyone needs to be aware that the BLACK keys are the GUIDEPOSTS that make it possible to identify and locate individual WHITE keys on the keyboard. This identification takes place both by sight and by touch.

C - Below 1

D - Above 1 (or Below 2; Between 1 and 2)

E - Above 2

F - Below 3

G - Above 3 (or Below 4; Between 3 and 4)

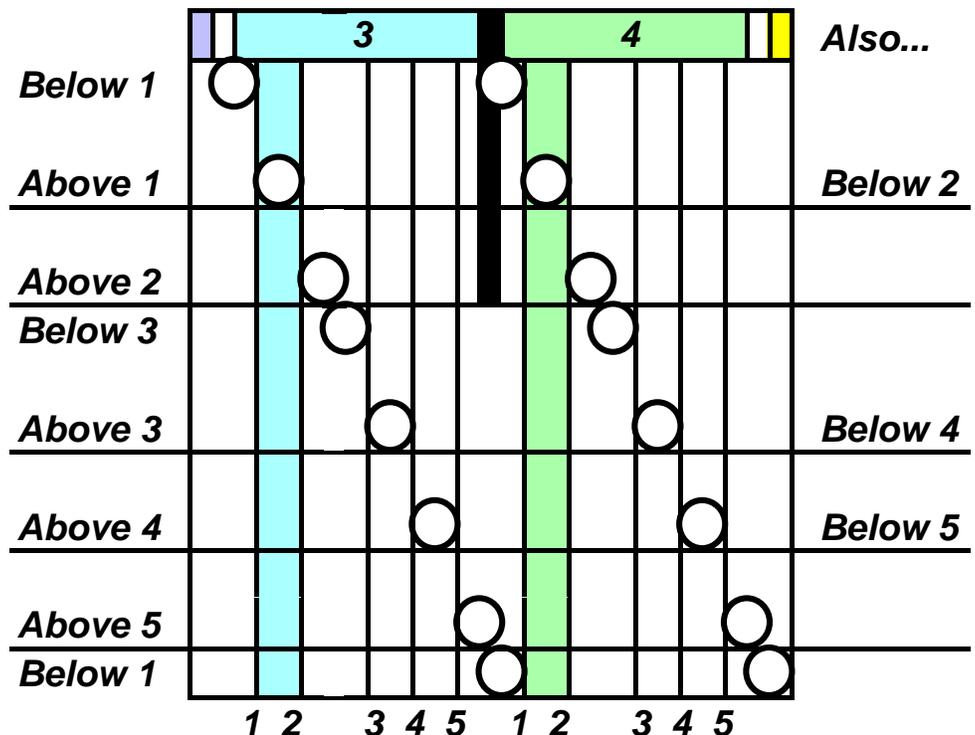
A - Above 4; (or Below 5; Between 4 and 5)

B - Above 5

C - Below 1

Knowing the NAME of the white note is not required for finding a key in this way.

For Any Octave Group



Finding Keys With Names and Addresses

You are already aware that you can find keys on the keyboard by matching keys with the note locations on the key diagrams. An additional way of finding keys on the keyboard is to match the keys with the names or addresses of the notes on the key diagrams as indicated below. In each octave group there are only 5 black key addresses to learn (12345). Also, there are only 7 white key names to learn (ABCDEFG). (These same names and addresses appear in all 7 octave groups.)

