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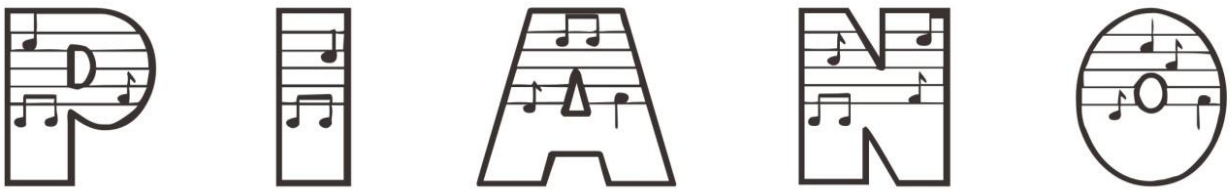
PART 3

PRACTICAL



Chapter 8

Introduction

❖ Introduction to the Piano/Keyboard

We shouldn't worry about much theory here, because the whole of PART ONE has been dedicated to essential rudiments needed to study any musical instrument.

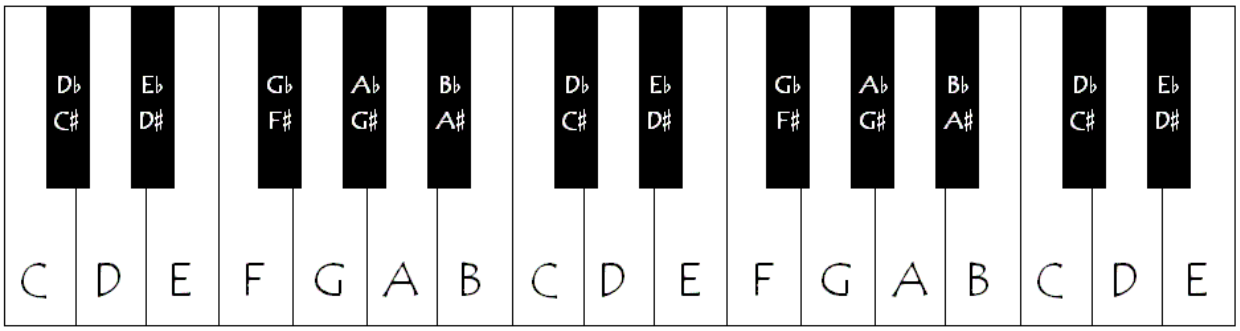
Our major concern in this part is to introduce you to the practical techniques required to play the keyboard. Let's start that by examining the basic structure of the piano keyboard.

The Keys of the Piano

Notes of the White Piano Keys
White piano keys are called *naturals*. They sound a natural (♮) note when pressed, as opposed to a sharp or flat.

There are seven naturals on the keyboard: **C-D-E-F-G-A-B**

After the **B**, the scale repeats itself on the next **C**. This means you only have to memorize seven notes!



Take note of the pattern in the picture above. Observe:

- The alphabetical order from left to right.
- There is no **H** note!* After **G**, the letters start back at **A**.

Try It: Find a **C** note on your keyboard, and identify each white key until you reach the next **C**. Do this until you feel comfortable enough with the keyboard to name the notes in random order.

Notes of the Black Piano Keys

Black piano keys are called accidentals, and they are just that: the sharps and flats of the piano.

On the keyboard, there are five black accidentals per octave. They can be either sharp or flat, and are named after the notes they modify:

- **Sharp** (#)
  A sharp makes a note a half step higher in pitch.
  On the keyboard, a note's sharp is the black key directly to its right.
  Try It: Find a **C** note on your keyboard, and identify its sharp #.
- **Flat** *(b)*
  A flat makes a note a half step lower in pitch.
  On the keyboard, a note's flat is the black key directly to its left.

  Try It: Find a **D** note and identify its flat on the keyboard #.

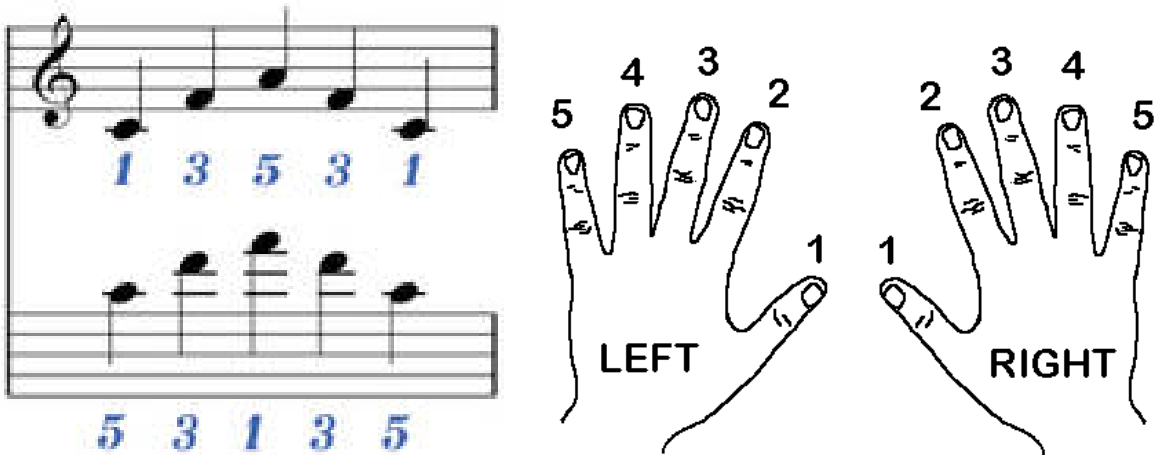
* Both examples point to the same black key. When notes go by more than one name, it's called "enharmonic."

Memorize the Notes on the Piano Keyboard

1. Identify the white keys individually, and practice naming them until you can find each note without counting from **C**.
2. You don't need to memorize each sharp and flat by name just yet, but remember how to locate them on the keyboard using the natural keys.

❖ Fingering Positions

Piano fingering refers to finger placement on the piano keyboard, and the hand techniques used to play the piano. The fingered piano below marks each note with a number that corresponds to one of the five fingers.



Beginners' Exercises

❖ Reading Piano Sheets

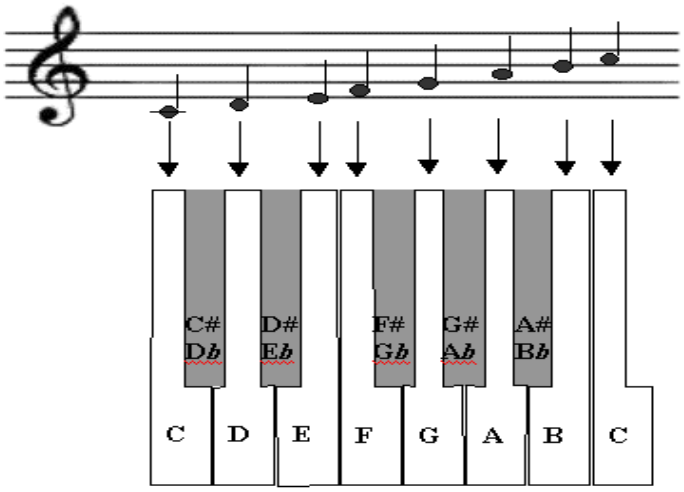
You will see numbers 1-5 written above or below notes in scales and songs. These numbers correspond to your five fingers, and tell you which finger presses which key. Finger numbering for both hands goes as follows:

Thumb: 1
Index Finger: 2
Middle Finger: 3
Ring Finger: 4
Pinky Finger: 5

When you begin playing with your left hand, you'll notice that the fingering is often the same for both hands. There are plenty of these fingering workouts for you to practice in the exercise sections.

