

## Lesson 2: Posture at the Piano

The more comfortable you are, the easier it is to play. Good body and hand positioning decreases strain on the muscles and tendons in the back, neck, arms and hands and reduces the chance of repetitive strain injuries.

### To sit correctly:

- if you have an electronic keyboard, the keyboard should be positioned between 27 and 32 inches from the floor
- if possible, adjust the seat/bench height so your elbows are level with or 1-2 inches above the keyboard when your back is straight and your shoulders are relaxed
  - when your hands are formed into fists and resting on the keyboard, your forearms will be either level with the floor or sloping slightly downward towards the keys
  - cushions or phone books, in conjunction with a foot-stool, can be used to compensate for a child's smaller size – you may wish to bring the books/stool to the lesson
- sit on the front half of the bench (the half closest to the piano) - your bottom should be in contact with only the front half of the bench
  - it is tempting to children (and some adults) to rock the bench forward when sitting in this position – this should be strongly discouraged because it significantly damages the bench and puts the child (or adult) in danger of a bad fall
- position the bench the distance from the keyboard at which only an inch or two of your knees are under the keyboard
- face the middle of the keyboard (with your nose in-line with the manufacture's name printed on the **fallboard**, which is the vertical board located just above the keys)
- keep the bench and your shoulders squarely facing the keyboard
- keep your feet flat and your back straight (sit tall)
  - you can lean forward slightly from your hips when you need to give more strength to your fingers
  - if you slouch or hunch over, you limit the ability of your arms to move up and down the keyboard
  - you can place your right foot slightly forward and to the right of the pedals – this puts it in position for pressing the right-most pedal when you get to that stage of advancement
- double-check the front-to-back placement of the bench by making two fists, placing your arms straight in front of you and touching your knuckles to the fallboard
  - keep your back straight and don't lean forward or backward
  - if you can't touch the fallboard, you are too far away
  - if your elbows are bent, you are too close
- relax your shoulders, let your arms hang loosely from your shoulders and keep your elbows close to the sides of your body – make two fists and rest your fists on the keyboard

### For the Younger Student

New vocabulary: **posture, piano bench, keyboard, fallboard**

Keep in mind that a young child will not be able to keep track of all these instructions, especially not all at one time. Cycle through them, focusing on only one or two key aspects at a time – and don't expect perfection.

Also keep in mind that his/her muscles are not used to this position and it will take time to build up the strength of those muscles so he/she can maintain a good posture for an extended period of time. Repeated frequent reminders will result in good posture in the long run.

"Great pianists have great posture"

- 1) After you determine the proper location for the bench, mark it with tape on the floor or teach your child how to measure the distance from the piano with a yard stick – let him/her take responsibility for placing the bench in the correct location. However, he/she may need help with stacking and getting seated on phone books or cushions, if used.
- 2) Remind him/her to sit on the front half of the bench and in the middle of the keyboard.
- 3) Remind him/her to sit up straight and tall – maybe see how long he/she can balance a small stuffed animal on top of his/her head.