Keyboard Diagram Sheet Music

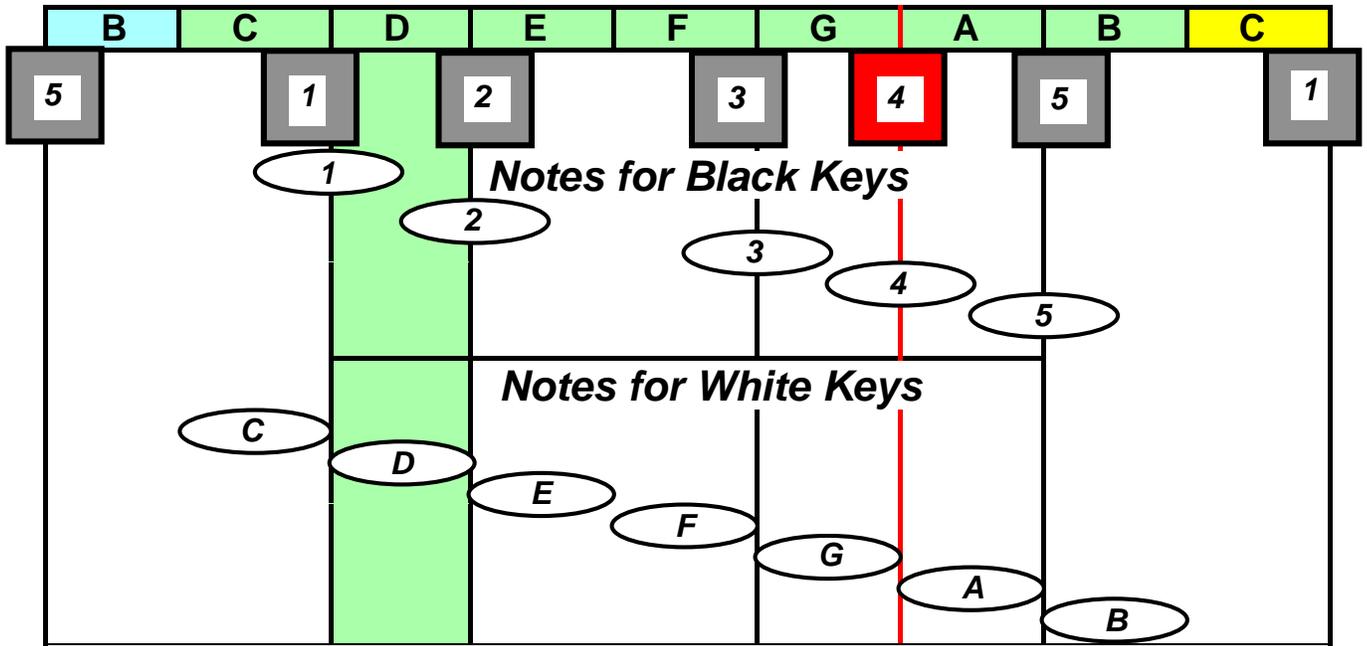
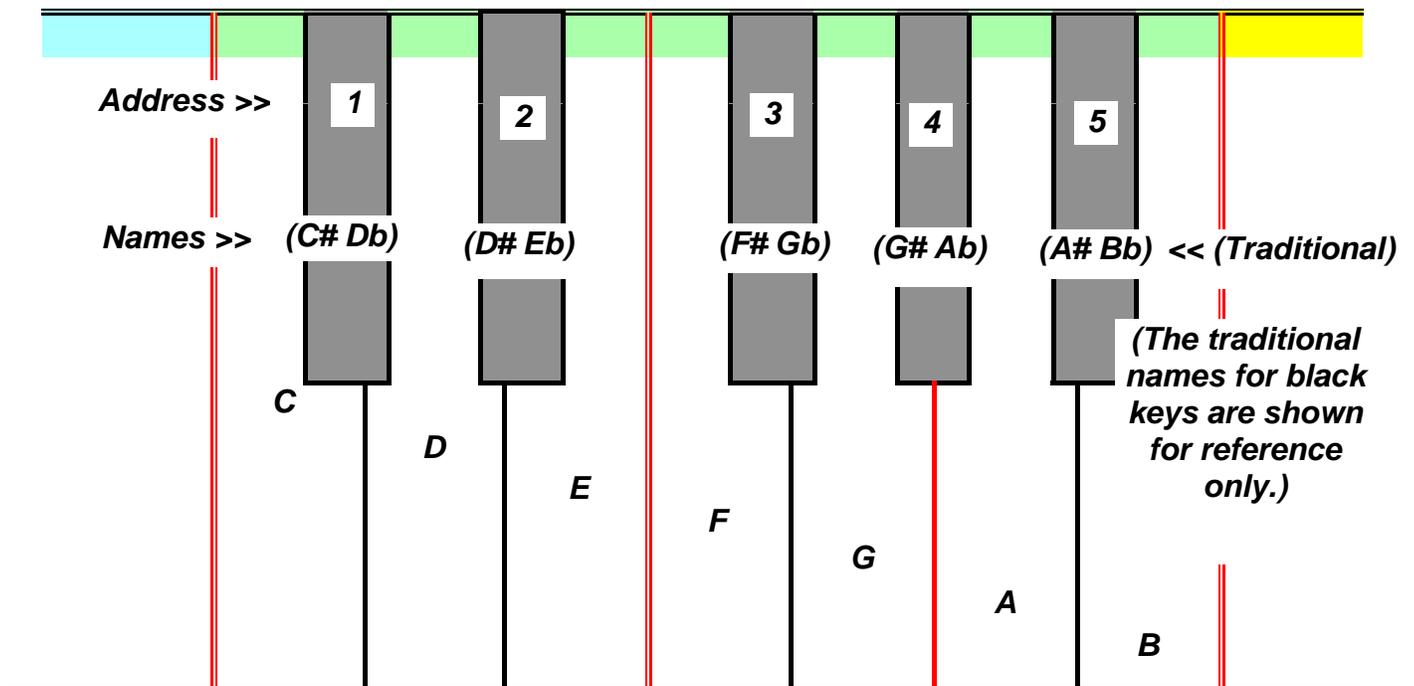