Good fingering is a valuable skill to have as a pianist. When you practice piano fingering, you're enabling your fingers to execute new techniques, master awkward positions, and exercise speed and flexibility. Practicing fingering may seem tedious at first, but stick with it; your fingers will adjust quickly.

Let's quickly remind ourselves of the piano keys and their positions on the staff, as well as the different musical notes and rests and how many counts they represent.



❖ Finger Warming Exercises

Place your right hand on any 5 adjacent white keys. Remember that the thumb is 1 and the little finger is 5. Are you ready? Practice with just the right hand first and then the left separately.

Exercise #1 - Play 1 3 5 3 1 3 5 3 1 3 5 3 1

Exercise #2 - Play 5 3 1 3 5 3 1 3 5 3 1 3 5

Exercise #3 - Play 1 3 1 3 1 3 1, 2 4 2 4 2 4 2, 3 5 3 5 3 5 3, 2 4 2 4 2 4 2

Simultaneous Parallel Motion

RH: ((1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 4, 3, 2))
LH: ((5, 4, 3, 2, 1, 2, 3, 4))

Note: RH = Right Hand, LH = Left Hand

❖ Quick Revision of Musical Notes and Rests

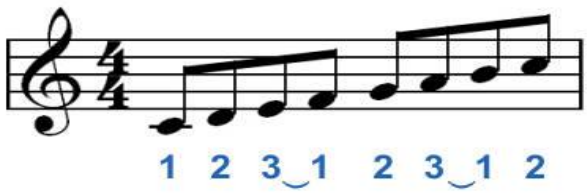
whole note		A note that gets 4 counts
half note		A rest that gets 4 counts
quarter note		A note that gets 2 counts
eighth note		A rest that gets 2 counts
sixteenth note		A note that gets 1 count
whole rest		A rest that gets 1 count
half rest		A note that gets 1/2 count
quarter rest		A rest that gets 1/2 count
eighth rest		A note that gets 1/4 count
sixteenth rest		A rest that gets 1/4 count

Please refer to the first part of this book for detailed information on sight-reading.

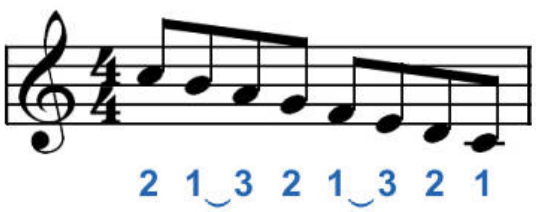
❖ Beginner Exercises

C major Scale

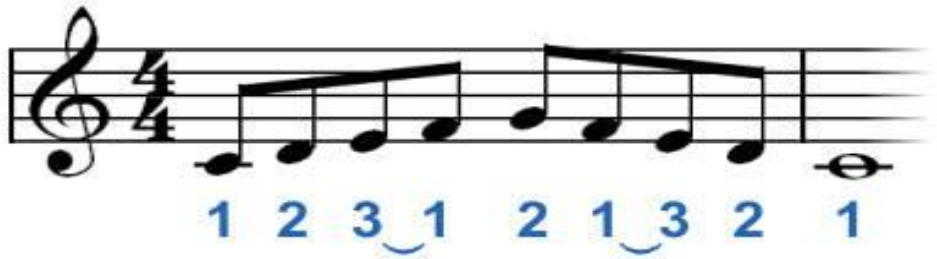
Ascending



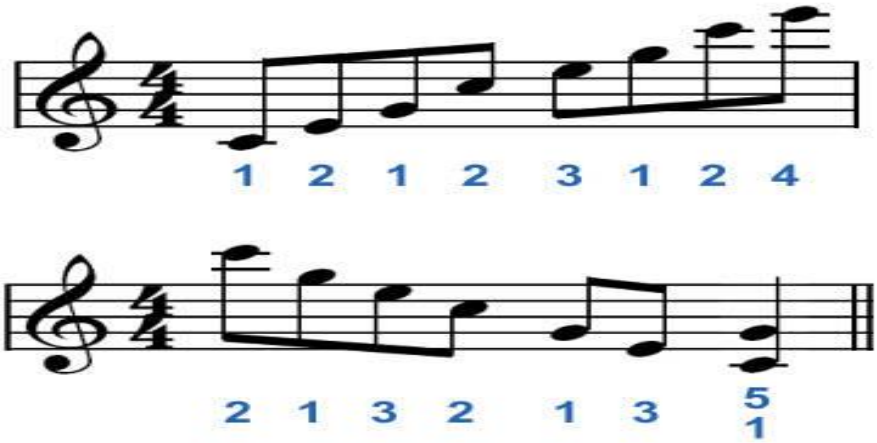
Descending



Playing 5-Note Piano Scales



Playing Longer Piano Scales



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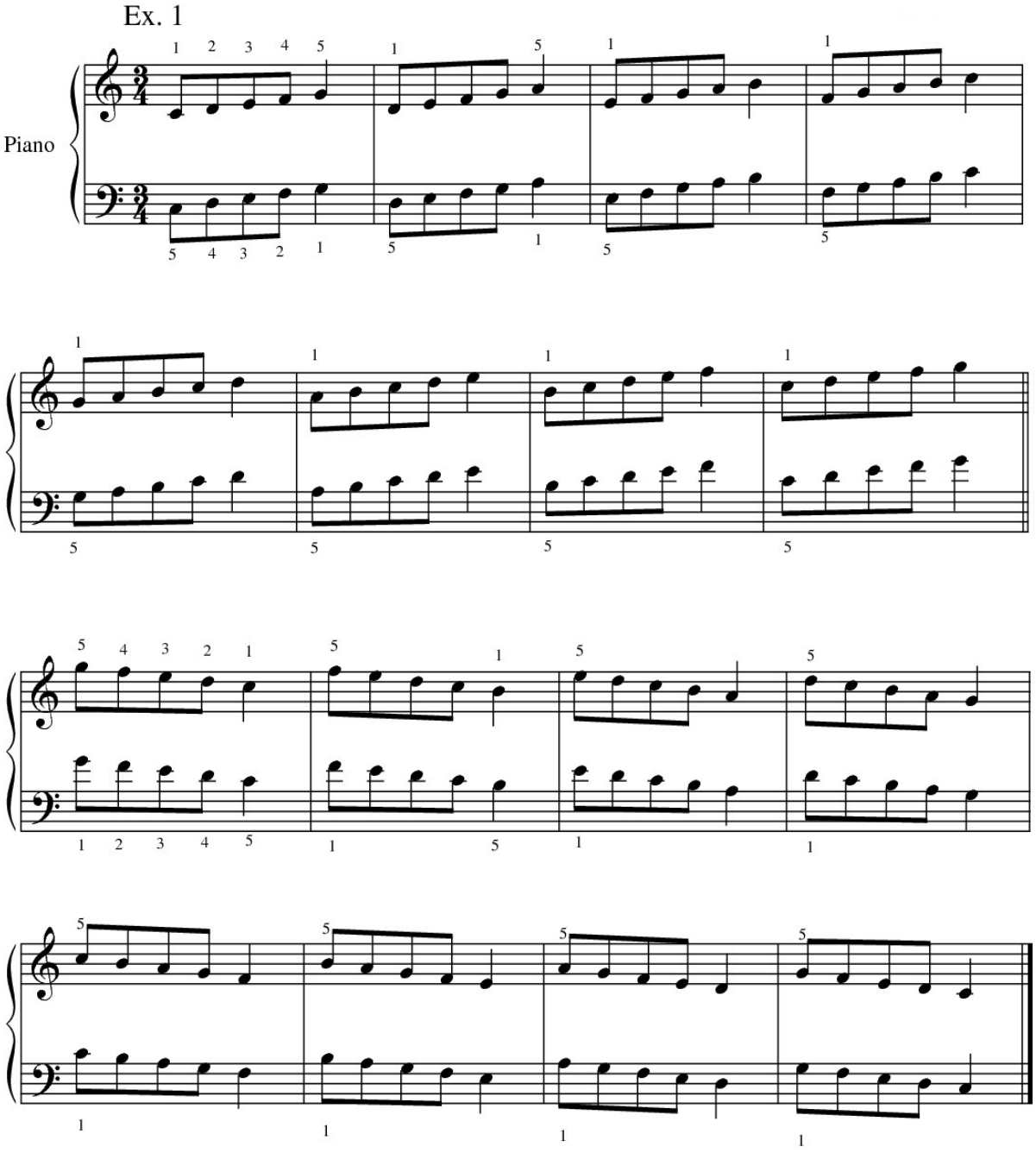
Five finger exercise

