

# Diamond Piano Free Trial Guide

Welcome! The first thing you need to know as you embark on a week-long trial of Diamond Piano is that you **can** succeed in becoming a lifelong musician. You **can** learn to play the music that you love on piano. And, you **can** learn to create your own music and share it with the world. Diamond Piano is designed to ensure the success of any student who is willing to stick with it, Pod after Pod. Remember to be patient with yourself as you study. It's going to take a lot of time, and a lot of hard work, but you'll get there. Enjoy the process!

Before we begin, let's list the **materials** that are recommended for you to enjoy a full Diamond Piano Free Trial experience:

- **A MIDI capable keyboard is recommended** and the proper cables to connect the keyboard to your computer (see our Help/FAQ videos for help with this) – If you don't have a MIDI capable keyboard, you can still enjoy your trial and learn a lot, so go ahead and do the trial even if you don't have one. You can use the Real-Time Tutor (Diamond Piano's MIDI assessment tool) in "play-along" mode if MIDI is not an option for you.
- A **computer** with **Google's Chrome browser** installed is best (the Real-Time Tutor works best in Chrome because of Chrome's native support for MIDI). Everything else in Diamond Piano (videos, tests, games) works great on multiple browsers. So again, if you don't feel like installing Chrome, you can enjoy a lot of Diamond Piano anyhow, but Chrome is recommended.
- A **printer** to print Diamond Piano's text – Even this isn't a deal breaker – you could conceivably read all the text off of a screen, but it's nice to have a physical copy of it.

## You've Clicked Your Free Trial link – Now What? (Explaining the Links You'll See Available)

You can access everything Diamond Piano has to offer you during your week-long Free Trial by clicking the following links that will appear in your left menu bar. Here's what they have:

- **Games/Tests/Progress** – Clicking this link takes you to a page with links to all the games and tests and songs you have available. Click the link you'd like to explore. Step by step instructions of all games, tests, and song practicing with the Real-Time Tutor appear are available further into this guide.
- **View Instruction Videos** – Clicking this link takes you to a page with further links to every bit of video learning available in whichever Pod you're Free Trial explores. A full description of how to navigate the video library is available further into this guide.
- **Download Pod Text** – Clicking this link allows you to download the full student text associated with your Free Trial Pod. **THIS IS NOT THE FIRST LINK LISTED, BUT CLICK IT FIRST AND PRINT THE TEXT.** The information on pages 2 and 3 is invaluable to a successful Free Trial experience, and also, all the concepts from this Pod are taught in written form before the songs and worksheets appear.
- **Practice with the Real-Time Tutor** – This is Diamond Piano's amazing MIDI assessment tool and creativity enhancer. Details on how to use appear later in this guide and there are also lots of Help/FAQ videos that teach the ins and outs of this amazing device too.
- **Help/FAQ** – This links to the public list of all guides and help videos. Most of your questions should be able to be answered here.

The bits of this guide that follow are borrowed from our Student User Guide. Details about all the games, tests, and Real-Time Tutor activities are available on the following pages.

## What is a “Pod” in Diamond Piano?

**Pod** is a term you will hear again and again when learning with Diamond Piano. Simply put a Pod of Diamond Piano is a “chapter”. There are 37 Pods in all. Five are offered as Free Trials. Each Pod focuses on a new set of concepts while reviewing all the concepts that were introduced in previous Pods. The reason Diamond Piano doesn’t call each of these 37 units “chapters” is because the word chapter conjures up printed text and a Pod is much more than the printed text. All 37 Pods include these components:

