



Penelope Roskell's Essential Piano Technique



'Revolutionary! These books will transform the way piano is taught in the early stages.'

Jenny Macmillan, Director, Cambridge Suzuki Training

'Any child that heeds Roskell's advice will develop a solid technical foundation...this is a fantastic set of beginner technique books.'

Pianist magazine

Education Publication of the Year 2023

Presto Music Awards





Penelope Roskell

About the author

Penelope Roskell is recognised as one of the world's leading exponents of a natural and healthy piano technique. She is Professor of Piano and Piano Pedagogy at Trinity Laban Conservatoire of Music and Dance, London as well as Piano Adviser to the British Association for Performing Arts Medicine. Her series **Essential Piano Technique** draws on the principles of her award-winning book, **The Complete Pianist**, to develop a strong foundation of healthy piano technique at the early stages.

"I believe strongly that every piano student can be taught to play musically and with good technique. It saddens me to see many young pianists playing with a distorted hand position, with tense wrists and shoulders and with little real enthusiasm for the music they are playing. They are missing out on so much! As a teacher of very advanced players, I become even more concerned when I witness at first-hand how habits acquired at the early stages can lead to serious problems such as debilitating tension or injury later on."

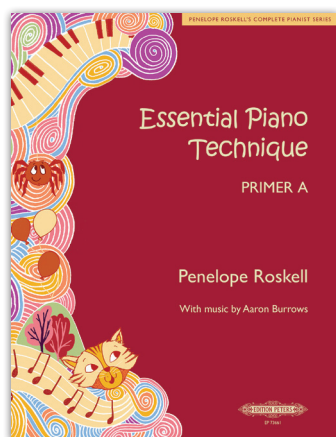
'Following the success and acclaim of The Complete Pianist, Penelope Roskell continues to make a vital contribution to piano pedagogy. Her new children's technique books... lay the crucial foundations for a lifetime of secure technique coupled with immense pleasure at the piano. I cannot recommend them too highly.'

The Cross-eyed Pianist blog

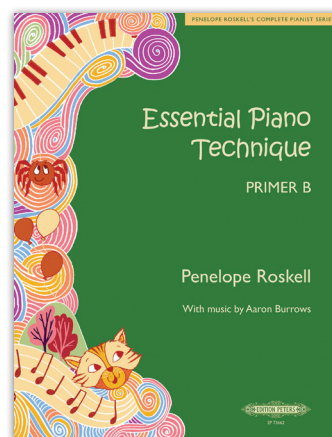
Essential Piano Technique: An Overview

The **Essential Piano Technique** series puts Roskell's healthy piano playing philosophy into practice.

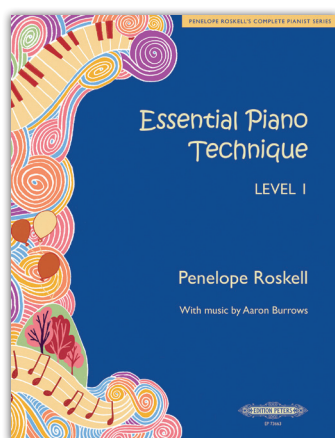
- These carefully curated books are filled with practical exercises, pieces, tips, and teacher support.
- Incorporating current research into best pedagogical practice.
- The primary focus is on developing good co-ordination, beautiful sound, freedom of movement and informed artistry.
- Delivered using appealing imagery making technique fun!
- Can be used alongside any method book.
- Supported by resources for teachers including learning objectives, teaching tips and access to instructional videos.



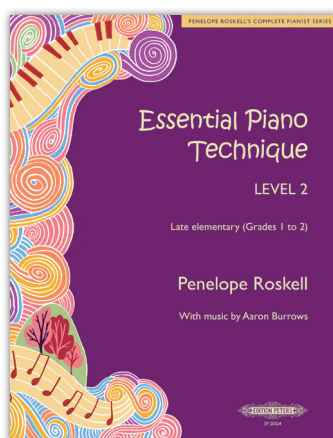
Primer A
*Beginner level,
from the first lesson*



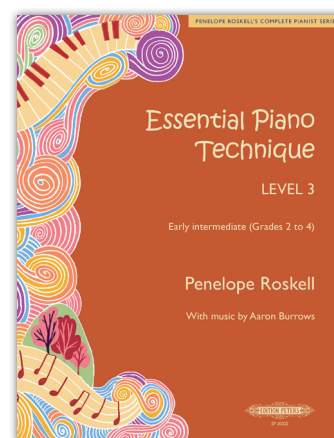
Primer B
*Early elementary
(to Initial Grade)*



Level 1
*Elementary
(Initial to Grade 1)*



Level 2
*Late elementary
(Grades 1 to 2)*



Level 3
*Early intermediate
(Grades 2 to 4)*

Warming up

Before playing the piano, remember to warm up (just like a sports person would).