Practicing the step



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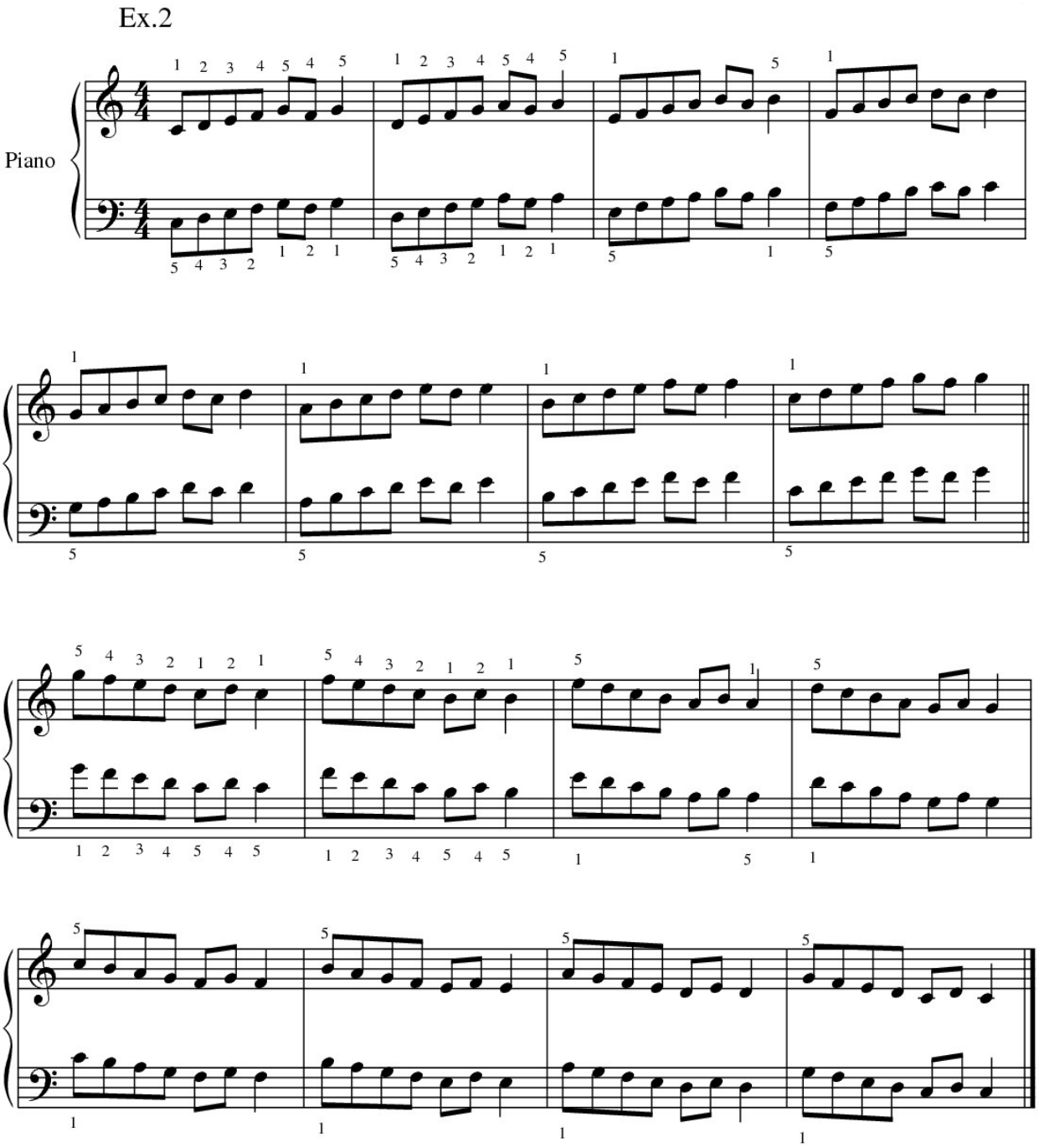
Five finger exercise

Practicing the step

Ex.2



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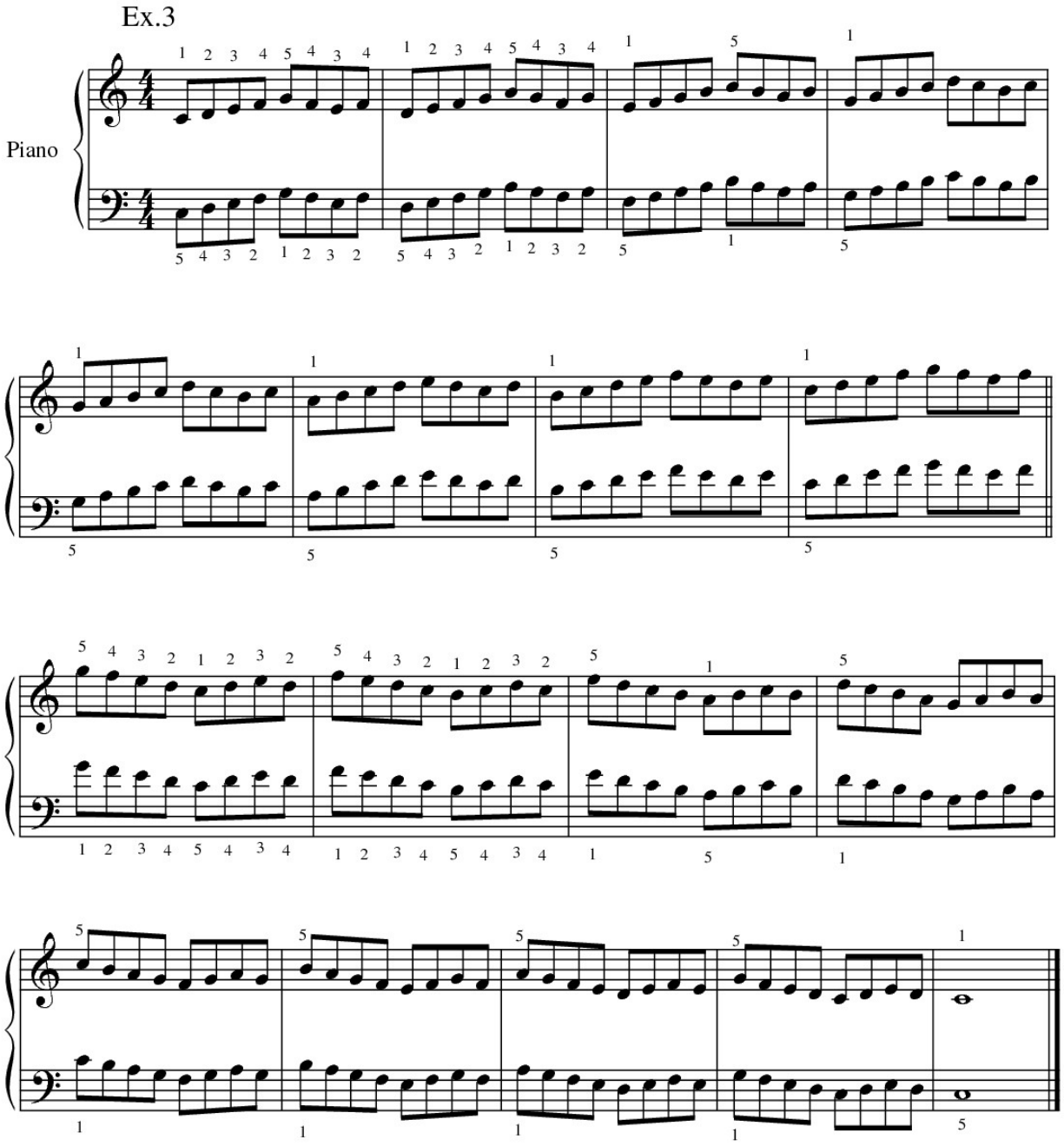
Five finger exercise

