

I am not a musician...how can I help my child succeed in piano lessons?

Many parents voice their concern to me that since they are not musicians themselves they feel they will be unable to help their children practice and succeed in piano lessons. I would like to help you put that fear to rest by giving you the following information:

1. You are more musical you think.

Many people adamantly swear they have no musical talent or ability, but I believe that everyone is musically inclined, at least to some degree. Do you have a favourite song? Do you like to sing along to music in your car? Do you find yourself tapping your toe or moving to the beat of some music you find irresistible? If so, you have musical ability! Being musically inclined is just part of being human. Sharing your favourite songs, singers, or bands with your children by listening to music in the home can be a great way to help their musical development while also providing a fun way to share time together.

2. The practice instructions are written down.

I always write detailed instructions about what to practice and how to practice in the student's homework book. This way it is easy for parents to move down the list of practice guidelines and accomplish the weekly tasks. The burden won't be placed on you to remember what they should practice.

3. Attend your child's lesson.

You are welcome and encouraged to attend your child's lesson. You will be able to see and hear what they are doing, which will make it easier to help them with practice at home. Everything students do in the first year to two years of lesson will be easy to follow along by watching and listening.

4. Encourage your children to perform for friends and family.

Showing enthusiasm for your child's musical accomplishments can motivate them to practice and help them feel positive about what they are learning. Performing for friends and family (or even a group of stuffed animals) in informal situations can be a great way to positively reinforce the importance of music lessons.

5. Go to concerts together.

Even if you have never attended classical music events in the past, try going to some concerts with your children. There is great family programming at the National Arts Centre. All University of Ottawa student concerts are free and open to the public. Discovering new music together can help instill a love of music and motivate students to aspire to improve their abilities. The concerts don't have to be classical—try checking out Jazz Fest, Blues Fest, or some local acts in cafés. The Lansdowne Market often features concerts with music from around the world! The more diverse the sounds, the better.