FREE CASE FILE

Piano Note Detective

Comfortable Piano Setup Lab

Before the first note: a bench at the right height, feet supported, shoulders loose and arms free to move. Three short cases and eight situation cards for home and the studio.

IN THIS FREE CASE

- 3 cases on a comfortable setup
- Bench height and distance
- Loose shoulders, arms and wrists
- A one-minute warm-up
- 8 situation cards
- Checklists for the adult

Sit facing the middle of the keyboard, near Middle C.

1 **Set the bench**

2 **Feet supported**

3 **Shoulders loose**

4 **Hands ready**

Digital download · Print at 100% on US Letter · For first-year piano students and their grown-ups · Three sittings of about 10 minutes · At the piano or keyboard

How the case file works

Three short cases at the piano. You watch; the learner tries.

For a first-year piano student and the grown-up who helps at home. A comfortable setup makes playing easier: a bench at a good height, feet supported, shoulders loose, arms free to move. There is no single perfect position. Bodies, benches and pianos differ, and a teacher adjusts the setup in person. This book gives things to try and to notice.

EACH CASE

The story	Read it aloud together. It says what the detective is looking for.
Learn	The rule for this case, with a picture. Point at it while you read it.
Tasks	Situation questions have one best answer with its reason. Checklists are for the grown-up to observe: there is nothing to mark wrong.

YOU NEED

- The piano or keyboard the learner practices on
- A bench or chair; for height and for the feet, firm supports that cannot slide or tip (a firm cushion, books, a sturdy box): the grown-up checks them before the child sits
- The situation cards at the back (cut out)

GOOD TO KNOW

- Notice and adjust; do not force a position.
- If anything is sore or uncomfortable, stop, rest and tell a teacher. This book does not diagnose anything.
- Re-check the setup when the learner grows or changes piano.

NOT A METHOD BOOK

A setup guide for beginners, not piano lessons and not medical advice. A teacher checks the setup in person; nothing here is a rule for every body.

Case 1: The Bench Mystery

A bench at a good height and distance

THE STORY

Detective, the practice bench keeps "moving": one day too low, one day too far away. Find a setup that feels easy, and write it down so it is the same every day.

LEARN

- Sit on the front half of the bench, facing the middle of the keyboard.
- Many teachers look for forearms about level with the keys, or a little above: raise a low bench with a firm cushion or books.
- Feet need support: flat on the floor, or on a box or footstool when they do not reach.
- Sit far enough back that the elbows can move freely in front of the body.

1 Choose the best answer.

1. Maya sits down and her elbows are well below the keys. Her hands have to reach up to play.
   - (A) Raise the seat with a firm cushion or books
   - (B) Lift her shoulders up to reach
   - (C) Play standing up
2. Leo's feet dangle in the air when he sits on the bench.
   - (A) Leave them dangling
   - (B) Put a box or footstool under his feet
   - (C) Sit on the very edge so his toes touch
3. Ava sits so close that her elbows bump her body.
   - (A) Move the bench back a little
   - (B) Tuck her elbows in tighter
   - (C) Lean back

Case 1: The Bench Mystery (continued)

2 Grown-up: watch the learner sit at the piano and tick what you see.

- [ ] Sits on the front half of the bench, facing the middle of the keyboard
- [ ] Feet supported: on the floor or on a box or footstool
- [ ] Forearms about level with the keys, or a little above
- [ ] Elbows free to move, not bumping the body or stretched far forward
- [ ] Our setup (write it down): bench height, cushion, footstool

Case 2: Loose Shoulders, Free Arms

Shoulders loose, arms and wrists relaxed

THE STORY

The second clue: a player who looks like a statue gets tired quickly. Find out what loose arms feel like.

LEARN

- Let the shoulders drop: they do not need to lift to play.
- Arms hang loose from the shoulders, then float the hands up to the keys.
- Wrists stay soft and roughly level with the hand, not stiff and not sagging below the keys.
- Curved, relaxed fingers rest on the keys, as if holding a small ball.

1 Shake out both hands. Let the arms hang by your sides and count to five. Then float your hands up and rest them on the keys.