Diagram of the Keyboard - "Green" Octave Group



About Finding the Keys on the Keyboard. How can one find the keys fast enough to play a melody with the proper rhythm? There are 88 keys on the piano, and this does seem like a very difficult or impossible task considering how quickly one must find the keys to play a melody - even a slow melody.

Groups of Sounds. Until now we have been focusing on how to find individual keys on the keyboard - with the focus on keys in an individual octave group. It would indeed be a difficult task to play a fast melody by concentrating on the individual keys. However, one can't avoid beginning with this focus. After all, you can't play the piano until you are able to find the individual keys that make up a melody. We must now turn our attention to groups of sounds - small groups, medium groups, and large groups. It is the grouping of the sounds that makes it possible to play the fastest melodies that we want to play.

The Importance of Patterns. Although the grouping of sounds is essential, it is not just the grouping of these sounds into patterns that is important. We like to group sounds into patterns that we recognize as MUSIC. A grouping of random sounds is not perceived as music; rather random sounds on a keyboard (not the random sounds of nature) are mostly considered to be random noise. Therefore, it is desirable patterns of sound that we want to consider, and learn to play.

The Kinds of Patterns. The patterns that we must deal with first are not the patterns in sound. We will begin with the keyboard as our major focus, because it is grand pattern maker of sound with a physical pattern of its own. The patterns of the keys on the piano come in several groupings, all of which enable us to make the musical patterns that we love to play. Each of these physical patterns is visually matched by the key diagrams and maps, and are what make it possible for us to find the keys that we want to play, quickly enough to play the rhythms called for in the musical scores.

The Octave Groups. The foundation for locating the keys on the keyboard is the octave group pattern. A (folded up) diagram of the 7 octave groups is shown on the next page. All of these 7 groups have identical key patterns. From left to right, each group sounds an octave higher than the previous group, and together they cover the full sound spectrum needed for all types of music. Each group has identical key names (an incredibly important and helpful pattern). The groups are distinguished from each other by the colors of the rainbow, by their locations next to each other, and by their numbers from 1 to 7. The colors appear on the key maps and are shown on labels placed on the keyboard reflecting the patterns of the octave groups on the keyboard. This grouping makes it possible to find the keys in each group in exactly the same way - reducing by 7 fold the task of finding each of the 12 the keys in each octave group.

(From Unit PK-12)

A piano has 7 complete octave groups. Other keyboards with fewer keys are grouped the same way, but they have fewer groups.

Each octave group is colored on your music with a different rainbow color to help you know which group to play in.

The 7 Standard Octave Groups

Group 0 - White

This violet octave Group 1 is located at the far LEFT end of the piano keyboard.

Group 2 - Indigo

This blue octave Group 3 is located in front of your LEFT arm and hand.

Crack at the Middle of the keyboard.

You SIT IN FRONT of this green octave Group 4

This yellow octave Group 5 is located in front of your RIGHT arm and hand.

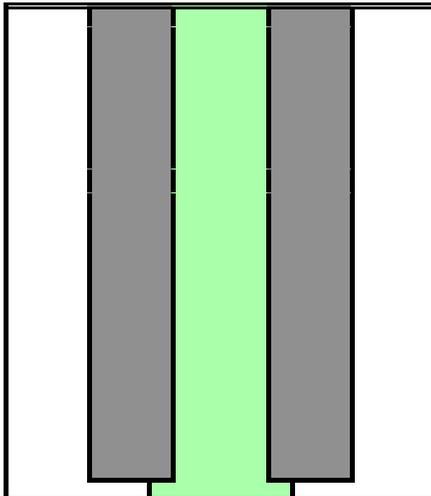
Group 6 - Orange

This red octave Group 7 is located at the far RIGHT end of the keyboard.

