

Steps for Learning a New Piece of Music

(for beginning students)

First, divide your piece into practicing sections (your teacher may need to help you do this). Each practicing section is usually one phrase (often 4 measures long) or half of one phrase.

Then you can go through the following steps for each phrase. Be sure to do all of these steps for each phrase before going on to the next phrase.

1. **Point and Say.** Point to each note in the music and say its letter name. If both hands are playing at the same time, you will need to do one hand at a time.
2. **Play and Say.** Play the notes and say the names of the notes while you are playing.
3. **Describe the direction.** Describe the direction from one note to the next (intervals). This is done by saying "up" (if you move up by a 2nd), "down" (if you move down by a 2nd), "same" (if the note repeats), "up a third" or "down a third" (if you move up or down a 3rd), or "up a..." or "down a..." (if you move up or down by another interval). You will have to simply say the name of the first note.
4. **Write in the counting.** If you need to, write in how you would count the music (1-2-3-4, etc.). If you can play and count outloud without writing in the counting, this is best.
5. **Play and count outloud.** Play and count the rhythms outloud (without the metronome). You can simply say the counting that you had written in during the previous step.
6. **Play with the metronome.** You may or may not try counting outloud. Your teacher may have to help you decide what speed is appropriate for the piece on which you are working. You can select a relatively slow speed first and then gradually get faster as you get to know the music better.

After you have worked through these steps for each section, you are now ready to start putting the sections together. You can apply the same steps to the whole piece or simply try the whole piece with the metronome since you have already applied each step to the individual sections.

You might want to work through all of these steps each day until you have the piece memorized, or you might only play with the metronome from slow-to-fast after you are comfortable enough with all of the other steps.