I did it | I did it with help

2 Choose the best answer.

1. Sam's shoulders are up by his ears while he plays.
   - (A) Pause, breathe out and let the shoulders drop
   - (B) Play louder
   - (C) Hold the shoulders up so the arms stay still
2. Mia's wrists sag below the keys between notes.
   - (A) Let them rest there
   - (B) Float the wrists up so they stay about level with the hand
   - (C) Press the wrists down harder

3 Grown-up: watch one short piece or a few notes, and tick what you see.

- [ ] Shoulders stay down and loose
- [ ] Wrists soft, roughly level with the hand
- [ ] Fingers curved and relaxed on the keys
- [ ] The learner can breathe and talk while playing slowly

Case 3: Ready, Set, Play

A one-minute warm-up and a quick setup check

THE STORY

The case is nearly closed. Detectives check their tools before they start: here is a one-minute check before every practice.

LEARN

- Before practice: bench, feet, shoulders, hands. Ten seconds each.
- A warm-up is gentle: slow and quiet, never forced.
- Take a short break when the arms or hands feel tired.

1 Warm-up: rest the right hand on any five white keys side by side, near the middle of the keyboard (the grown-up can point to Middle C). Play each key slowly and softly, letting the arm stay loose. Then do the same with the left hand, a little lower.

I played it | I played it with help

2 Choose the best answer.

1. Noah's hand feels tired after a long practice.
   - (A) Keep going without stopping
   - (B) Take a short break, then check the setup
   - (C) Play faster to finish sooner
2. The family moves the piano to a new room with a different chair.
   - (A) Check the height and feet again
   - (B) Nothing changes
   - (C) Sit on the floor

3 Grown-up: before the next three practices, tick each step of the check.

- [ ] Day 1: bench, feet, shoulders, hands
- [ ] Day 2: bench, feet, shoulders, hands
- [ ] Day 3: bench, feet, shoulders, hands

Situation cards

Cut out the cards. Read one aloud at the piano, guess what would help, then try what the card suggests.

CARD 1

The seat is too low

The hands reach up to the keys. Try: a firm cushion or books on the seat; check that they cannot slide.

CARD 2

Feet in the air

The feet do not reach the floor. Try: a box or footstool under them.

CARD 3

Too close

The elbows bump the body. Try: move the bench back a little.

CARD 4

Too far

The body leans forward to reach. Try: move the bench closer.

CARD 5

Shoulders up high

Try: pause, breathe out, let the shoulders drop, then start again.

CARD 6

Sagging wrists

Try: float the wrists up so they are about level with the hand.

CARD 7

Off to one side

The learner sits near one end of the keyboard. Try: sit facing the middle, near Middle C.

CARD 8

Tired hands

Try: a short break, then check the setup. If something hurts, stop and tell a teacher.

Answers

Every answer comes with its reason. Read the reasons aloud: they teach.

CASE 1 · THE BENCH MYSTERY

Task 1 **PND21-C1-T1**	1 A: Raise the seat with a firm cushion or books · 2 B: Put a box or footstool under his feet · 3 A: Move the bench back a little A higher seat brings the forearms closer to the level of the keys, so the shoulders can stay loose. Supported feet help him sit balanced without gripping the bench. A little more distance lets the elbows move freely in front of the body.
Task 2 **PND21-C1-T2**	Observed by the adult (no single answer). Notice and adjust together; a teacher fine-tunes the setup in person.

CASE 2 · LOOSE SHOULDERS, FREE ARMS

Task 1 **PND21-C2-T1**	Hands arrive on the keys without the shoulders lifting.
Task 2 **PND21-C2-T2**	1 A: Pause, breathe out and let the shoulders drop · 2 B: Float the wrists up so they stay about level with the hand Loose shoulders let the arms move freely; a pause and a breath out is a simple reset. A soft wrist about level with the hand lets the fingers reach the keys easily. Her teacher may suggest more.
Task 3 **PND21-C2-T3**	Observed by the adult (no single answer). Signs of a comfortable setup, not a test.

CASE 3 · READY, SET, PLAY

Task 1 **PND21-C3-T1**	Slow, soft notes with loose arms; which five keys does not matter here.
Task 2 **PND21-C3-T2**	1 B: Take a short break, then check the setup · 2 A: Check the height and feet again A short break and a quick check of the setup help. If something hurts, stop and tell a teacher. A new seat or piano changes the height: check the setup again.
Task 3 **PND21-C3-T3**	Observed by the adult (no single answer). A habit, not a test.