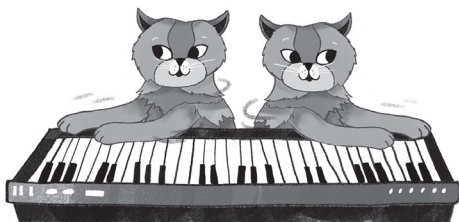
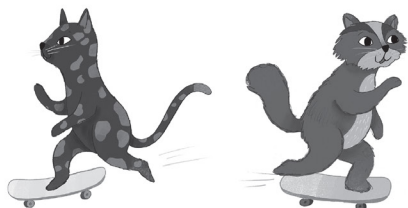


Windmills

Swing your arms in a big circle like a windmill, then shake your arms loose.

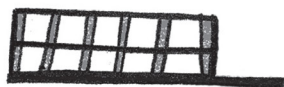
Skateboarding arms

Imagine your hands are skateboarders swishing apart along the surface of the keyboard, then meeting back together. Can you feel your arms stretching out like elastic?



Swishing

Swish both hands towards one end of the keyboard then back towards the other.



Colour in one of the boxes of this windmill sail each time you practise these warming up exercises at home.

Each technique is taught first as a fun warm-up away from the piano followed by a simple exercise at the piano. This then leads to a short piece which focuses almost exclusively on that particular technique.

Penelope Roskell demonstrates each of these techniques herself in the accompanying videos.

In **Primer A**, beginners are encouraged to play all exercises and pieces with a detached 'bobbing' technique initially, rather than playing legato. The arm supports each finger as it plays which helps to develop a strong hand shape and well-coordinated movements.

Primer A starts by teaching initially by rote, while gradually introducing simplified 'stick notes'. This is a well-established practice which gives students the freedom to explore the whole keyboard without being limited to playing the notes they can identify on the staff. The full staff is introduced in the second half of Primer A.



Can you Catch a Kangaroo?



Stand up and sing this song with your teacher, clapping (or hopping) in the rests. When do the notes go higher and lower? When do they bob on the spot?

RH starts on A#4, LH on A#3

4/4

3 3 3 3 | 3 3 3 (hop) | (hop) Trad., words by Carl Heap

Can you catch a kang - a - roo on your trip to the zoo?

What's its mo - ther goin' to do if she cat - ches you?

(hop) (bop, bop!)

Now play the whole piece with RH finger 3, then with LH finger 3, starting below middle C. When you are ready, play this as a duet with your teacher.

Practise 'Can you Catch a Kangaroo?' until you can play it without looking at the page. Then start to give a little kangaroo hop with your hand during each rest.

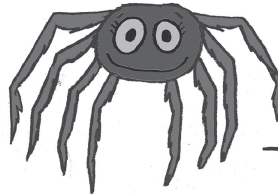
Piano-related injuries often stem from imbalances that have been embedded at the earliest stages of learning. These books help pianists start their piano journey with the best possible hand position, a healthy ergonomic relationship with the keyboard and well-coordinated arm-hand-finger motions which allow full freedom of movement around the entire keyboard.

Find your hand shape

Here's a great way to find the perfect hand shape for playing the piano. Think of this as your 'piano hand'.



Sleepy Spider



Wide-awake Spider



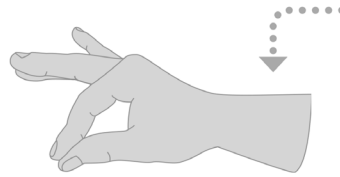
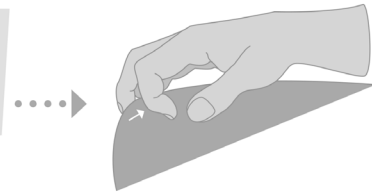
Squashed Spider

Hand gym



Itchy leg

Cup your hand over your knee. Scratch your leg with each fingernail in turn. Feel your finger bending at the end joint.



Snapping crocodile

Touch your thumb and second finger together like a crocodile opening and closing its mouth. Then snap your thumb against your third finger, then fourth finger.

Most exercises and pieces are 'pattern-based' as in 'Viennese Whirl'. This approach has been shown to develop excellent sight-reading and memorisation skills, as the student becomes familiar with looking ahead at whole groups of notes rather than reading individual symbols.

Viennese Whirl

A waltz is another elegant dance in $\frac{3}{4}$ time.

Clap the rhythm first, then play this waltz with your RH, then with your LH. Remember the down-up movement and imagine your arm is dancing when you play.



RH starts on F4, LH on F3

Waltz Tempo

Aaron Burrows

Singing phrases

Here you will learn to play beautiful phrases that seem to sing!

Breathing wrist

Place your hands on a flat surface, in playing position. Breathe *in* as your wrists float upwards very slowly (leaving your fingertips dangling on the flat surface). Breathe *out* as you let your wrists float slowly back down.