- **Printed Text** – The “lesson book” portion of Diamond Piano. Each Pod has text that is set up with:
  - A written explanation of the new musical concepts being introduced.
  - Songs – a progression of songs that implements these new concepts while increasing in difficulty.
  - Worksheets – a “theory” page specific to each song that requires students to perform written tasks related to the new concepts being introduced (don’t worry – there are worksheet answer keys for you to use to check yourself).
  - Transposing exercises (Pods 1-27) – Transposing is something Diamond Piano uses to make sure its students are understanding theory in a “hands-on”, useful way. If you don’t know what transposing is, don’t worry, it’s fully explained in text and video form for you.
  - Improvisation exercises (Pods 8, 15, 23, 28-37) – These are exercises designed to get you thinking creatively while at the keyboard. Everyone has some original and unique music to offer, and you’re no exception!
- **Video Learning** – Each Pod in Diamond Piano has dozens of videos that explain every new concept and cover how to play every new song. The videos are divided into these categories:
  - Instruction Videos – These are videos that teach each new concept.
  - Getting Started Videos – These are videos that introduce each new song.
  - Piano Only Demo Videos – Split Screen Videos that show songs played slowly.
  - Full Orchestration Videos – Full speed song demos with vocal and backing track.
  - Ear Training Videos – A photo with audio that develops listening skills.

- **Pod Tests** – Diamond Piano’s Pod tests are 10-question, randomly generated, multiple choice tests that see if you’re understanding the new concepts. Each Pod Test is unique and pulls from a lot of questions, so while you might see a question repeated, you’ll never see a whole test repeated (about 2,000 questions in all!). Pod Tests are a great review as well because beginning with the second Pod, four of the 10 questions are pulled randomly from earlier Pods.
  
- **Games** – Diamond Piano keeps the learning fun with a series of games. These games get harder as the Pods progress. The games are:
  - Note Hunter – A timed game that develops note reading
  - Beat Buster – A game that develops rhythm
  - Scale Scorcher – A game that solidifies understanding of scales and keys
  - Chord Builder – A game that solidifies understanding of basic triads
  - Chord Detective – A game that solidifies recognition of inverted triads
  
- **Practice with the Real-Time Tutor** – This is Diamond Piano’s amazing assessment technology. Simply connect a MIDI keyboard to a computer, open up Diamond Piano with Google Chrome, and practice songs along with the music that appears on your screen (you can read from your printed text if it’s easier). Every note you play is assessed for accuracy (pitch and rhythm), and you can review what you’ve played to see what was right and what was wrong. You can *change the speed, pick a hand to practice, pick a section to practice, loop a section to practice, change the volume of the “reference keyboard” that plays along, and more*. You name it, the Real-Time Tutor can do it! It truly is **like having a teacher sitting next to you every time you sit down to practice**. The Real-Time Tutor has four modes. These modes are:
  - **Know Thy Notes Mode** – In this mode a student doesn’t have to worry about rhythm at all. This mode only assesses whether or not the correct key on the piano has been played in the correct order.
  - **Practice Mode** – In this mode a student can select any portion of a song to practice at any speed. Playing is assessed for notes and rhythm. Students can play the performance back to see errors.
  - **Test Mode** – In this mode a student can play through an entire song at any speed they choose. Their performance is assessed for pitch and rhythm. Students can play the performance back to see any errors.

- **Hear My Best Mode** – In this mode a student (or teacher) can listen back to the most accurate performance a student has completed on any given song.

In addition, the Real-Time Tutor has an extraordinary tool to develop a student musician's confidence to create original musical ideas. This tool is called **Melody Maker**. Melody Maker allows students to create a backing track from existing recordings and then guides the student as they create their own melodic ideas on top of these backing tracks. Students are allowed to save and share their creations! Consult the Help/FAQ videos related to Melody Maker to understand how to use it, but in a nutshell:

- **Create a "backing track"** by dragging the colored blocks in the "available accompaniments" into the empty boxes below. Put them in any order you like (you can repeat colors if desired) and then listen to what it sounds like by clicking the "play" arrow.
- **Next, use the "recommended melody" notes** that are pictured on the guide keyboard to record your own ideas over the top of the backing track you created by pressing the "record" circle.
- **Play it back**, and if you like it, you can save and share it. If you don't like it, do it again and again until you do like it. Have fun!

