



**DAVIS
MUSIC STUDIOS**

STUDIO POLICIES

2021 - 2022

This booklet contains all the information you need to get the most out of piano lessons and serves as an agreement between teacher and student / parent. These policies will update each year as I continue to refine the logistics of running a studio, as new technology becomes available, and based on feedback from students and families. A physical copy should be kept in every student's assignment binder, and the most recent digital copy will be available on the website and on MyMusicStaff (MMS).

OVERVIEW:

I hold a Bachelors of Music in Piano Performance with a focus in Piano Pedagogy from the Benjamin T. Rome School of Music at Catholic University (Washington, DC), where I studied under Dr. James Litzelman.

I specialize in teaching a technique based on upper arm gesture and weight manipulation as the path to physiologically healthy & efficient playing and freedom of expression. I handle all logistics via an online portal (MyMusicStaff), facilitate various recitals, group classes, masterclasses, and competitions throughout the year, and have an effective setup for online lessons. I am a member of Music Teachers National Association (MTNA) along with several local affiliates (Maryland State, Greater Baltimore, Montgomery County, Washington DC). I charge a flat-rate monthly tuition based on the number of lessons in a September to August term, and teach year-round.

EXPECTATIONS

The intensity of lessons very much depends on the goals of the individual student, but it's important for teacher, student (and parent) to be on the same page regarding basic expectations of all students:

Expectation of Students:

- **Practicing every day** with only incidental exception. Discuss a recommended minimum daily practice with your teacher.
- Practice time at home should include **Theory, Technique, and Repertoire**. The teacher's lesson notes should be referenced every day for this info.
- Practice should take place on an **acoustic piano** (not a keyboard/electric piano), or you should be in the active process of trying to find one.
- All pianists must maintain **short nails and clean hands**, especially when coming to lesson. Always wash your hands before playing.
- Students are expected to participate in all the two primary **studio recitals** each year. Please discuss additional events with your teacher.

Expectation of Parents:

- Parents are expected to be a present **support system** for every student's development. For young beginners, this may include being present with them at every practice session to reinforce the lessons, or for older students, may include more general encouragement about consistency, problem-solving, discipline, and responsibility.
- For any student who is under 18 years of age, it is the **responsibility** of the parent to ensure timely transportation, that tuition is paid, and that they are the primary communicator regarding logistics and attendance.
- For any student under age 10, it is **highly recommended** that you be in attendance with the student at each lesson, to help keep them focused, and so that you can assist throughout the week with reinforcing the lessons.

Expectations of Teacher:

- You can expect a patient and consistent effort to give you the tools you need to become your own teacher, including the **knowledge** to understand various pieces and styles, the **exercises** to physically train your skills in a way that is physiologically healthy, and the **methods** with which to problem-solve and develop good efficiency in your own practice.
- You can expect a clear **communicator** and organized **planner**, who will provide resources and opportunities that will help you meet your goals.
- You can expect a kind **demeanor**, but one that is straight-forward and always focused on long term growth and development.

ONLINE PORTAL - MyMusicStaff

The browser-based program called **MyMusicStaff** helps everyone stay organized, and provides tools tailored to you to make the experience of taking lessons more effective. Parents can have access to information to stay updated, and students who are old enough can have their own log in. You will be provided login information when you begin lessons.



The student portal allows you to:

- View a calendar of upcoming events, lessons, recitals, etc.
- Register for and cancel lessons / makeup lessons
- Click a link to enter Zoom meeting for online lessons
- View your attendance and lesson assignments
- View downloadable resources, such as study scores, exercises, articles, and overview calendars
- Track your practice time and leave notes or questions that you have from their practice session
- Add and track your repertoire
- View your email history
- View contact information for me and other student families
- Keep up-to-date with studio news
- View your family's account and invoice information (only visible to parents/adult students)
- Pay for lessons or setup auto-payments



LESSON FORMATS

Lessons are offered both **In-person** and **Online via Zoom**. Students may sign up for one, the other, or a combination of the two. There are pros and cons of both formats, depending on your goals and logistics. Here are some examples:

- A **young beginner** may wish to take in-person lessons, at which it's easier to pay attention and be visually guided to the right answer. The youngest beginners may opt for in-person lessons with short follow-up zoom lessons within the same week.
- An **older beginner** or **transfer student** may find online lessons challenging in a useful way, since it requires more autonomy, and hones focus, reading skills, and organization.
- A student interested in learning **improvisation** or **music production** on top of standard piano may wish to do online lessons for easier collaboration and sharing of demo material.
- An **adult student** may wish to take some of both kinds; online lessons are convenient and allow recording for future reference, while occasional in-person lessons allow for tactile technical development.
- An **advanced student** may wish to take some of both kinds; online lessons allow for detailed feedback videos and insight from working on a consistent instrument, while in-person lessons can provide rigorous detail and experience on a grand piano.
- A **homeschool** family may opt for online lessons so that a seamless schedule can be maintained, while a **military** family might desire the consistency regardless of location.

