

10 Great Tips for Sight Reading

1 Develop Your “Relative” Sense of Touch.

Acquire the skill of playing so that you don't need to look down at your hands. Without looking at the keyboard, glide your hands so you feel the two and three black keys (like Braille.) When you need a C, D, or E, feel for the “2s.” When you need an F, G, A, or B, feel for the “3s.” Most good sight-readers don't need to look at their hands while they play and this drill teaches you how to find any note without looking at your hands. Then you will be able to keep your eyes on the music and look ahead and this will greatly speed up your sight-reading.

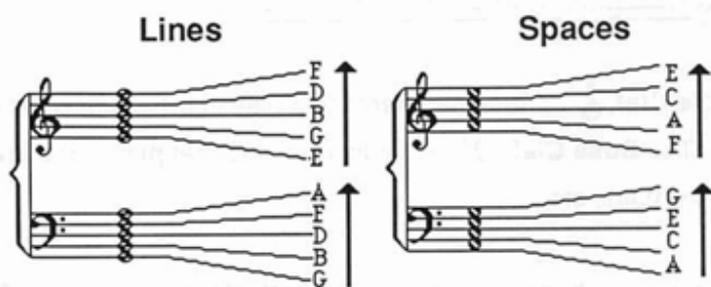
2 Develop Your “Absolute” Sense of Touch.

Always sit in the same place. Middle “D” is recommended because it creates a symmetrical pattern in both directions. Sometimes you may need to make a page turn or your hand will jump from a high position to a low position on the keyboard. It is handy to not have to look down to find the correct position in these cases. By always sitting the same place at the piano, you will develop a physiological memory of all 88 keys on the piano!

3 Practice Finger Technique Without Looking at Your Hands.

A creative way to do this is to play your scales and arpeggios in the dark. This will add confidence to your sense of touch. This exercise is to further enhance tactile awareness that is developed in steps 1 and 2.

4 Learn the Four Groups of the Lines and Spaces:



Try to learn these without the typical slogans: “Every Good Boy Does Fine,” or similar phrases. If you were to attempt to read a note using slogans, you would have to go through a 2-step process which seriously slows-down your speed. Just memorize the groups as fast as possible by saying them out loud frequently. Memorize the following.

Say: “Lines in the Treble E G B D F”

Say: “Lines in the Bass G B D F A”

Say: “Spaces in the Treble F A C E”

Say: “Spaces in the Bass A C E G”

Eventually, you will just memorize all the notes, but until that time comes, literally speak through the appropriate sequence until you reach the desired note. For example, if you want to read the third space in the treble clef, you say “F A C.” You stop on “C” and that is the third note.

5 Practice Only the Rhythmic Information.

In a composition you are working on, ignore the correct pitches. Just play the rhythmic information of the piece on any notes. Your brain will enjoy the ability to work on just one thing.

6 Practice Only the Pitch and Fingering Information.

In a composition you are working on, ignore the correct rhythm. Just play the correct pitches along with the correct fingering. Don't try to play in time here. This way, you can focus on just the right notes with the right fingers. Your brain will enjoy the ability to narrow its focus. Eventually, you will be able to play the right notes with the right fingering and with the right rhythm all at the same time!

7 Play Easy Pieces up to Tempo.

Force yourself to keep going no matter what. Don't worry about mistakes. This helps you to look ahead.

8 Play Difficult Pieces Super Slowly.

Don't dare make even one mistake. This helps to develop accuracy.

9 Look For Patterns in Music.

Don't be afraid to look way ahead for a second just so you can anticipate what will be easy or difficult. Patterns make it easy. If you detect a pattern then you can devote your concentration to other things.

10 Study Music Theory.

Professional sight-readers never read every note! They get a sense of the overall chord and "fill-in" the blanks. With a solid knowledge of music theory, this becomes natural and immediate.