

Tips and Tricks for Teaching Repertoire by Rote

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Pedagogical Principles

Maximizing objectives with repetition and transfer

- Technique and artistry (play)
- Connect known sounds with new knowledge (read and learn)
- Improvise and transpose (create)

Processes for initial learning plans

- Whole-part-whole
- Smallest part (single step)
 - o Stop-prepare
- Spread learning over weeks
 - o Melody first
 - o Previews
 - o Form-based learning
- Next lesson, start from the first step again

Tips for teachers

- Embrace the process
 - o Find each student's pace and capacity
 - o Single step, with repetition (lots of)
 - o Refine the details
- Language
 - o Questions to guide observation (i.e. "What key did I start from?")
 - o "Listen and watch carefully"

- o "My turn, your turn"
- o "Follow the leader"
- o "Simon says"
- o "Are you ready to try?"
- o Student as teacher

Tricks for students

- Preparation
 - o Recordings in advance
- Help with focus
 - o Movement to music
 - o Props, stickers (mark keys)
 - o Actions to cue behaviors
 - o Lyrics as recall cues
- Retention
 - o Begin lesson with rote learning
 - o Interleave the rote material
 - o Review at the end
 - o "Again before bed"
- For recall
 - o Maps, diagrams, made with/for students
 - o Pictures of student's hands
 - o Video: performance, graphic illustration, step-by-step

Musical Examples Used to Illustrate Principles

1. "Anyone Home?" by Cornelius Gurlitt, Op. 117, No. 8
2. "Jack be Nimble" by Sara Ernst from *Stories in Sound*, not published
3. "Monsters on the Run" by Julie Knerr Hague from *Pattern Pieces 2*, Piano Safari
4. "Marigold" by Wendy Stevens from *Color of Music Series*, ComposeCreate.com

Select Elementary Music for Rote Teaching

Alexander, Dennis and Amy Greer: *Repertoire by Rote* (Alfred)

Unique collection designed for rote instruction, featuring pre-made maps that can be photocopied for students and step-by-step teacher instructions.

Costley, Kevin and Helen Marlais, ed.: *Be A Star!* Series, especially Book 1 (FJH)

Highly patterned music using intervals as a basis for each work. All pieces are pedaled and feature movement around the keys.

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Glennon, Amy: *Friends at Last* (Piano Safari)

An adorable new collection of pieces for beginners with a storyline. Features teacher duets and is ideal for group and rote instruction. Limited use of hands.

Gurlitt, Cornelius: *The First Lessons*, Op. 117 (see nos. 5–10, 12, 13, 15).

Kabalevsky, Dmitri: Selections from *Pieces for Children*, Op. 39 (see nos. 1–4, 6, 7, 9, 12) and Op. 89 (see nos. 1, 8, 15, 20)

Knerr Hague, Julie and Katherine Fisher: *Pattern Pieces*, Book 1 and 2 (Piano Safari)

Delightful repertoire designed for rote instruction. Can supplement many approaches, although repertoire was designed alongside the method *Piano Safari*.

Olson, Kevin, and E. L. Lancaster, ed.: *From Rote to Note*, Book 1 (Piano Education Press)

Includes short, particularly easy-to-learn pieces with maps, standard notation, teacher duets, and step-by-step teaching guides.

Pearce, Elvina (historical): *Solo Flight*, *4 o'clock Tunes*, *First Impressions*, *Excursions* (Alfred)

Possible for teacher reference and to create maps for students. *Solo Flight* features a unique use of grayed out staff behind notes. Note: While there are many excellent pieces for rote and rote-to-note instruction in these collections, there are some pieces that use problematic cultural references.

Stevens, Wendy: *Outback Adventure* and *Colors in Sound Series* (ComposeCreate.com)

Both collections include playful and artistic pieces that could be used at the beginning of study and for later elementary. Written with rote teaching in mind.

Tan, Chee-Hwa: *Through the Windowpane* (Piano Safari)

Pieces combined with poetry that are ideal for a rote-to-note instructional style.

Pedagogical Research Resources

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Bigler, Carole, and Valery Lloyd-Watts. *Studying Suzuki Piano—More Than Music: A Handbook for Teachers, Parents, and Students*. Van Nuys, CA: Alfred Music, 1993.

Comeau, Gilles. *Teaching Suzuki Piano: 10 Teachers' Viewpoints*. Vanier, Ontario: CFORP, 1998.

Comeau, Gilles. "Playing by Ear in the Suzuki Method: Supporting Evidence and Concerns in the Context of Piano Playing." *The Canadian Music Teacher* 62, no. 3 (2012) 42+.

Jacobson, Jeanine M., and E. L. Lancaster, ed. *Professional Piano Teaching, Vol. 1: A Comprehensive Piano Pedagogy Textbook for Teaching Elementary-Level Students*. Van Nuys, Alfred Music, 2006.

Knerr, Julie, and Katherine Fisher. "Mini Essay 6: The Benefits of Rote Teaching." <https://pianosafari.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/04/Mini-Essay-6.pdf>.

Knerr, Julie. "Mini Essay 7: Teaching Strategies." <https://pianosafari.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/04/Mini-Essay-7.pdf>

Lancaster, E. L. "The American Beginning Piano Method. The Yamaha Music Education System," *The Piano Quarterly* 33, no. 128 (1984): 19–33.

McPherson, Gary E., and Alf Gabrielsson. "From Sound to Sign" in *The Science & Psychology of Music Performance: Creative Strategies for Teaching and Learning*, Richard Parncutt and Gary McPherson, eds. New York: Oxford University Press, 2002.

Pearce, Elvina. "Reading with a Dash of Rote (Video Teaching Demonstration)." Kingston, NJ: New School for Music Study, 1987.