Regardless of format, I do my best to personalize lessons to meet your individual goals.

CONTACT

Pianobyme@gmail.com
www.Pianobyme.com

ZOOM LESSONS

These are given from a home studio optimized for effective piano lessons, including **professional audio/video**, a variety of **camera angles**, and the ability to **record** for later reference.

- The Zoom link is always the same, and can be found directly on the MMS calendar, along with weekly lessons notes, which can also be emailed.
- This format can also be used for makeup-lessons, sick days, weather cancellations, etc.

Note: distance lessons from my home studio are of a higher quality than from one of the in-person locations.

IN-PERSON LESSONS

These are presently given at two physical locations:

Cockeysville Music Education Center (Baltimore, MD) - [LINK](#)
1818 Pot Spring Road, Suite 22
Lutherville-Timonium, MD 21093

This newly opened location features lessons on a Kawai 6'7" Concert Grand piano. CMEC is a teacher co-op which I help run.

Westmoreland Congregational UCC (Bethesda, MD) - [LINK](#)
1 Westmoreland Circle
Bethesda, MD 20816

Westmoreland is where I currently serve as Director of Music. Lessons are held in the Sanctuary on a Steinway Baby Grand piano.

EVENTS

Recitals, Recordings, and Competitions are held at various venues throughout Maryland. Please take advantage of as many performance opportunities as possible. Some of these include:

- 2 Recitals per year through Cockeysville Music Education Center
- 1 Summer Recording Session at Westmoreland UCC
- Various Virtual Recitals throughout the year
- MSMTA Spring Festival
- MTNA National Competition
- Other Competitions / Masterclasses / Festivals / Judged Recitals

COVID-19

This is a vital addition to the 2021-2022 policies. It is our joint responsibility to create a safe environment in which to take lessons. This means that we must look after one another, be communicative and forthcoming about illnesses, and consider that I (the teacher) am a connective link between you and other students, some of whom are older or have family vulnerabilities.

Note: The following will apply for all in-person lessons, subject to change as updated information and advice becomes available.

What I will do:

- Wear a mask
- I am vaccinated (Moderna) as of March 2021
- Disinfect shared surfaces, including the piano keys, between lessons
- If I am feeling symptoms of illness, I will opt to have lessons via Zoom for that week.

What I ask of you:

- Wash hands or hand sanitize before every lesson
- Wear a mask (this includes family waiting inside)
- If you or a household member are feeling symptoms of illness, please opt to have that lesson via zoom for that week.
- If you have traveled or attended an event with large crowds, please opt to have lessons via zoom for that week.

SABBATICAL

This is a temporary addition to the 2021-2022 policies. I will be taking a 3 month sabbatical in 2022, from **April 18th to July 17th**. Prior to this window, I will arrange bi-weekly substitute lessons (6 in total) with a small group of teachers, depending on what will be most beneficial. Tuition will remain the same during this time, as I will arrange to pay the subs directly and according to their various rates. This will not affect the number of lessons you have throughout the year in total.

Adult students may opt to suspend lessons during this time.

CHANGES & CANCELLATIONS

By signing up for lessons you are reserving a weekly time slot for every week that lessons are held, according to the yearly calendar. If you have a schedule conflict, please follow these guidelines:

- All adjustments, swaps, or cancellations must be made at least 24 hours in advance via **MMS Calendar**. Email or text is also fine if the tech gives you trouble. Changes with at least this much notice are considered an “**excused absence**” and are eligible for makeup.

NOTE: No more than four lessons will be made up throughout any one term. There will be no refund or credit for any missed lessons, except for those cancelled by the teacher. Notification the day of a lesson or failing to notify at all will be considered unexcused, and will not be made up.

- Check the MMS Calendar to see if there are any **open lesson times** available that week that you can register for instead. You must “cancel” the attendance for your normal lesson time before you can register for a makeup. This automatically creates an open spot for someone else.
- Eligible **makeups** can also be fulfilled by adding additional time onto a series of lessons, by scheduling a second lesson within a different week, or by taking advantage of a “make-up day” for which there will be announcements as the year goes on, usually on scheduled off weeks.
- **Extended vacations** can be considered excused absences (if notified), but you must continue to pay monthly tuition to hold your spot. If you plan to miss an entire month of lessons, please mail tuition or pay online. This includes summer months.
- **Weather-related cancellations** will be confirmed via email, though will general follow the local school district. The first option will be to hold lessons online. If lessons are impossible, they will be considered excused.