H
i
g
h
e
s
t

K
e
y

5-Key Low Group

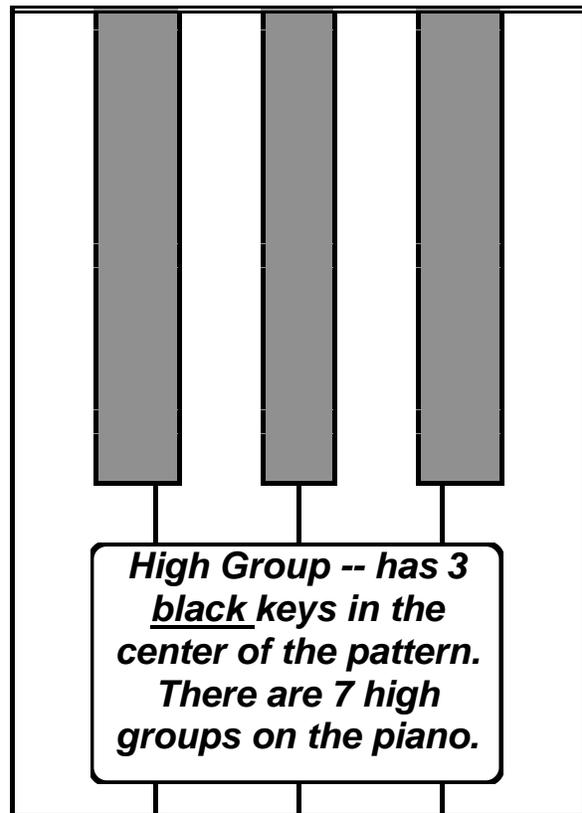


Low Group -- has 2 black keys in the center of this pattern. There are 7 low groups on the piano.



The Subgroups of an Octave Group. Each octave group is comprised of 2 subgroups - the Low Group and the High Group. Each of these subgroups further narrows the search for the keys to be played. It further simplifies the pattern recognition that is required for finding the keys to be played.

7-Key High Group



High Group -- has 3 black keys in the center of the pattern. There are 7 high groups on the piano.

Learning to recognize these three kinds of group patterns (Octave Groups, Low Groups, and High Groups) will help you find your way around on the keyboard. Recognizing these groups is a very important part of learning to play the keyboard.

About the Hands, Fingers, and Fingering

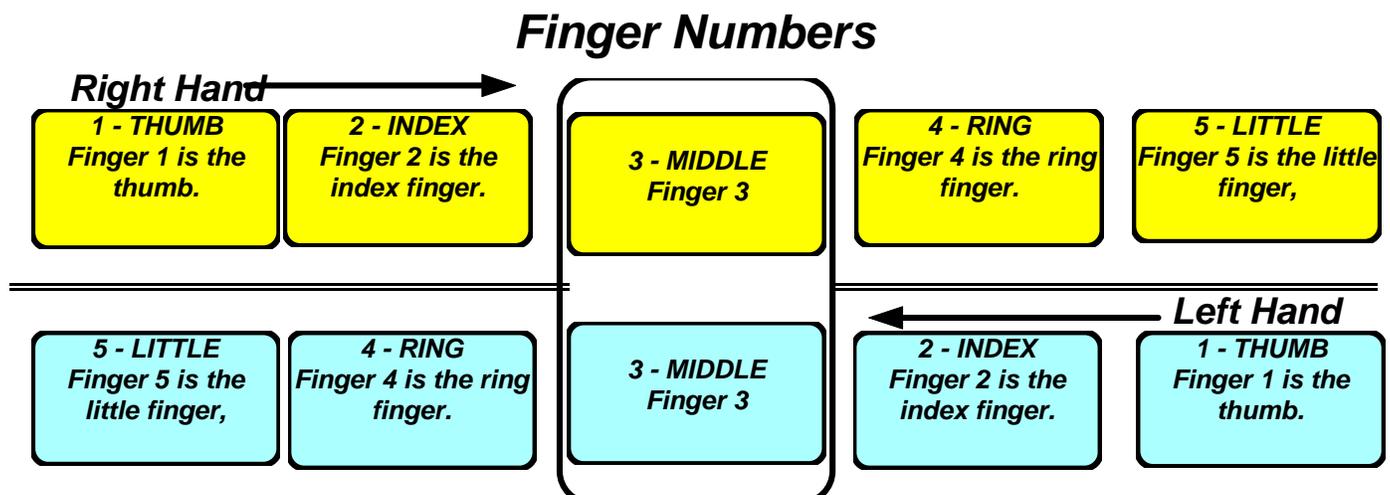
After You Find Which Key to Play... The first thing that you do is play it with a finger. Which finger? There are ten fingers to choose from. Which hand do you use? Selecting a finger can't be avoided because you can't play the chosen key until you select one of your ten fingers to play it.