Practicing the step



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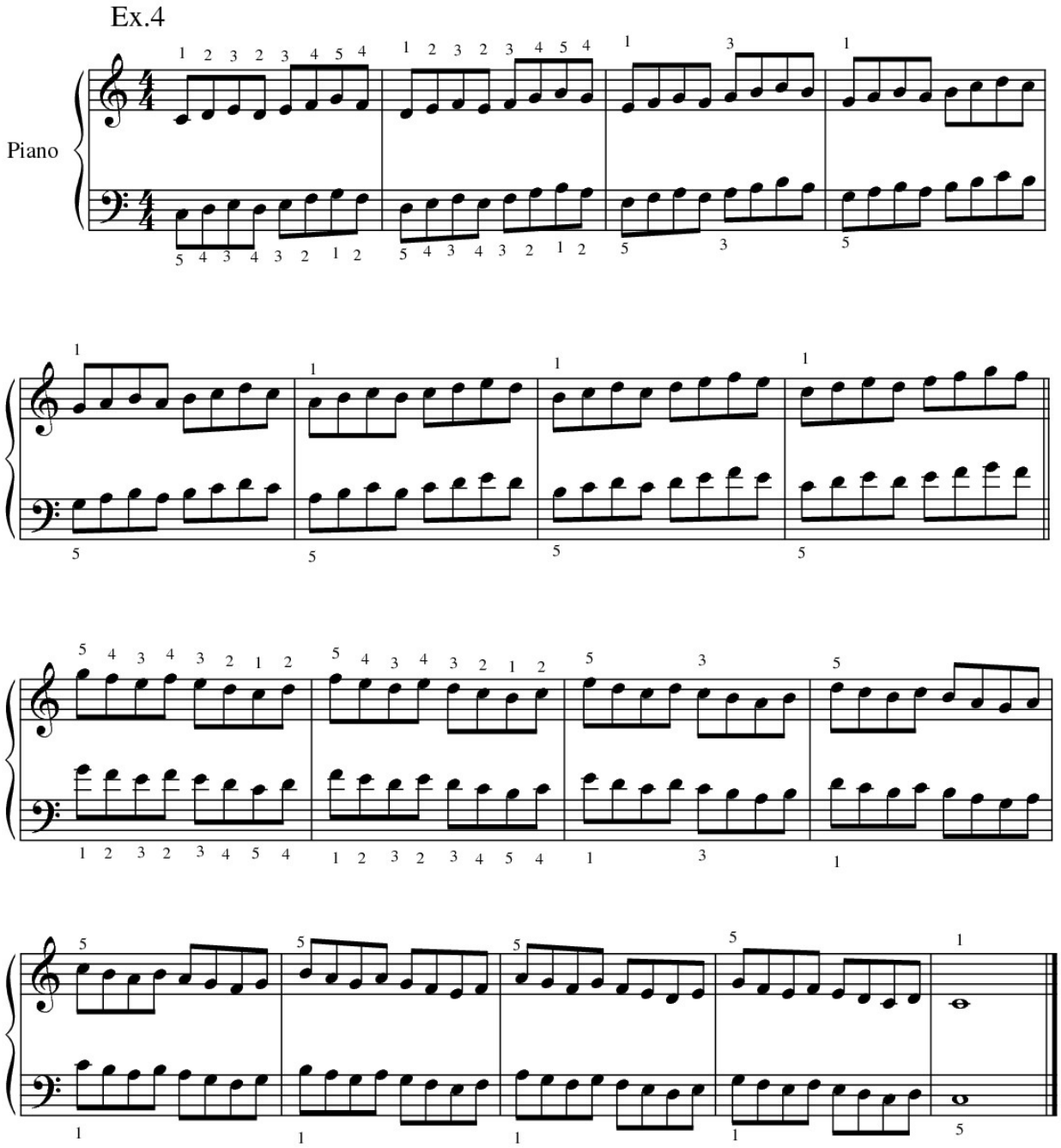
Five finger exercise