NOTE: MyMusicStaff has a system of makeup credits, but I’ve had trouble with it in the past. I’ll keep track of the 4 available makeups separately—please inquire directly if you’re not sure.

TUITION

Tuition is the same amount every month, regardless of how many lessons are scheduled. This amount is based on the total cost of 38 lessons plus a yearly \$100 fee which forms a pool to cover recital costs and materials given out in lessons. Balances are sent monthly via emailed invoice.

Note: Sometimes books will be procured by me, sometimes by you. When I purchase them on your behalf, I'll add the cost as a line-item on the monthly invoice. I'll do the same to be reimbursed for event fees.

At the end of each term (Aug 31st), each family receives a receipt detailing attendance, payments made, and an evaluation of progress. If adjustments are needed, they will be applied to the September tuition invoice as a credit or additional charge.

- Tuition is **due by the 10th** of each month, or as noted on the monthly invoice.
- Tuition should be paid either with **check or card** (preferably not cash). You may pay online by clicking the button on the invoice, or you can setup auto-payments through MMS.
- If payment is not received, a **reminder** will be emailed. If payment is not received by the 16th of the month, a **\$10 late fee** will automatically be applied to your balance.

Note: The late-fee is automatic, but sometimes there are mistakes. Please contact me in the event you receive a late fee by mistake.

- Lessons are offered with default times ranging from 45 minutes to 120 minutes, with an exception for beginners younger than 7, who can be asked to schedule two 25 minute lessons per week for the first month or until they are ready for 45 minute lessons.

	Standard	CMEC
Family Discount	\$160.00/mo	\$130.00
45 minute	\$195.00	\$165.00
60 minute	\$240.00	\$200.00
90 minute	\$320.00	\$280.00
120 minute	\$400.00	\$350.00

Note: I'm generally pretty accommodating if you are good at communicating. If you run into problems, just keep me informed.

Other notes on tuition:

- If you are or know a motivated student for whom lessons are unaffordable, please ask about partial or full **scholarships**.
- For families with more than one student per household, there is a **family discount**. The student with the longest lesson is priced according to the chart. All additional family members are priced one box above what would be their normal rate.
- Please note that tuition at **Cockeysville Music Education Center** is slightly lower, due to partial subsidization. Lessons which are completely **Online** fall into the “Standard” category.
- **Adult students may sign up for lessons per diem**, for coachings and general guidance, according to the following rates:

30 minute	\$45.00
45 minute	\$55.00
60 minute	\$65.00

TERMINATION

If the time comes when you no longer can or wish to take lessons, you must give **a month’s notice** at or before the time of your final payment. Here are other policies regarding ending lessons:

- If you have accrued **excused absences** that you would like to makeup, you have the option of continuing lessons after the final month for as many weeks as you have accrued makeup lessons.
- Upon ending lessons, you will receive a **receipt**.
- **No lessons will be refunded.**

The teacher reserves the right to terminate lessons with the same one month notice and stipulations, for any of the following reasons:

- Consistent disrespect or misbehavior.
- Consistent tardiness or failure to attend.
- Failure to pay tuition within a month of its due date.
- Consistently late payment of tuition.

CLOSING NOTE



There is *almost* nothing in this world that I believe in more than I believe in piano lessons. I have now been teaching long enough to repeatedly see how it can transform students (and appreciate how it transformed me). Adherents to lessons, as with many other long-term disciplines, learn:

- Patience, problem-solving, and deliberate focus
- How to process feedback, create good strategy, and be time-efficient
- How to overcome nerves, build confidence, learn from failure, and manage tension in the body
- How to make creative decisions, consider detail, and describe abstractions
- How to gradually acquire skill over time

Most of all, however, they are given the ability to communicate in this powerful language for their own nurturement and enjoyment throughout their lives. This is one of the many gifts that a parent can give to their child whose impact may not be truly appreciated until years later in life.

I am grateful that I was given that gift growing up, and that it has turned into the foundation of my work. This was due, in part, to the financial sacrifice of my parents and grandparents, but also to the generosity of my teachers and mentors. This is why, to date, I have given over 200 hours of lessons at no or reduced cost. It is my goal to do more, as I am able.

If you support this mission, please consider contributing to the my Studio Fund. Read more at www.Pianobyme.com

Thanks,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Alec M Davis'.

Alec M Davis

