

# How to Play the Piano

*James Rhodes*

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**Learn to play one of Bach's most exquisite preludes in just 6 weeks, even if you have never played the piano before.**

An accessible and inspiring guide by the pianist and international bestselling writer James Rhodes, who promises that this book gives anyone with two hands, a piano or an electric keyboard and just 45 minutes a day the tools they need to learn to play Bach's Prelude No. 1 in C Major in 6 weeks, even if they know nothing about music and have never even touched a piano before.

How often do we convince ourselves that it's just too late - too late to learn how to ride a bike, too late to know how to meditate, too late to travel the world... As we get older and time slips through our fingers like water, we become resigned, almost defeatist, about abandoning our dreams.

For James Rhodes, after the inevitable "How many hours a day do you practice?" and "Show me your hands", the most common thing people say to him when they hear he's a pianist is "I used to play the piano as a kid. I really regret giving it up".

Where does this mourned and misplaced creativity go? For Rhodes, it's still there to be tapped into by all of us, at any point. This inspirational book gives us the means to do this, by breaking up Bach's seminal Prelude No. 1 from the Well-Tempered Clavier into manageable segments, teaching us the basics of piano playing - how to read music, the difference between the treble and the bass clef, sharp and flat notes, how to practice etc.. - and encouraging personal interpretation in a way that is guaranteed to soothe the mind, feed the soul and unleash creative powers we didn't know we still had. All of this will culminate in an ability to perform one of Bach's masterpieces.

*"If listening to music is soothing for the soul, then playing music is achieving enlightenment. It's going from kicking a ball around with a few pals to playing alongside Ronaldo."*

## How to Play the Piano Details

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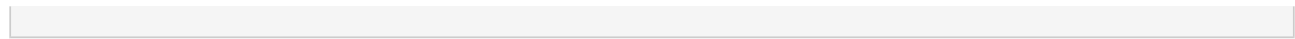
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# From Reader Review How to Play the Piano for online ebook

## Laura TvdB says

Este librito es exactamente lo que dice su portada. James Rhodes te enseña a tocar el *Preludio en do mayor* de Bach al piano en seis semanas. O sea que no es *Instrumental*. No es literatura ni cuenta una historia. Solo música.

No soy su público objetivo porque yo ya sé tocar el piano y he aprendido la pieza sin necesidad de sus lecciones, pero me encanta James Rhodes y escucharlo en directo fue maravilloso, así que me compré este librito por curiosidad (el precio me parece bastante caro, pero bueno, al menos he dado dinero a Blackie Books, una editorial genial, y a James). Lo recomiendo a los que estéis estresados por el trabajo o los estudios, a los que os guste la música pero nunca hayáis aprendido a tocar un instrumento por X o por Y. Se trata de un empujón divertido y enriquecedor para aprender a tocar una pieza sencilla pero nada desdeñable.

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## Antía says

Classical pianist James Rhodes (although he seems more of a rock star) says anyone can perform Bach's Prelude N° 1 in C Major even if reader has never studied music or got any contact with any musical instrument within six weeks by reading the book and practicing 45 minutes every day.

About half of the book gives a summary of how to read musical sheets and the elements of piano keyboard. Second Section analyses Bach's piece in sections to explain how to perform it. Perhaps the most interesting parts, are introduction and epilogue on why studying piano. It felt a bit like a self-help book (that Rhodes claims to hate) as he writes about the sense of self-achievement challenge can give the reader and the power of classical music to avoid stress.

I did get to perform Bach's Prelude after about 4 weeks. I enjoy it, want to keep practicing every day and mean to learn more. So work's done, Mr Rhodes. Nevertheless, I found the book explanations too simplistic in the second "How to play" section. I enjoyed the casual tone and Rhodes's enthusiasm, although I honestly doubt I could have got it if I hadn't had some previous and almost forgotten knowledge of how to read music.

Overall, it's a good introduction to how to play piano, but rather too short.