Keep doing a smooth 'breathing wrist' movement as you breathe in and out normally.

Little Piece

Robert Schumann (pronounced 'Shoe-man') wrote this lovely legato melody for children to play. With your teacher, sing these new words to the melody. Remember to take a breath at the end of each phrase.

RH starts on E5, LH on E3

Not fast

Robert Schumann, words by Carl Heap

1. What's the task for me to-day? Learn a 'Lit-tle Piece' by Schu-mann.
2. I have prac-tised ev-'ry day. Fin-gers feel-ing their con-nec-tion.

If I fluff it, as I may, Bear with me: I'm on-ly hu-man.
Now, at last, hip hip hoo-ray! I can play it to per-fec-tion.

Level 2 and **Level 3** focus on agility, creating a variety of sound, elegant phrasing and balancing sounds. They also include sections on ornaments, Alberti bass and legato and direct pedalling.

Wonderfully imaginative pieces by composer **Aaron Burrows** give students the opportunity to have a richly satisfying musical experience even when playing relatively simple pieces.

Little Waltz

Use **Jellyfish jumps** for all the intervals in this piece.

Somewhat tentatively

Aaron Burrows

Now practise **Mexican waves** at the piano. Parachute onto the first note of each phrase, then let your fingers tumble quickly onto the keys, one after the other.

Even scales and arpeggios, traditionally considered somewhat boring mechanical exercises, are introduced as preparation for expressive playing.

The books also encourage students to explore different sound worlds with curiosity and creativity.

Harpist's Serenade

Dynamics explorer

Here are some extreme dynamics for you to try out.

What is the loudest note you can play? Play some loud notes angrily, then joyfully.

What is the quietest note you can play? Play some notes secretly.

Try pressing a key so gently that it doesn't even sound.

Repeat a note with changing dynamics.

Polka

In this Polka by Glinka, **jump** off the first beat of the bar to **LAND** firmly on the accent on the second beat. Look at the fingering in this piece. The thumb plays all the accents, which helps them sound heavy.

In addition to new works by Aaron Burrows, students are introduced to music from some of the greatest composers of educational piano music, including Bartók, Schumann, Tchaikovsky, Grieg, Beach and Gurlitt.

Each book culminates in a flamboyant 'Finale' – a performance duet in which the pianist displays many of the techniques they have already learnt.

And finally, Teachers Notes guide the teacher in the finer details of each technique, plus suggesting related repertoire.

Page 43 Wide leaps

- R** Rainbows, Over the hills (Primer A, pp. 8–9), Leaps and bounds (Level 1, pp. 43–44), UM cha cha waltz (Level 2, p. 31); *Legato* pedalling (Level 2, p. 49).
- LO** To move accurately and confidently around the keyboard with flowing movements. To help play securely pieces with leaps from memory.
- TT** Aim for freedom of movement initially – accuracy will improve as the arm develops a confident memory of distances.
- RP** Frederic Chopin: 'Waltz' B150 Op. Posth
Vitalij Neugasimov: 'Waltz-Caprice' from *Piano Sketches*

Further praise for Essential Piano Technique

'I cannot state urgently enough how highly I rate and strongly recommend these three volumes. Beautifully presented, but modestly priced, they indisputably establish a new benchmark for teaching children a healthy piano technique. Ignoring them is not an option.'
Andrew Eales, pianodao.com

'The series is worth its weight in gold.' **Joanna García, Curious Piano Teachers**

'These will be excellent additions to the material available to teachers working with young students. I especially love the art work and imagery used to help convey musical and technical ideas to the student.' **Gail Berenson, Past President, MTNA**

The Complete Pianist

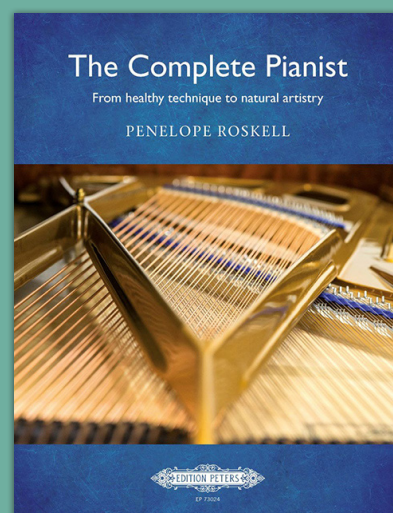
from healthy technique to natural artistry

Penelope Roskell shares a lifetime's experience of teaching, performing and ground-breaking research into healthy piano playing. Containing more than 500 pages of text, 300 videos and 200 exercises newly devised by the author, this award-winning volume is the most comprehensive book ever written on piano playing.

The Complete Pianist has something new to offer to all pianists and keyboard players – student and teacher, professional and amateur.

'An encyclopaedic masterpiece of pianistic wisdom.'
Piano Magazine USA

Available to buy now in store and online.



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