## Diamond Piano's System of Advancement (Scoring)

Diamond Piano assigns point values to many of the activities in each of the 37 Pods. There is a **total of 100 points to be scored in each Pod**. Once a student reaches 90 points in a Pod, the next Pod becomes available for them to study (not true in the Free Trial – Free Trials are limited to just the Pod of the trial). Here is the breakdown of how the 100 points are awarded in each Pod:

- **30 Points – Performing songs on your keyboard**
  - 20 Points – Two highest “Test Mode” Scores (1-10, both hands when applicable)
  - 5 Points – Highest Transposing “Test Mode” Score (1-5, Pods 1-27)
  - 5 Points – Highest Ear Training Score (1-5, Pods 1-27 and then 1-10, Pods 28-37)
- **30 Points – Pod Tests**
  - Three highest scores (1-10) added together
- **40 Points – Games**
  - Scoring on the various games (Note Hunter, Beat Buster, Scale Scorcher, Chord Builder, and Chord Detective) changes as the Pods progress and more of the games are introduced, but always adds up to 40 points. Each Pod will indicate how many points are assigned to each of its games, and the instructions of each game will indicate how many points can be scored in it.

**The highest scores are the only scores that count towards points – scoring is not cumulative.** For example: If you have taken three Pod tests and have scores of 8, 9, and 10, your total is currently 27 out of a possible 30. If you a fourth test and score 8, your score will not change because your three highest scores are still 8, 9, and 10. If you score a 9 on the fourth test, your total will increase by one to 28 out of 30 because now the three highest scores are 9, 9, and 10. And so on. . .

## Using Diamond Piano's Video Library

Each Pod in Diamond Piano has several videos associated with it that will help you understand the material. You can access the videos in each Pod by selecting the "Videos and More" link in the Pod list. There is also a link to "Videos and More" from the "Games and Tests" page. The best way to use the videos is as follows:

- First, watch all the **Instruction Videos** when you are starting a new Pod. These videos teach the new concepts that are introduced in each Pod in a very detailed, easy to understand manner.
- Watch the **Getting Started Video** for each song as you get ready to learn it. These videos are short, but they point you toward important aspects of the song that require your attention.
- Watch the **Piano Only Demo Video** for each song as you are starting to learn it. This video has a split screen that shows the notes that are being played on the keyboard, and these videos run at a nice slow tempo so that they are easy to follow.
- Watch the **Full Orchestration Video** for each song when you've got it "under your fingers" and you are able to play it well. This video will help you understand how the music you're learning to play should eventually be able to flow.
- The **Ear Training Video** in each Pod is actually a still photo with an audio track. The photo helps you understand where to place your hands on the keyboard, and the audio steps you through what you are trying to learn to play by ear.

## Using Diamond Piano's Real-Time Tutor

Using Diamond Piano's Real-Time Tutor requires the connection of a MIDI capable keyboard to a USB port on your computer. There are two types of MIDI connections. The first uses a USB2 cable (like printers). The second requires a "MIDI to USB cable" – this cable has a MIDI IN and a MIDI OUT on one end and a standard USB on the other end. Check your MIDI keyboard to see which cable you need. **Please note: First – you will likely need to install the "drivers" for your particular make/model of keyboard. Second – if you have the "IN – OUT" type of MIDI connection, please connect the "IN" cable to the "OUT" on your keyboard, and the "OUT" cable to the "IN" on your keyboard.**

Once your keyboard is properly connected to your computer, you'll see a "MIDI Keyboard Connected" message in the upper right corner of your screen. The Real-Time Tutor has a really elegant method of calibrating your keyboard (measuring the lag in MIDI drivers and sound cards), so you probably won't have to manually calibrate. But, if you choose to use the manual calibration, you can select it from the left menu and follow the instructions. **Calibration may take several attempts.** Follow the on-screen directions and **be patient** 😊.

Diamond Piano's Real-Time Tutor has four modes under its "Song Assessor" section. Each of these modes can be used with every song and are valuable. They are detailed below.

