



SPARKLE

Workbook

The 7 secrets to reading notation
every music teacher should know

The
CURIOUS
PIANO TEACHERS

[Click here](#)



to watch the video series on YouTube



S | for sing # 1

P | for patterns # 2

A | for automatic # 3

R | for rote # 4

K | for knowledge # 5

L | for landmarks # 6

E | for enjoy # 7





S | for sing (#1)

Do you feel confident about using your singing voice in piano lessons?

YES

NO

- a. Write down the reasons why you think this is the case

- b. Read Sally's blog post <https://www.thecuriouspianoteachers.org/sing-first/>

Do any/all/some of your students have problems using their singing voices in lessons?

YES

NO

- a. Check that the singing is always part of an energising game or activity
- b. Use a chant instead
- c. Read Sally's blog post <https://www.thecuriouspianoteachers.org/when-singing-in-piano-lessons-isnt-an-option/>



P | for patterns (#2)

Do you know why a phrase is the most basic musical unit?

YES

NO

- a. Sing a song (for example *Twinkle Twinkle*) then write down all the patterns it contains. For example, rhythm patterns, melodic patterns, structural, harmonic

- b. Choose a piece of music that you have in your repertoire and, away from the piano, look for the patterns using the list above



When playing an unfamiliar piece of music do your fingers often 'know' where to go?

YES

NO

- a. Go and play a short unfamiliar piece and note down the physical, aural and visual processes you observe yourself going through. Do you read each of the individual notes, do you read the patterns and shapes, do you 'know' the names of the notes?



A | for automatic (#3)

Do you know what the three stages of learning are?

YES

NO

a. Write down the three stages of learning

b. Outline the learning that happens at each stage



Does your current approach to teaching notation match up with the 3 stages of learning model?

YES

NO

- a. How do you currently approach teaching pupils to read notation? Jot down your thoughts

- b. Map this onto a timeline using the cognitive, associative and automatic learning model



R | for rote (#4)

Do you teach pieces by rote in the first 6 months of learning?

YES

NO

a. List the advantages of teaching pieces by rote

b. List the potential problems of teaching pieces by rote



Do you feel confident about teaching a piece by rote?

YES

NO

- a. Download *Building Blocks* by June Armstrong
[Download score](#) | [Listen](#) | [Watch](#)
- b. List the steps you need to go through in order to be able to teach this from memory



K | for knowledge (#5)

Do you find out about pupils previous musical history?

YES

NO

- a. Create a list of what you want to be on the look out for in the first few weeks of lessons. Can they keep a steady pulse, recognise higher and lower sounds, or clap back a rhythm pattern accurately?

- b. Create a list of possible questions you could ask parents to build up your knowledge about pupils background. What music does the family listen to? What goes on at school? Has the pupil learnt any other instrument? etc.



Do you share your own musical enthusiasm with pupils?

YES

NO

- a. Play a passage from a piece you are currently working on to your pupils this week. Think about and share with them what excites you about the music.

Do you give pupils the bigger picture and show and discuss with them music well beyond their level?

YES

NO

- a. Select a piece to share and discuss with pupils. Ask the pupil to identify at least one thing that is already familiar to them



L | for landmark (#6)

Do you know what landmark notes are?

YES

NO

a. Draw the Landmark notes C G F on the staff below

Two blank musical staves, each consisting of five horizontal lines, provided for drawing the landmark notes C, G, and F.

b. List as many patterns and mirror images as you can spot

A large empty rectangular box with a black border, intended for listing patterns and mirror images.



Do you know how to introduce landmark notes in lessons?

YES

NO

- a. Grab a coffee and pen and paper. Write down the resources you will need (manuscript, manumat, whiteboard etc.)
- b. Write a short script that will help you introduce Landmark C (or G or F)

Can you do the H experiment forwards and backwards fluently?

YES

NO

- a. Download the alphabet string cards - [Download](#)
- b. Practice with the cards until you can use them in a rhythmical and organised way



E | for enjoy (#7)

Do you have fun in lessons on a regular basis?

YES

NO

- a. Grab another coffee (!) and spend a few minutes reflecting and writing about a recent lesson that felt good and in which learning happened. What were the qualities and/or ingredients that caused this to happen?



Would you feel comfortable playing the games Basketball or Stepping Stones in a piano lesson?

YES

NO

- a. Think about a particular pupil you could try one of the games out with
- b. List the props you will need to help you

- c. Practice playing the game - if you're feeling a bit tentative try it out first with someone who isn't a pupil



N | for notes...