

# Top 10 Tips for Beginning Pianists

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by Dominic Cheli



PIANO

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## Meet Your Instructor

**Dominic Cheli's** playing has been described as "spontaneous yet perfect, the best of how a young person can play." (Symphony Magazine). His rapidly advancing career included his Walt Disney Concert Hall Debut where Dominic was described as "mesmerizing, (he) transfixed the audience...his fingers were one with each key." (LA Times). He gave his Carnegie Hall Recital Debut in 2019 and has had a busy performing and recording career ever since.



# 1. Scales and Arpeggios: The Foundation of Fluency

Learning **major and minor scales** (harmonic, melodic) and **arpeggios** is crucial. Think of them as the building blocks of technique and tonal harmony.

Avoid obsessing over perfection; instead, **practice all scales systematically every day**, increasing tempo gradually. Ensure correct **fingerings**.

## 2. Maintain Strong Finger Joints

The **DIP joint** (distal interphalangeal joint) should not collapse. Keep the hand in its natural position to maintain control and avoid unnecessary stiffness.

Strong fingertips lead to **better sound production and articulation**.





### 3. Hands-Separate and Hybrid Practice

Practicing the right hand alone and the left hand alone builds solid habits. A **hybrid method** — playing one hand while the other plays on a flat surface instead of the keys — is also effective.

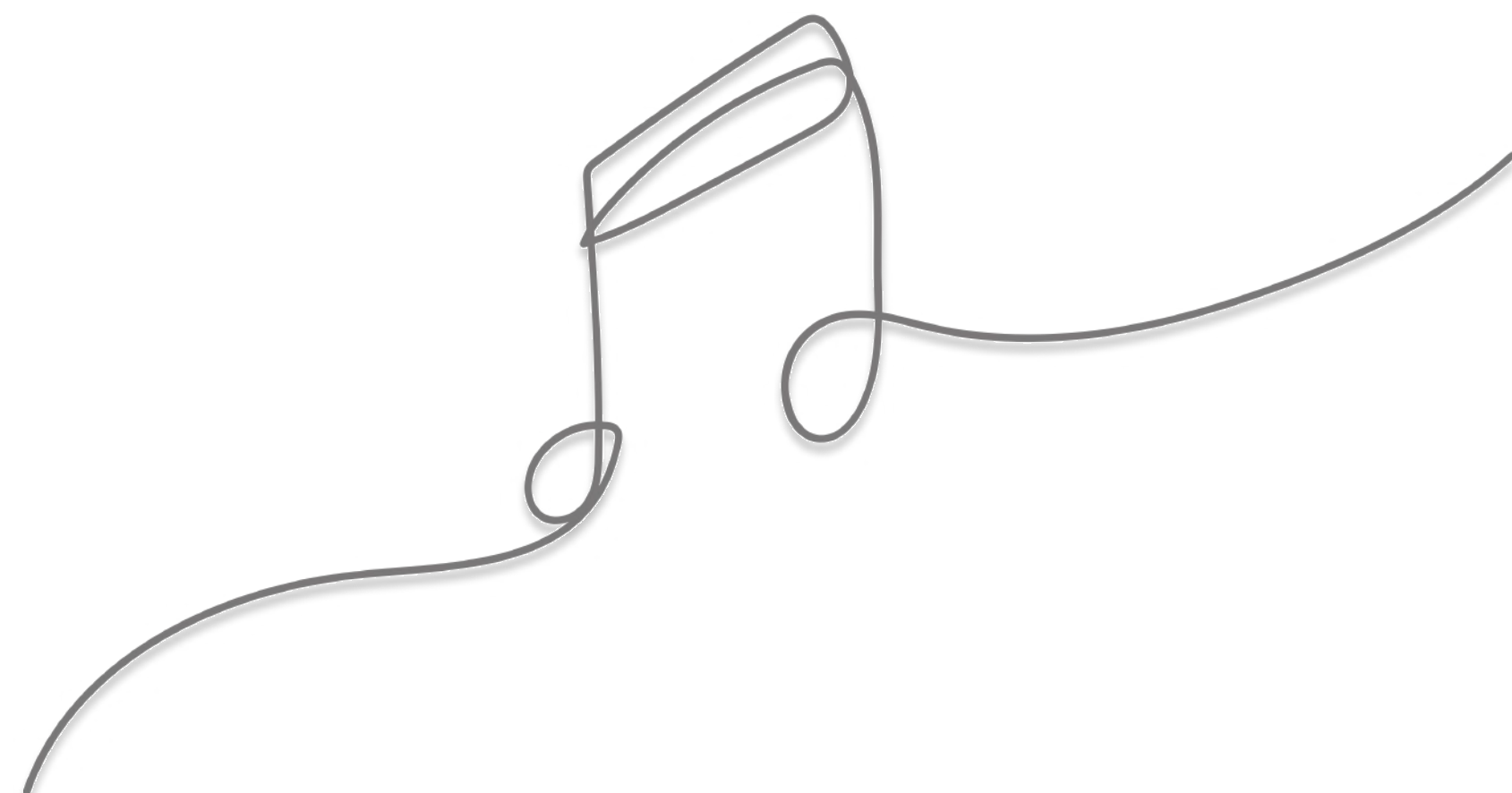
These approaches **build hand independence**.



