

HELPING STUDENTS READ PITCHES AND LEARN FINGERINGS

One problem that beginning students sometimes have is that they try to memorize music instead of learning to read the pitches.

Parents, here's how to help your kids:

The Goals

The student needs to be able to...

- 1) recognize the pitches, be able to name them (letter names).
- 2) move his/her hand into the fingering position upon seeing the notes.
- 3) increase the speed and perform a timely succession of finger switches.

(Fingering for trombones means slide positions.)

(For bells it means touching the bars silently.)

The Steps

(You'll need to familiarize yourself with the notes and fingerings first.)

- 1) Randomly point to a note on a familiar page in our book and have the student tell you its letter name.
- 2) Randomly point to a note on a familiar page in our book and have the student move into the proper fingering.
- 3) Randomly point to a note on a familiar page in our book and have the student play it.
- 4) Repeat each step by pointing to 2, then 3, then 4 consecutive notes and strive to move faster over time.

With enough practice, the reading/fingering should become almost second nature.

Tempo (Speed)

When using our band book, the CD accompaniment provides a steady beat which can help gauge progress over time. Students can finger along and eventually play along once the fingerings are mastered. The CD's tempo can be slowed down if loaded into a computer, but only plays at one speed in a regular stereo or CD player.

Interactive Websites

You could also set a tempo using a metronome. Here's one in case you don't have one. Copy and paste the address below in your web browser or find it on the Links Page and just click.

<http://www.metronomeonline.com/>

The following interactive site is good for naming notes for all students, and for finger training for advanced brass players. Copy and paste the address below in your web browser or find it on the Links Page and just click.

<http://www.musictheory.net/index.html>

Tips On Using musictheory.net

Use the LESSONS to clarify information and to study. The first LESSON applies to reading pitches and the next few deal with rhythms.

Use the NOTE TRAINER to work on reading and naming pitches. Click on SETTINGS to choose the appropriate clef and drag the notes to set the range. Check the band book to verify which clef and notes you need. Don't worry about flats or sharps at this point.

Use the BRASS TRAINER for fingerings. Unfortunately, the number of notes can't be limited enough to be helpful for beginners at the earliest stage. You can SET THE INSTRUMENT, SET THE RANGE and ALLOW/DISALLOW FLATS and SHARPS.