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## Jackie Law says

How to Play the Piano, by concert pianist James Rhodes, is the first offering in Quercus's new 'The Little Book of Life Skills' series. I received the book six weeks ago and read it through almost immediately. I decided not to post my review until I had attempted to follow its instructions that I may report back on how effective they had been at teaching me to play Bach's Prelude No. 1 in C Major within the time period proscribed. In the interests of full disclosure, I have never had a formal piano lesson but I did have some musical training on other instruments as a child.

The book opens with advice on how to master a piece of music. It is important to take things slowly and to practice regularly. To play the piano it is necessary to be able to read music, and to understand the

correlation between the symbols on a musical score and a piano's keys. Explaining this vital information takes up about half the book. It is then time to start to play.

A copy of the score is included and may be cut out or scanned. A few annotations have been added which are pointed out as progress is made.

The importance of correct fingering is explained. To navigate a keyboard smoothly this is a necessary skill to master. Timing is also important and to demonstrate this, and to give some idea of the sound being aimed for, the reader is directed to a series of short videos the author has posted at <http://www.jamesrhodes.tv> I found these helpful.

The next twenty pages take the reader through the score, two bars at a time, explaining the tricky sections and offering advice on how to move the piece along. Getting through this section took me about four weeks. I was diligent with my practice, although I may have averaged closer to half an hour, five days a week rather than the three quarters of an hour, six days a week suggested. As much as anything I found the muscles in my hands would start to ache after this length of time and wanted to maintain my enjoyment even if it was to the detriment of the musical skill I could acquire.

Having more or less mastered the notes, albeit at quite a slow pace, there is then a chapter on performance and instruction on how to use the piano pedals. I found this tricky. Remembering the pedal affected my concentration on the notes and I struggled to play without mistakes. I also wished to add the suggested interpretation which, again, led me to flounder on the bars where notes move between octaves and fingering positions must be changed. The author suggested that, having played through the piece so many times, the score would no longer be required. My memory does not work in this way and I continued to need the score in front of me in order to play.

There is a lot to take in and remember but the book is clear in its instruction and eager to remind the reader that they started out unable to play the piano. To be able to get through the piece, even if not to as high a standard as desired, is very pleasing.

The final chapter offers a pat on the back and suggests some other pieces that the reader may wish to tackle should they choose to continue their musical journey. Using the advice gleaned from this book I can see that this is possible. I now feel that I have learned to play this particular piece, which is satisfying. It has also been a lot of fun.

My copy of this book was provided gratis by the publisher, Quercus.

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## **Sorrento says**

This compact little book will teach anyone who has no musical knowledge whatsoever how to play a Bach prelude on the piano in 6 weeks. That is so long as you stick to the deal of practising for 45 minutes a day with one day off each week. I have some musical knowledge and I am trying to teach myself the piano. I read the book quickly skipping over the first bit and then started to learn the Prelude which I downloaded with the fingering from James Rhodes' website. I am about three weeks in and I can say that I am getting the hang of the piece. I haven't stuck to the schedule so I guess James is about right with his estimate of how long it will take to master it. I've already got my eye on the Moonlight Sonata for my next piece which I aim

to master.

James Rhodes is an inspirational teacher and evangelical advocate of the joy of piano playing. I can strongly recommend this book to anyone who wants to give the piano a go.

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### **julieta says**

Está simpático este libro, y quizás si empuje a un par al piano, y eso le da un valor, para mi, pero es solo un manual bonito. Igual se trata de Rhodes, que si lo han leído les cae bien seguro, o por lo menos a mi, y entonces si James quiere hacer un libro que sea una lección de piano, pues yo lo apoyo. He dicho.

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### **Anna says**

How Ryan Gosling learnt the piano for La La Land.

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### **Tony says**

#### **Excellent**

Inevitably a little dry at times, but very clear explanations and lots of encouragement. Please do give it a go!

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