Which Finger to Use. Every time that you identify a key to play, you make a choice about which hand and which finger to use. Often, you don't think about which finger you will use. Sometimes it doesn't matter, but often it does matter. Actually, it often matters a lot. You need to select the finger based on where your NEXT finger needs to go.

Where the Next Finger Goes. This depends entirely on the pattern of keys needed to play the melody. Which finger is used next? Often the composer or editor of the music wants to tell you which finger to use next. This, of course, is why we have finger numbers to show you which finger to use. Placing a finger number by the note is called "fingering." Fingering is how we place the hands and fingers where they need to be for the next few notes to be played. To get your finger on the right key, you need to be aware that on key maps, finger numbers are ALWAYS placed NEXT TO the note - NEVER above or below the note (to avoid confusion over which note the number is for).

"Fingering" Places Your Whole Hand. Fingering does tell you which finger to use to play a note. But it also has a broader effect. Placing your finger where the finger number indicates also puts your HAND in a certain place. And having your hand in a certain place locates your other 4 fingers close to the key just played. Most often, the reason for placing the finger is actually to move your hand in the right place for playing the next few keys!

The Standard Finger Numbers. These are shown in the chart below. Notice that the numbers start with the thumbs as number 1. This numbering system has your fingers going in opposite directions when starting at the thumbs - down for the left hand; up for the right hand.



Connecting Keys, Fingers, and Patterns

The 5-Finger Positions. These positions place the 5 fingers of a hand over 5 adjacent white keys on the keyboard. You might call this the basic playing position for playing melodies on a keyboard. It works for both hands (separately, of course). This works because most keys of melodies are played in groups of nearby keys, not as separate entities. What this does is make it possible to keep a hand in a fixed location for a short period of time. And this makes it easy for you to keep track of where your fingers are, and avoids frequent movements of your hands to the left and right.

In the Example. You can see the 5-finger positions in action. In this 28 note example, the 2 hands are put in place when they play their first notes. They remain in place for the entire 28 notes! Not a single move to a new location. You can see why the 5-finger position is used almost universally in beginning piano courses. Not only that, but it is the foundation for playing nearly all keyboard melodies. When both hands in 5-finger positions are placed with the thumbs next to each other - the result is referred to as a 10-finger position, as in the present example.

Twinkle, Twinkle Little Star

Jane Taylor	French folk tune
Moderately	Beats: 4
<p>3 4</p> <p>2</p> <p>lit- tle star,</p> <p>How I won- der what you are;</p>	<p>R 2</p> <p>Up a- bove the world so high,</p> <p>Like a dia- mond in the sky,</p>

ALL of the left hand notes are colored PINK, and all of the right hand notes are white.

About. Although there is no fixed position for the hands on the keyboard, the spacing of the fingers in the 5-finger position over 5 adjacent white keys is an important skill to develop. The position is not fixed in any given location, but the 5 fingers are spaced to fit 5 adjacent white keys at any location on the keyboard. Keeping the fingers spaced in this way is a major challenge for many students. Yet, it is an essential position for finding keys on the keyboard. In this position, one or more fingers are sometimes placed on black keys instead of white keys, thus making the position a bit more difficult to learn.

The 5-Finger and 10-Finger Positions

Locations of These

Positions. As indicated on the previous page, the 5-finger positions may be located anywhere on the keyboard to help one find keys quickly and easily by the way that they are grouped. It should be understood that hands and fingers will often move in and out of these positions as dictated by which keys need to be played. Many melodies with a small range of notes, however, can be played in their entirety without moving either hand to a new location - as shown on this page and the previous one. Also, as you can see in the example, black keys can often take the places of white keys in a 5-finger position.

Finding These Positions.

Exercises and pieces for beginners normally are clearly marked so that the hands will be placed in these positions. The beginning of each 5-Finger position will be indicated with a finger number. As a student advances he or she will learn to recognize the patterns in the notation and will place the fingers accordingly.

Mother Goose Brightly b: 2	Beats: 4	Traditional tune	
4	5	4	5
4			4
	2		
1			

The 5-Finger Colored Version - v5FC

About the 5FC Version.