Practicing the step



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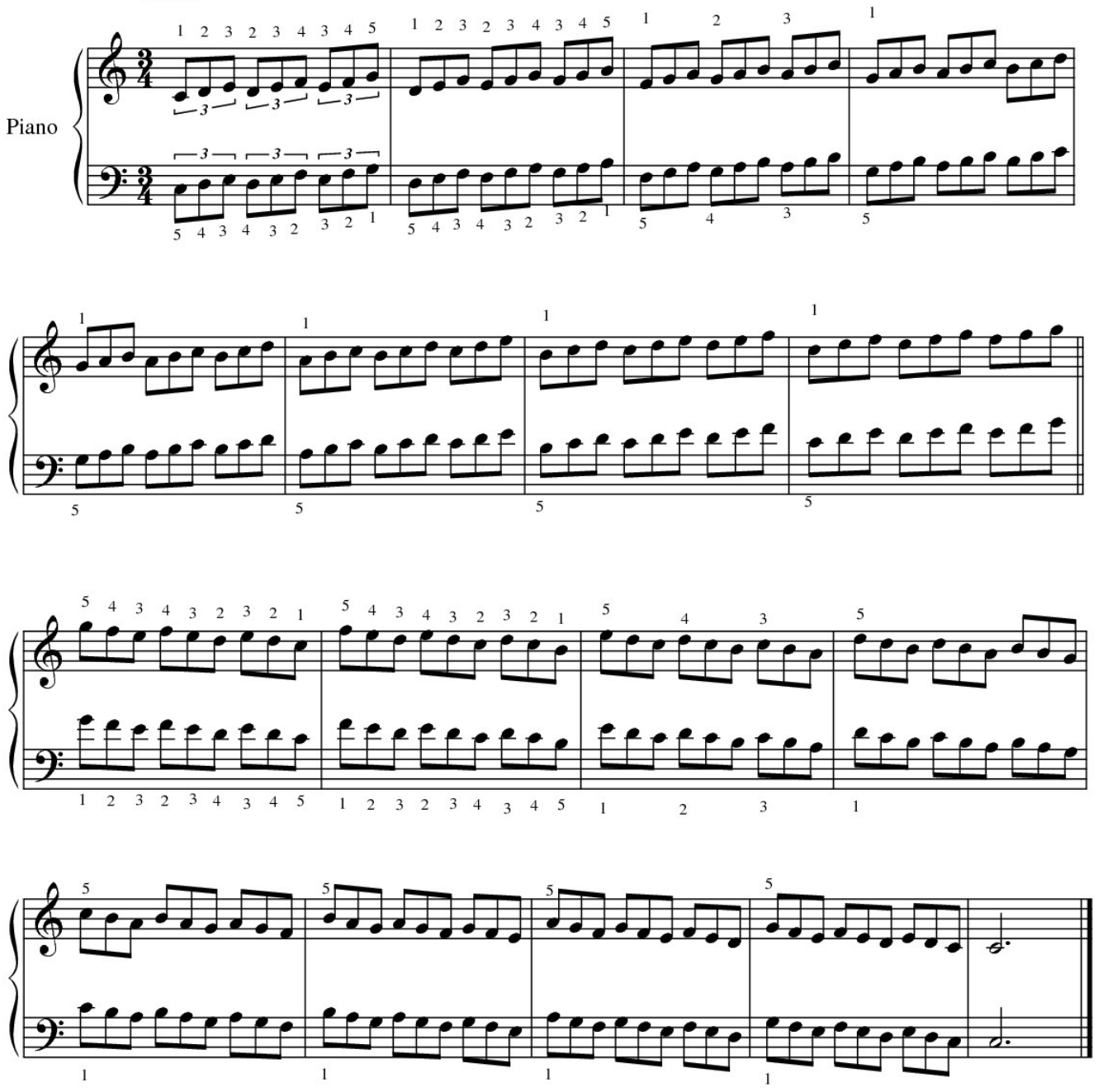
Five finger exercise

Practicing the step

Ex .5



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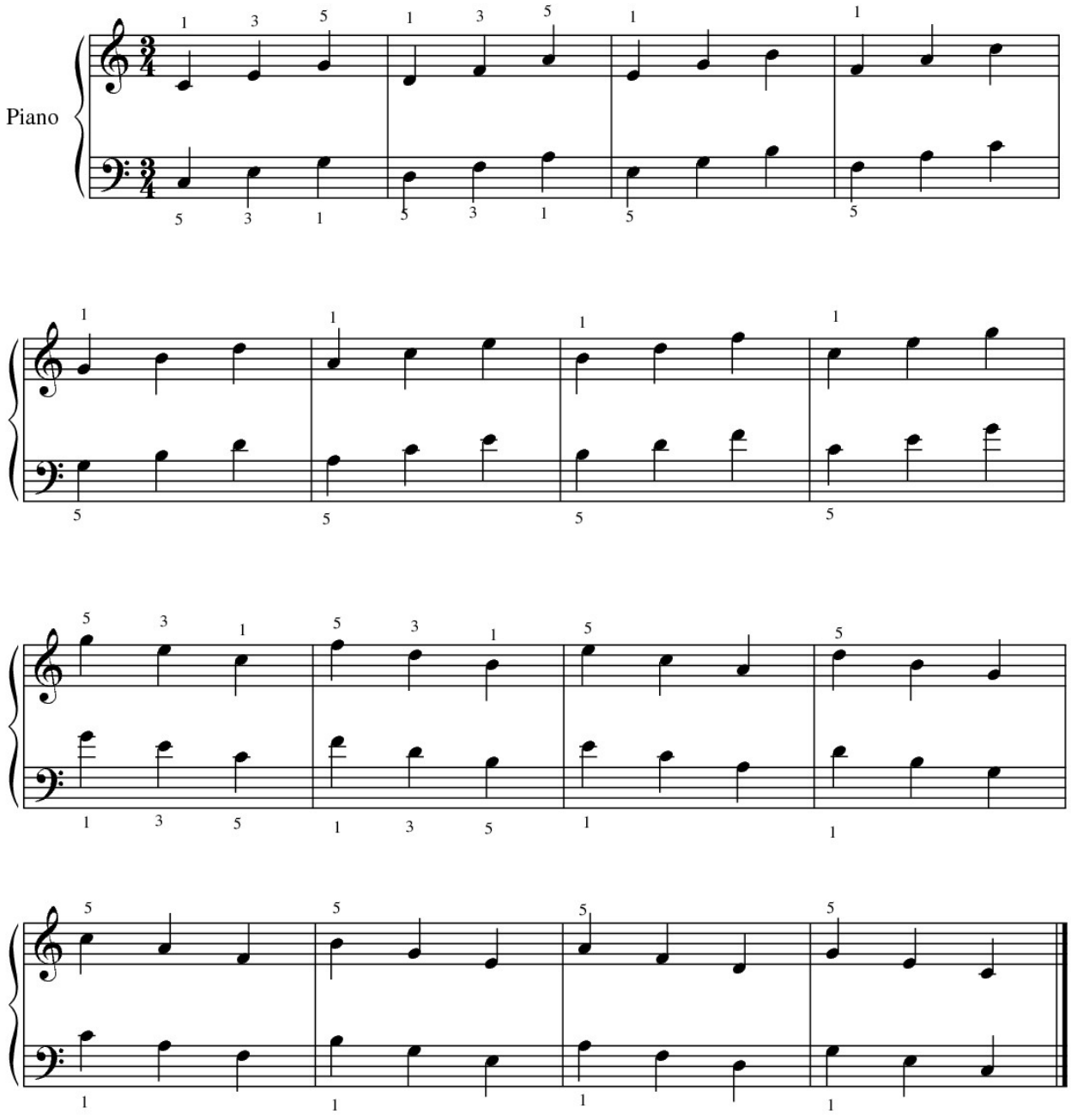
Five finger exercise

Practicing the Arpege (skipping over notes)