- **Know Thy Notes Mode (great mode to use first on a new song)**
  - You can **link to this mode** for any song directly from your Pod page. Or, if you are already inside the Real-Time Tutor, you can select this mode from the "Song Assessor" list found in each available Pod.
  - The **Measures** list in the left menu bar allows you to select the "Start Measure" (the first measure of the section you would like to work on). It will default to "All" (all the measures of the song)
  - Slide the **Start Measure** and **End Measure** tabs to select the section you'd like to practice in Know Thy Notes mode. You'll see the orange colored line above the measures of the selection in the sheet music reflect your choices.
  - Clicking the **green arrow** will play the section for you. You'll be able to track where you are in the sheet music because the blue bar will highlight the measure you are hearing.
  - The blue colored "**Pause**" and "**Stop**" buttons will either stop the playback right where it is and then allow it to continue from there (pause) or stop the playback entirely and send it back to the beginning.

- Clicking the **red record circle** will pop up the instructions you must follow to use Know Thy Notes mode. Essentially you must play all the notes in the selection in the proper order. **They do not have to be in rhythm – that’s the awesome thing about Know Thy Notes mode – you just have to know which keys to play – don’t sweat the rhythm.**
- Note – **if you play a wrong note** (either entirely incorrect or out of order), you have to start the measure you’re in from its beginning. Don’t go back to the very beginning unless you are in the first measure.
- Also, please note that scores achieved in Know Thy Notes mode are important as a way to note your improvement, but they **do not count toward the Diamond Piano points** you need to accrue to open up the next Pod. **Only Test mode counts toward Diamond Piano points.**
- **Once you’ve received a score** in Know Thy Notes mode, you will have several options. You can:
  - **“Know Thy Notes Again”** – This will start a whole new Know Thy Notes session with exactly the same selections you had just used.
  - **“Practice”** – This will switch you to Practice mode for the same song.
  - **“Dashboard”** – This takes you to the main page of the Real-Time Tutor. From there you can navigate to any Pod/song you have access to.
  - **“Song List”** – This takes you to a list of all the songs in the Pod you were just working in during the Know Thy Notes session.
  - **Pressing any key or your pedal will restart the exact Know Thy Notes session again.**
- **Practice Mode (great for when you’ve got the notes and want to focus on rhythm)**
  - You can **link to this mode** for any song directly from your Pod page. Or, if you are already inside the Real-Time Tutor, you can select this mode from the “Song Assessor” list found in each available Pod.
  - The **Measures** list in the left menu bar allows you to select the “Start Measure” (the first measure of the section you would like to work on). It will default to “All” (all the measures of the song)
  - Slide the **Start Measure** and **End Measure** tabs to select the section you’d like to work on in Practice mode. You’ll see the orange colored line above the measures of the selection in the sheet music reflect your choices.
  - When a song uses both hands, both hands will be automatically selected. **If you choose to practice only one hand**, you can “deselect” the hand you don’t want to practice.

- The slider by the **“volume icon”** controls the volume of the reference track. If you would like to hear the **“perfect”** music play while you are playing along, keep this volume up. If you’d like to hear just the metronome click, slide this volume down.
- The **“loop”** feature is awesome for practicing. If you have a small section you’d like to work on over and over, selecting this loop feature will play that section over and over with a **“count in click”** in between each loop. **It only works with the green play arrow.** It doesn’t record your performance, or score it, but it’s a great way to hit a hard section over and over.
- The **“Tempo Adjust”** feature allows you to slow a practice session down or speed it up. The default tempo will be the exact speed of the full orchestration demo video of each song.
- The **green play arrow** will play whatever section is selected with a count off measure as an intro. It’s a great way to practice if you find yourself working with a keyboard that doesn’t have a MIDI connection.
- Pressing the **red record circle** will start a performance to be assessed. Whatever section of measures is selected will be scored. You can select which hand you’d like to score (if applicable) or you can go ahead and score both hands.
- Once a performance has been scored in Practice mode, **you will receive a score and you will have several options.** You can:
  - **“Playback”** – This is great if you want to see a measure by measure, note by note, assessment of your performance. **Green measures** were perfect. **Yellow measures** were partly right and partly wrong. **Red measures** were completely wrong.
  - **“Practice Again”** – This takes you back to Practice mode with the exact same settings you just had.
  - **“Take Test”** – This takes you out of Practice mode and into Test mode for the same song you were working on.
  - **“Dashboard”** – This takes you to the main page of the Real-Time Tutor. From there you can navigate to any Pod/song you have access to.
  - **“Song List”** – This takes you to a list of all the songs in the Pod you were just working in during the practice session.

