

Piano Exams - expectations and preparation: a quick guide for all pupils, and where applicable parents.

Exams should be enjoyable, and seen as a vehicle for showing what you can do, rather than like going into a lion's den and hoping not to get bitten. The Association Board booklet *These Music Exams* - well worth reading - sums up this approach thus: *Achievement through enjoyment*. Ask us to email it to you or see the ABRSM website for it and other similar resources. To this end, we generally only agree to pupils entering exams when you are likely to obtain a Distinction; with Merit as a fall-back; and Pass being an out of character unforeseen mess-up of a section or two on the day. We're not at all interested in the "will I/won't I pass" scenario - that's too stressful, and not at all enjoyable, for all concerned.

Exam Timing.

Plan realistically and carefully when you aim to do the exam: what are your other commitments? If you have a leading role in the Christmas play with many after-school rehearsals, a November/December exam is probably not a pragmatic option. Equally, it's no good aiming for an exam session that is going to be preceded by you being away for 1, 2, 3, or 4 weeks, without practice facilities, prior to it. You also need to plan for the possibility of needing to defer entry for a term.

Exam entry.

Our standard procedure, for many years, is that at the start of term, prior to entry deadlines, we will assess your preparation thus far. We will expect at least two out of the three pieces to be thoroughly fluent and memorised (whether or not you play from the music in the exam); all scales and other technical work to be fully fluent; and for Grade 2 and above, both sight-reading and aural tests in the grade immediately below the grade you are taking to be fully fluent with, for all grades, evidence of regular practice of both in the current grade. If one or more is/are not achieved, we will tell you where you fall short, and ask you to defer the exam. If all these thresholds are reached you may enter; on the basis of you honouring our trust in you to do regular practice (including during school half term breaks/holidays) and attend weekly lessons regularly between this point and the exam. For the avoidance of misunderstanding, pupils MUST NOT enter, or be entered, before this assessment has been carried out, or enter after receiving a negative pre-entry assessment result.

You make the entry as first, rather than otherwise having to wait until your next lesson, you get the results delivered directly to you as soon as they are available. Second, anyone is less likely to make mistakes filling out their own details than if

someone else does it. Allow at least TWO working days to get the on-line pass code, so don't leave entering to the very last minute!

To keep everything on the boil, rotate the content of your practice so that everything is covered regularly. In the higher grades, scales and technical work might be split over two or three practice sessions, making sure absolutely every possibility that can be asked for, is practised. Try to vary the order to avoid inadvertently building in the success of *G* major being reliant upon having just played *C* major, for example.

The Exam day itself.

Dress, formally, to impress: this is a formal performance. Male examiners will have been asked to wear a blazer/suit and tie, and ladies to wear the equivalent, and so you need to show respect for them and for the occasion by dressing accordingly: nobody gets a second chance to make a first impression and you do not want to get off to a bad start by either looking or indeed feeling underdressed. The smartest version of your school uniform - i.e. the version you would be expected to wear for a school concert - is a good option, or a useful benchmark for something else.

If the venue location is unfamiliar, do a recital a few days before. Visualising everything from your arrival to the end of a happy and successful exam can be a useful confidence-building part of the later stages of preparation.

Arrive in good time, to allow opportunity to visit the bathroom (there may be a queue, esp. at a domestic venue) and for cold hands to warm up; either naturally or by being rinsed under warm water. Don't rely on the school bus to run on time: this is likely the one day it won't! In fact consider whether to take the morning and/or afternoon off school/work - and don't do an exhausting activity, such as a cross-country run, earlier in the day: you need all your energy and concentration for the exam.

Needless to say, try to get to bed in good time at least the night before, and get everything (including exam paper work, music, clothes, polished shoes and indeed non-exam things too) ready the day before too, to avoid any unnecessary panic on the day.

By this stage, you've hopefully worked at all sections conscientiously and know your stuff, so, have fun and just do your best - nobody can ask more than that. If you enjoy it, the examiner will too. Good luck!

David & Kate Meacock.

**Pre-entry assessment carried out on . . . / . . . 20
in accordance with our examination policy *Piano
Exams - expectations and preparation: a quick
guide for all pupils, and where applicable parents.***

Pupil's name

Subject & Exam

Practical Exams: (A tick = adequate so far. A cross = inadequate)

Technical Work (scales etc.): ... Pieces: A: ... B: ... C: ...

Aural: ... Sight-reading: ...

Theory: Last Practice Paper Mark: /100 (needs to be 75+)

(PTO for any comments if necessary)

Result. *(delete one of the statements below)*

Regrettably, your preparation is not sufficiently advanced to enable me to give you permission to enter the exam. If you work hard, this term, then hopefully you might be ready next term.

I am delighted to inform you that on the basis of your agreed continued conscientious preparation and regular lesson attendance, you may now enter for the exam session at the end of this term.

Signed (David / Kate)

Assessment result Accepted.

Signed by pupil

and by a parent (if pupil is under 18):

Please return this copy, signed, at our next lesson & I will give you my copy

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