Ex. 1



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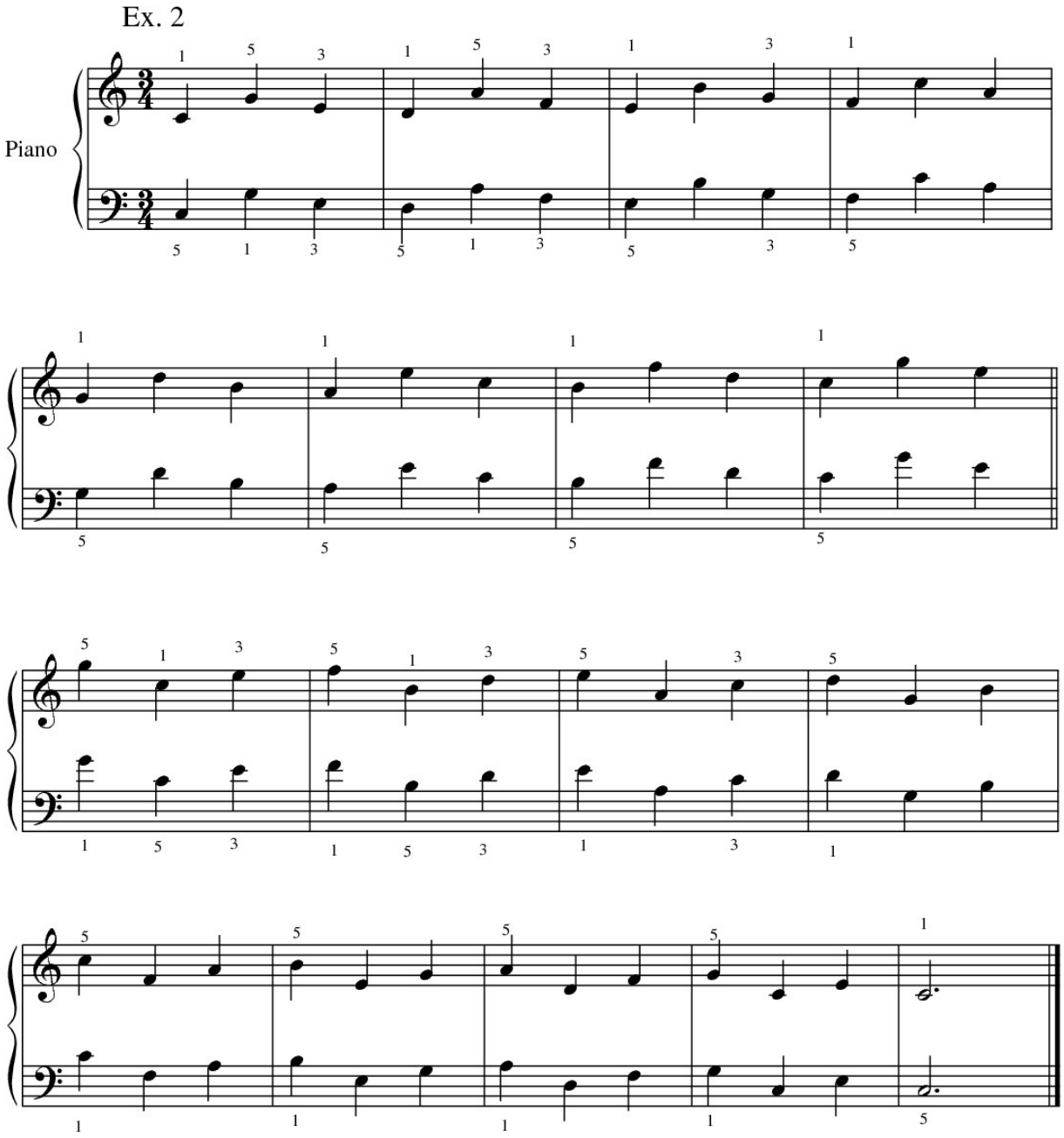
Five finger exercise

Practicing the Arpege (skipping over notes)



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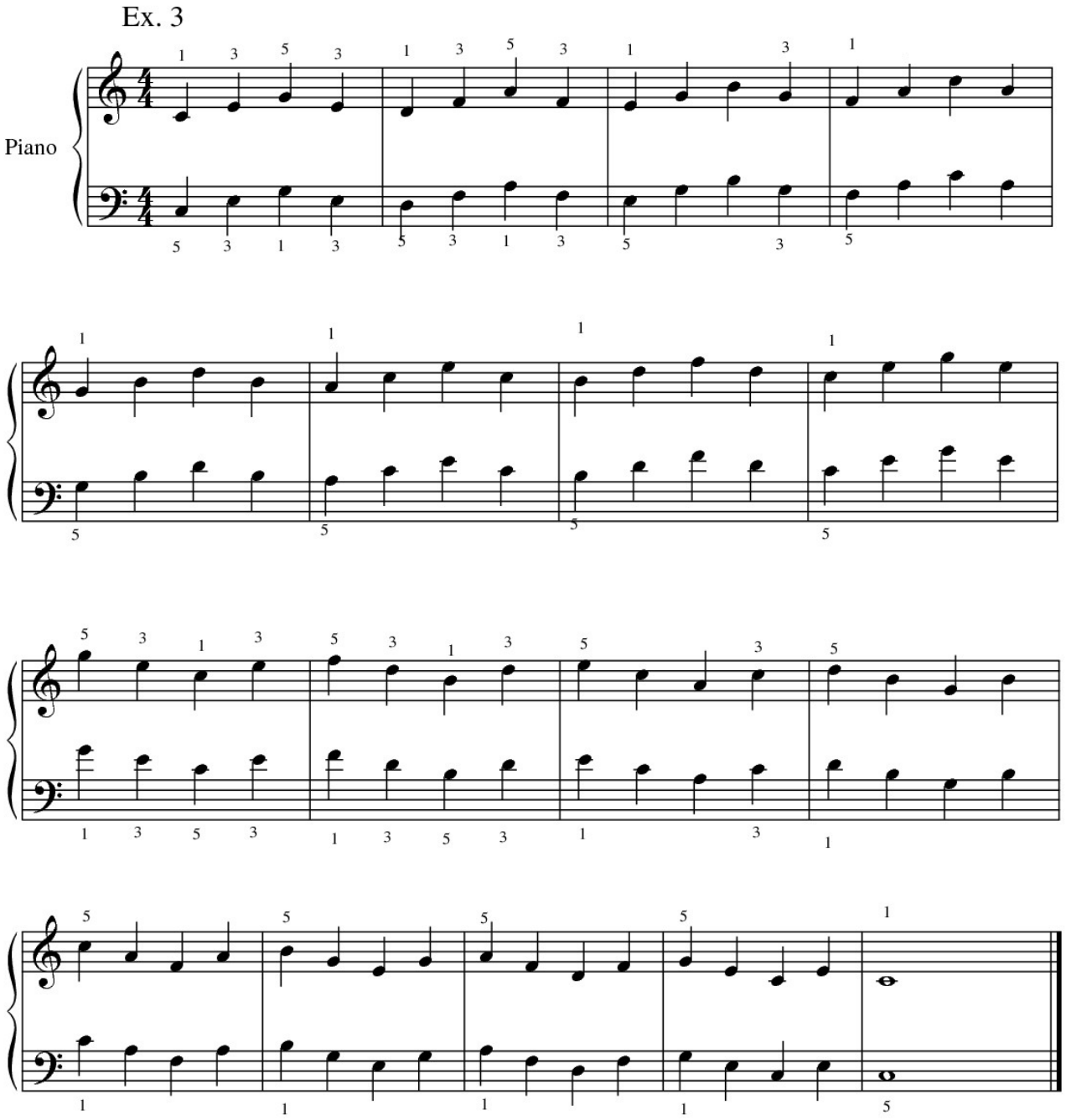
Five finger exercise

Practicing the Arpege (skipping over notes)