- **Pressing any key or your pedal will restart the exact Practice session again.**
- **Test Mode (The mode you use when you can play a song well and are ready to score it for Diamond Piano Pod points)**
  - You can **link to this mode** for any song directly from your Pod page. Or, if you are already inside the Real-Time Tutor, you can select this mode from the “Song Assessor” list found in each available Pod.
  - The slider by the “**volume icon**” controls the volume of the reference track. If you would like to hear the “perfect” music play while you are playing along, keep this volume up. If you’d like to hear just the metronome click, slide this volume down.
  - The “**Tempo Adjust**” feature allows you to slow a practice session down or speed it up. The default tempo will be the exact speed of the full orchestration demo video of each song.
  - The **green play arrow** will play the song with a count off measure as an intro. It’s a great way to practice if you find yourself working with a keyboard that doesn’t have a MIDI connection.
  - Pressing the **red record circle** will start a performance to be assessed. **You can select which hand you’d like to score (if applicable)** or you can go ahead and score both hands.
  - Once a performance has been scored in Test mode, **you will receive a score and you will have several options.** You can:
    - “**Playback**” – This is great if you want to see a measure by measure, note by note, assessment of your performance. **Green measures** were perfect. **Yellow measures** were partly right and partly wrong. **Red measures** were completely wrong.
    - “**Re-Test**” – This takes you back to Test mode with the exact same tempo and hand selection settings you just had.
    - “**Hear My Best**” – This takes you out of Test mode and lets you see and hear the best performance you have recorded so far on that particular song.
    - “**Dashboard**” – This takes you to the main page of the Real-Time Tutor. From there you can navigate to any Pod/song you have access to.

- **“Song List”** – This takes you to a list of all the songs in the Pod you were just working in during the practice session.
  - **Pressing any key or your pedal will restart the exact Test session again.**
- **Hear My Best Mode**

This mode archives your best Test mode performance of a song. It’s a great way to be able to share your progress with a teacher remotely. And it’s also nice for you to hear!

## Taking a Diamond Piano Pod Test

Taking a Pod Test can be done by clicking the “Take Test” link under the Games and Tests page in each Pod available in your student account.

Pod Tests are 10 question multiple choice tests that are created randomly from a data base that holds a lot of questions. As you take Pod tests in any given Pod, you are likely to see test some questions repeated, but you will never see an entire test repeated.

The 10 questions of a Pod test are broken into two categories. Six of the questions fall into the category of questions created to test the concepts introduced in the current Pod. Four of the questions are in the second category of questions as they are pulled randomly from earlier Pods. This structure ensures that a good review of the material is built into the curriculum.

When taking a Pod test, **simply select the best answer to each question by clicking in the “bubble” next to it.**

After the test is complete, you will receive a score out of 10. **Any question that was marked wrong will show the correct answer, and you will be directed to the instruction videos in the Pod from which the question was pulled.** This is great because if you need clarification, you know where you can find more information about why the answer you chose was incorrect.

## Diamond Piano Games

### Note Hunter

The Note Hunter game trains you to recognize notes on the staff. You can access it from the “Games and Tests” page of each Pod in your Pod List. Click the “Play Game” link next to Note Hunter.

The instructions for the game appear when the game is first opened. Read them carefully the first time so that you understand how the timing of the game works, and how the scoring is done. Basically, when you select a piano key to match the note you see on the staff, it will light up green and move to you on to a new note if it’s correct, and it will light up red and keep you on the same note if it is incorrect (wrong notes also add 5 seconds to the time counter).