### 4. Dynamics: Speed of Attack, Not Strength

**Louder, brilliant sounds** come from **faster key attack**, not brute force. Even small pianists can produce powerful sounds by utilizing **speed, not strength**.

Soft playing requires a **slower attack** to precisely control dynamics.





## 5. No Piece is Too Easy

Avoid dismissing music as **too simple** before fully exploring its nuances. Balance challenging repertoire with pieces that allow **comfortable conditions for refining technique and expression**.

Choose different starting points in practice to prevent excessive familiarity with only the opening measures.

## 6. Metronome and Segment Practice

Instead of increasing speed for **entire pieces**, use the metronome to raise the tempo of small sections gradually. **Break passages down**, master them individually, and then link them together.

Structured increases in tempo over time lead to greater overall fluency.





## 7. Patience and Consistency

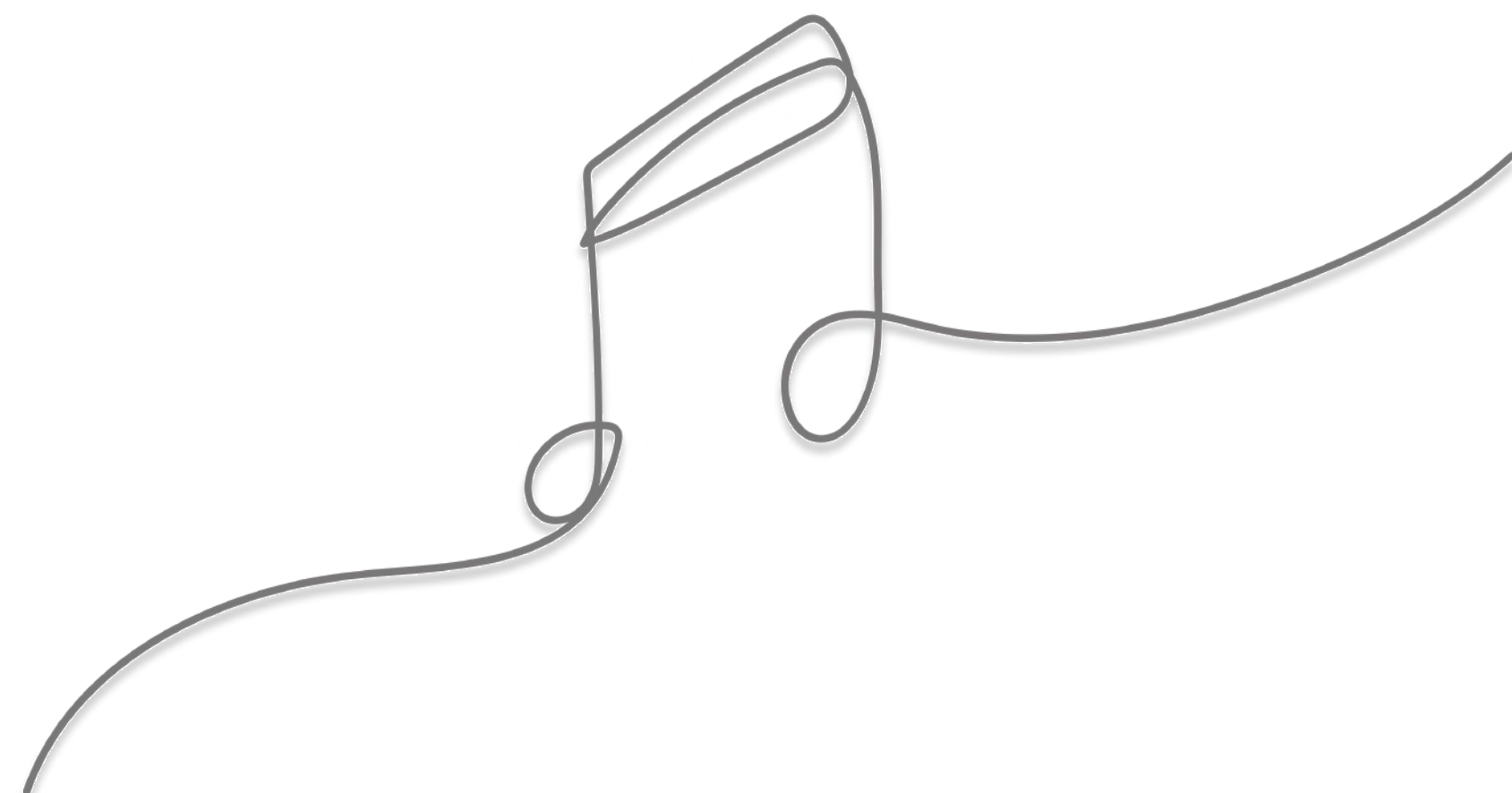
**Daily, focused practice** (even as little as 15 minutes) is more effective than long, sporadic sessions once or twice a week. Progress is **relative to recent practice**, so **regularity prevents setbacks**.

Be patient; piano playing is a long-term pursuit.



## 8. Proper Pedal Technique

Keep **heels on the ground** when pedaling. The left foot should rest gently on the **una corda pedal**, and the right foot on the **damper pedal** (without accidentally depressing them, of course!).





## 9. Layer Learning: Build in Steps

Approach new pieces in **layers**: notes first, then rhythm, articulation, phrasing, and dynamics. Avoid overwhelming yourself by tackling too many details at once.

**Refinement** should come gradually, reinforcing each layer as **fluency** develops.



## 10. Listen to Music Actively

Exposure to **symphonies, operas, film scores, jazz, and beyond** enriches musical understanding. For interpretation, listening to **orchestral works** provides essential context (e.g., Beethoven's symphonies in relation to his piano sonatas).

Active listening fosters **musical taste, inspiration, and stylistic awareness**.



By following these 10 principles, you'll develop **technical mastery, artistic sensitivity, and effective practice habits** that will serve you throughout your musical journey.

## Ready for More? Introducing “Piano 101”

Whether you're a complete beginner or returning to the piano after a break, **the right foundation makes all the difference**. But where do you start? How do you develop good habits from day one?

In “Piano 101” – tonebase’s new 6-part beginner course – Dominic Cheli guides you step-by-step through **everything you need to know to build a strong foundation at the piano**. You'll master posture and technique to prevent tension and injury, understand how pianos work, and get expert advice on choosing and maintaining your instrument.

[Click here to unlock the full course with a 14-day free trial of tonebase!](#)