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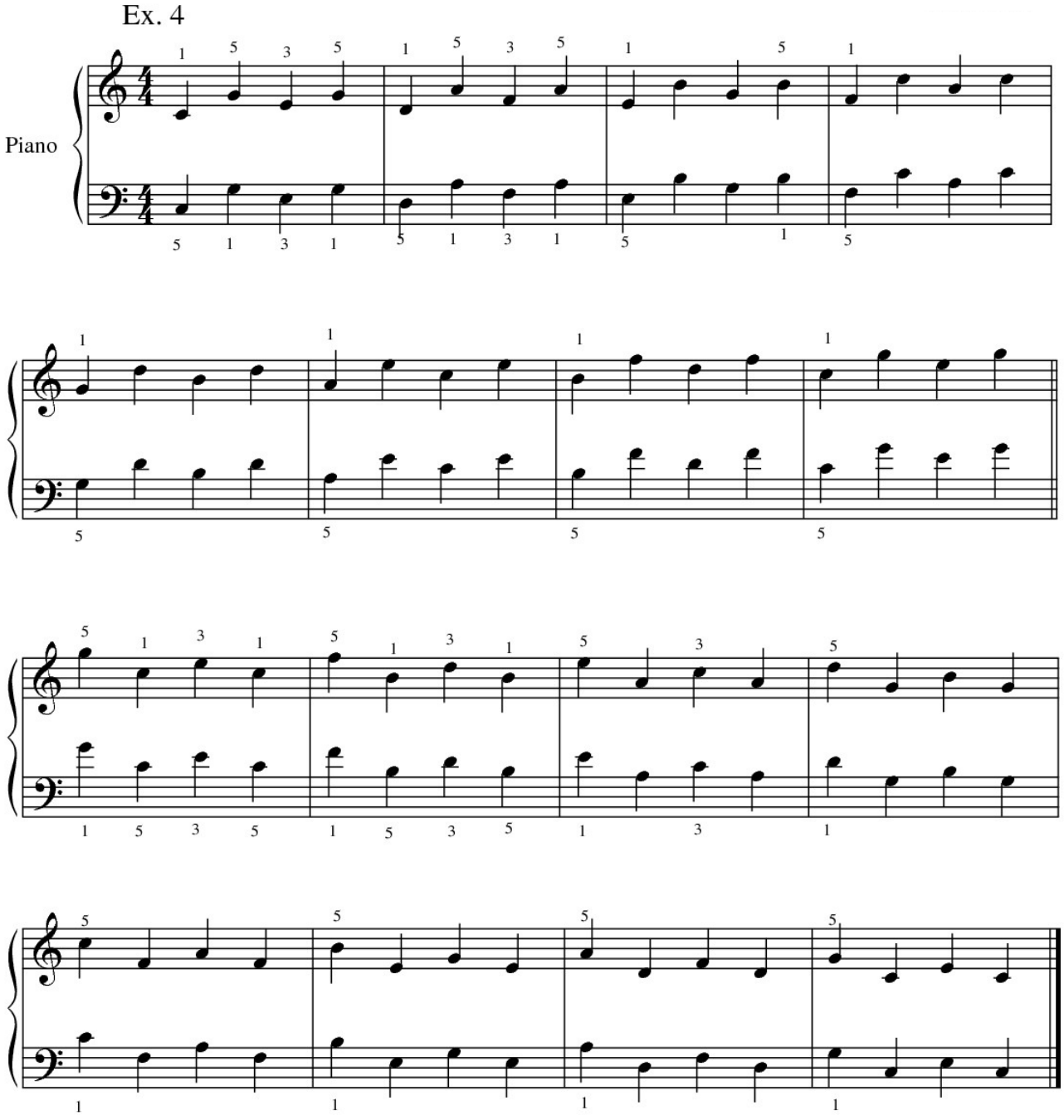
Five finger exercise

Practicing the Arpege (skipping over notes)

Ex. 4



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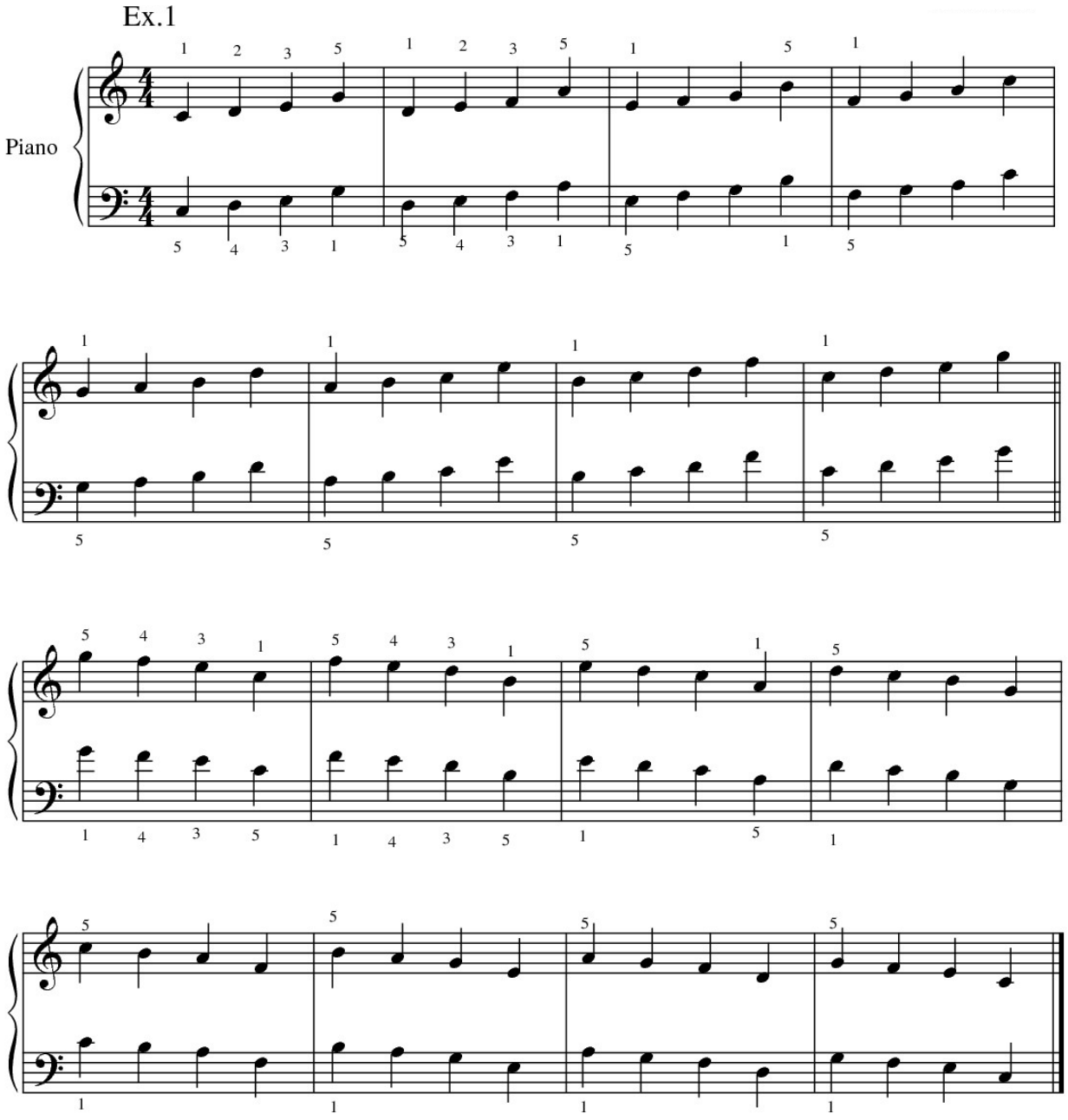
Five finger exercise