Pod 1 has only a G Clef Note Hunter Game. Pod 2 has only an F Clef Note Hunter Game. Pods 3-37 have both.

The Note Hunter games get more challenging as the Pods increase in difficulty by adding more notes to the range that is presented, and eventually by adding key signatures to apply.

### Beat Buster

The Beat Buster game trains you to read rhythms and to be able to count aloud as you practice (this is a terrific skill to develop!). You can access it from the “Games and Tests” page of each Pod in your Pod List. Click the “Play Game” link next to Beat Buster.

The first time you play a Beat Buster game, you will be invited to use standard calibration or to calibrate your device yourself. For most people, standard calibration will work just fine. But if you don’t seem to be getting accurate results, you can **calibrate manually** the computer/device you are using. The instructions for calibration appear on your screen when you first launch the game along with the “Start Calibration” button. Basically, calibration involves tapping your space bar, or tapping the “Tap” button on a touch screen, a total of four times exactly when a voice countdown tells you to “Tap”. There’s a good video in the Help/FAQ section showing calibration. Once a device has been calibrated, you can “Skip Calibration”. If the game ever seems to be giving you iffy results, you can always recalibrate manually to see if that improves the results.

The Beat Buster game has two modes: **Practice** and **Test**. It’s a good idea to use Practice mode first to get good at a rhythm, and then to switch to Test mode to try to get a good score for your Diamond Piano points. **In both modes, you can tap and hold your space bar (or the bar on your touch screen) exactly as you would press and hold a piano key.**

In Practice mode, a rhythm appears with the proper count written beneath it. And, after the one measure count-in, the count continues along with the click. This counting (written and heard) makes it much easier to understand when to tap your space bar than the Test version which has neither the written nor the audible count accompanying the rhythm. After you have played the game in Practice mode, **black checks** will appear under notes you “played” at the correct time. **Red Xs** will appear in places where you played, but shouldn’t have. **Red Os** will appear in places where you should have played, but didn’t. And you’ll be shown what score you would have earned had you been in Test mode. After a Practice mode game, you’ll be invited to choose to practice the same rhythm again (recommended), to switch to Test mode for that same rhythm (good idea once you’ve gotten a perfect 10 in Practice mode), or to choose another rhythm entirely. **There are several rhythms to try in each Pod.**

After playing the Beat Buster in Practice mode, you can switch to **Test mode**. The big difference in Test mode is that the count is not written beneath the notes, and, except for the one measure count-in, there is not a voice heard counting the beat and the metronome click is the only thing that you hear to help you keep steady. The green checks, and the red Xs and Os appear after a Test game of Beat Buster to show you how you did. **Scores achieved in Test mode count toward your Diamond Piano points.**

### Scale Scorcher

The Scale Scorcher trains you to recognize some common patterns on the keyboard. Learning to build these patterns rapidly will help you with every song you play. You can access it from the “Games and Tests” page of each Pod in your Pod List **beginning with Pod 5**. Click the “Play Game” link next to Scale Scorcher.

When the Scale Scorcher launches, directions will appear. Read them carefully before playing. Like all the games, Scale Scorcher gets harder as the Pods progress, although for several of the first Pods that it appears in, it stays the same difficulty.

### Chord Builder

The Chord Builder helps you commit to memory the keys on the keyboard that create the 24 most fundamental three-note harmonies in music. You can access the Chord Builder from the “Games and Tests” page of each Pod in your Pod List **beginning with Pod 19**. Click the “Play Game” link next to Chord Builder.

When the Chord Builder launches, directions will appear. Read them thoroughly to be sure that you understand how to play. The Chord Builder is the game with the fewest levels. The Chord Builder becomes more challenging as the Pods progress.

## Chord Detective

The Chord Detective helps you to quickly identify and name commonly occurring combinations of three notes when they appear in written music. You can access Chord Detective from the “Games and Tests” page of each Pod in your Pod List **beginning in Pod 19**. Click the “Play Game” link next to Chord Detective. Be sure to read the directions when it launches.