This multi-colored version of the 5-Finger position shows when the hand remains in place and when it must move to a new location. The notes of a single color identify each 5-finger position. Each **COLOR CHANGE** signals that the hand needs to be moved to a new location. This color change gives the player advance notice of when the hand must move to a new location. Each new hand position begins with a finger number. Notes are not located in a 5-finger position are white.

Beside signaling each move to a new position, the color groups make it easy to see how long the hand is to **REMAIN** in the present 5-finger position. (Note that the colors of the notes have no meaning other than to show the groupings of the keys.)

Mother Goose Brightly b: 2	Beats: 4	Traditional tune	
4	5	4	5
1			4
1			4
1			4
1			4
1			4
1			4
1			4
1			4
1			4
1			4
1			4
1			4
1			4
1			4
1			4
1			4
1			4
1			4
1			4
1			4
1			4
1			4
1			4
1			4
1			4
1			4
1			4
1			4
1			4
1			4
1			4
1			4
1			4
1			4
1			4
1			4
1			4
1			4
1			4
1			4
1			4
1			4
1			4
1			4
1			4
1			4
1			4
1			4
1			4
1			4
1			4
1			4
1			4
1			4
1			4
1			4
1			4
1			4
1			4
1			4
1			4
1			4
1			4
1			4
1			4
1			4
1			4
1			4
1			4
1			4
1			4
1			4
1			4
1			4
1			4
1			4
1			4
1			4
1			4
1			4
1			4
1			4
1			4
1			4
1			4
1			4
1			4
1			4
1			4
1			4
1			4
1			4
1			4
1			4
1			4
1			4
1			4
1			4
1			4
1			4
1			4
1			4
1			4
1			4
1			4
1			4
1			4
1			4
1			4
1			4
1			4
1			4
1			4
1			4
1			4
1			4
1			4
1			4
1			4
1			4
1			4
1			4
1			4
1			4
1			4
1			4
1			4
1			4
1			4
1			4
1			4
1			4
1			4
1			4
1			4
1			4
1			4
1			4
1			4
1			4
1			4
1			4

Review

Ways of Finding the Keys. As it turns out, there are many ways of finding the keys to play them. One of the reasons that we need these many ways is that we can't look at the notes and the keys at the same time. As a result of this, we need to learn several ways of finding the keys without looking at the keyboard. We need to learn to locate keys very quickly so that we can play melodies fast enough to give them the necessary rhythm. Among the first things that we need to learn are the meanings of the words for the directions on the keyboard, because they differ from their usual meanings: up, down, high, low, higher, and lower.

Using the Black Keys to Find the White Keys. The black keys serve as guideposts for finding the white keys. The great thing about the black keys is that one really doesn't need to look at them to identify them. In addition to our being able to see them, they stand out so that we can find and identify them just with our fingers. With the black keys numbered from 1 to 5, they are very easy to identify by their groups of 2 and 3. Every white key sits next to one or two black keys. This proximity to the black keys makes the black keys excellent identifiers for the white keys - both visually and by touch.

Identifying and Naming the Patterns of the Keys. Our ability to find and play a single key from among the 88 different keys on the piano depends entirely on the patterns formed by the keys on the keyboard. The largest patterns are the 7 identical octave groups of 12 keys each. Each octave group is identified by a different color. Within each octave group pattern is a low group and a high group. The low group has 5 alternating black and white keys. The high group has 7 alternating black and white keys. Each of these patterns can be identified visually and by touch.

Identifying the Individual Keys. Within each octave group are 5 black keys and 7 white keys. The 5 black keys are identified by "addresses" from 1-5. The white keys are identified by "names" which are the first 7 letters of the alphabet, A-G. The SAME addresses and names are used in each octave group. Thus, there only 5 addresses and 7 names to learn for identifying the keys. The keys with the same names or addresses are distinguished from each other by the colors of their octave groups.

Knowing Which Finger to Use. Sometimes it doesn't matter which fingers you use to play a melody - but often it does matter. The fingers of each hand are identified by the numbers 1-5, beginning with the thumbs as number 1. When it is necessary to use a certain finger in a melody, the composer or editor can place the finger number next to the note so that the player can place the finger (and hand) in the necessary location for ease of playing.

Playing in the 5-Finger Positions. The 5-finger positions are basic playing positions that greatly simplify finding the next key to play. The 5-finger position places the hand in a location on the keyboard that puts a finger on each of 5 adjacent white keys. The hand remains at a fixed location on the keyboard for a short period of time, making it possible to find each key in the position very quickly.