Mixing the step and the skip



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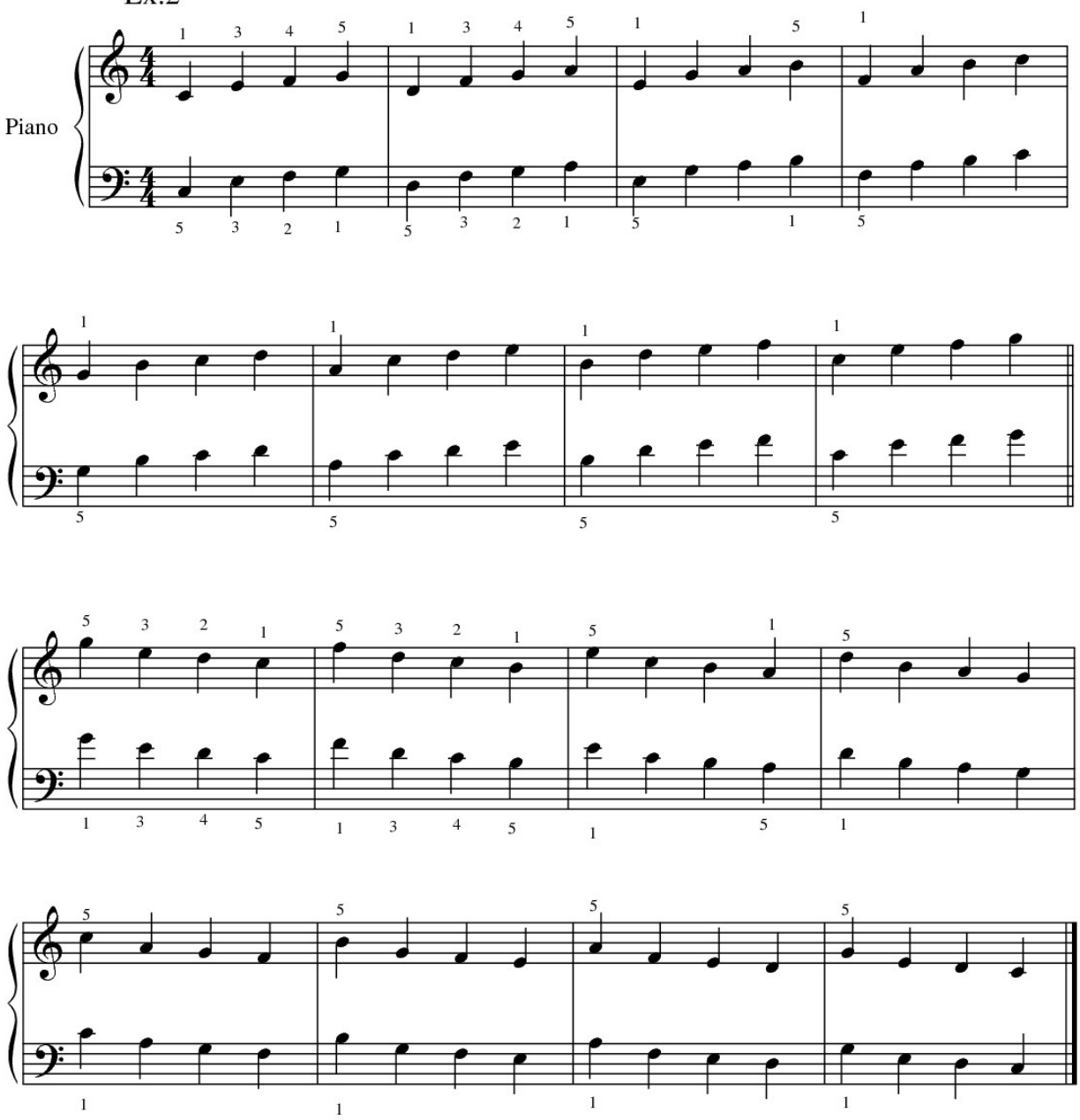
Five finger exercise

Mixing the step and the skip

Ex.2



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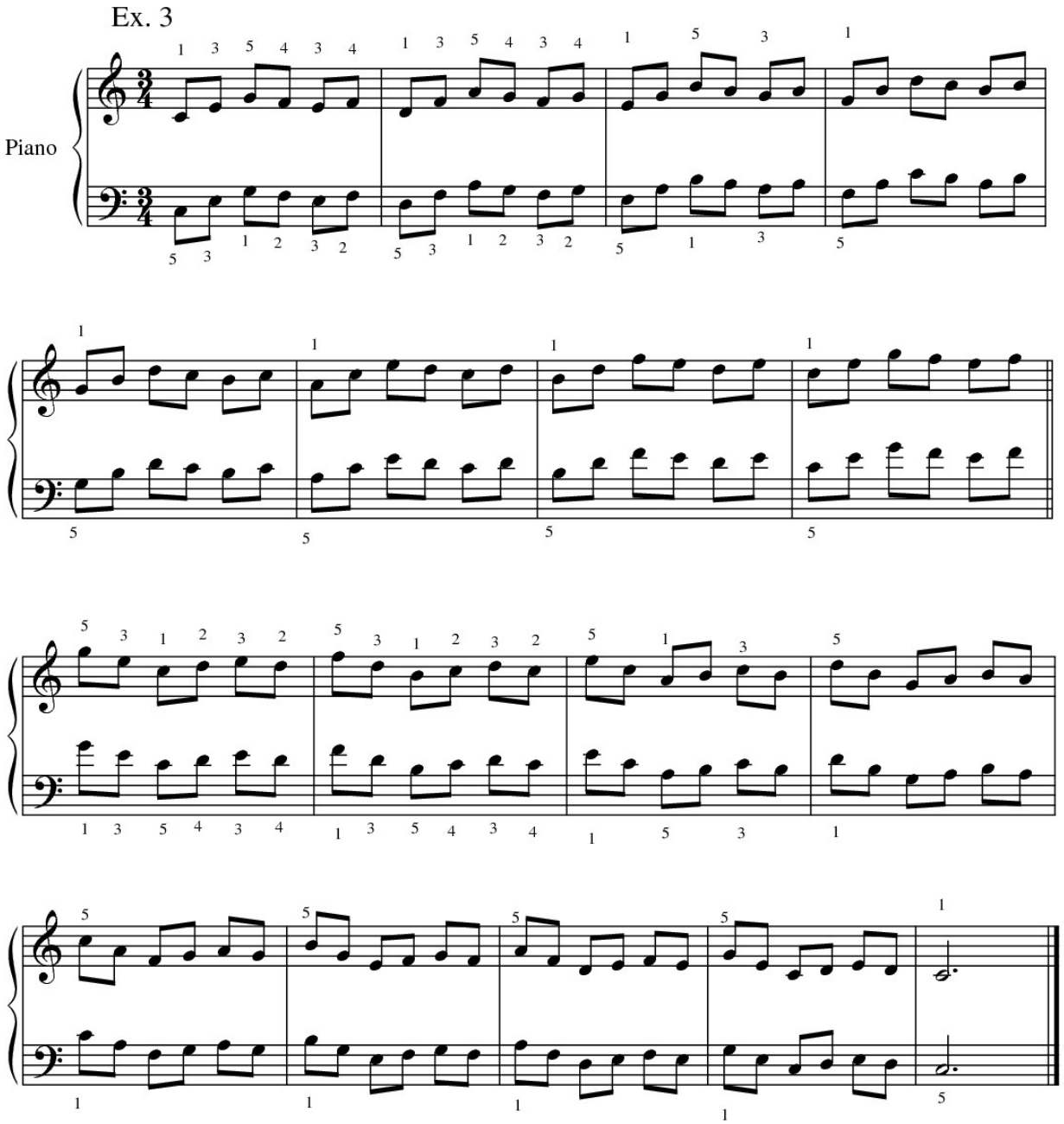
Five finger exercise

Mixing the step and the skip



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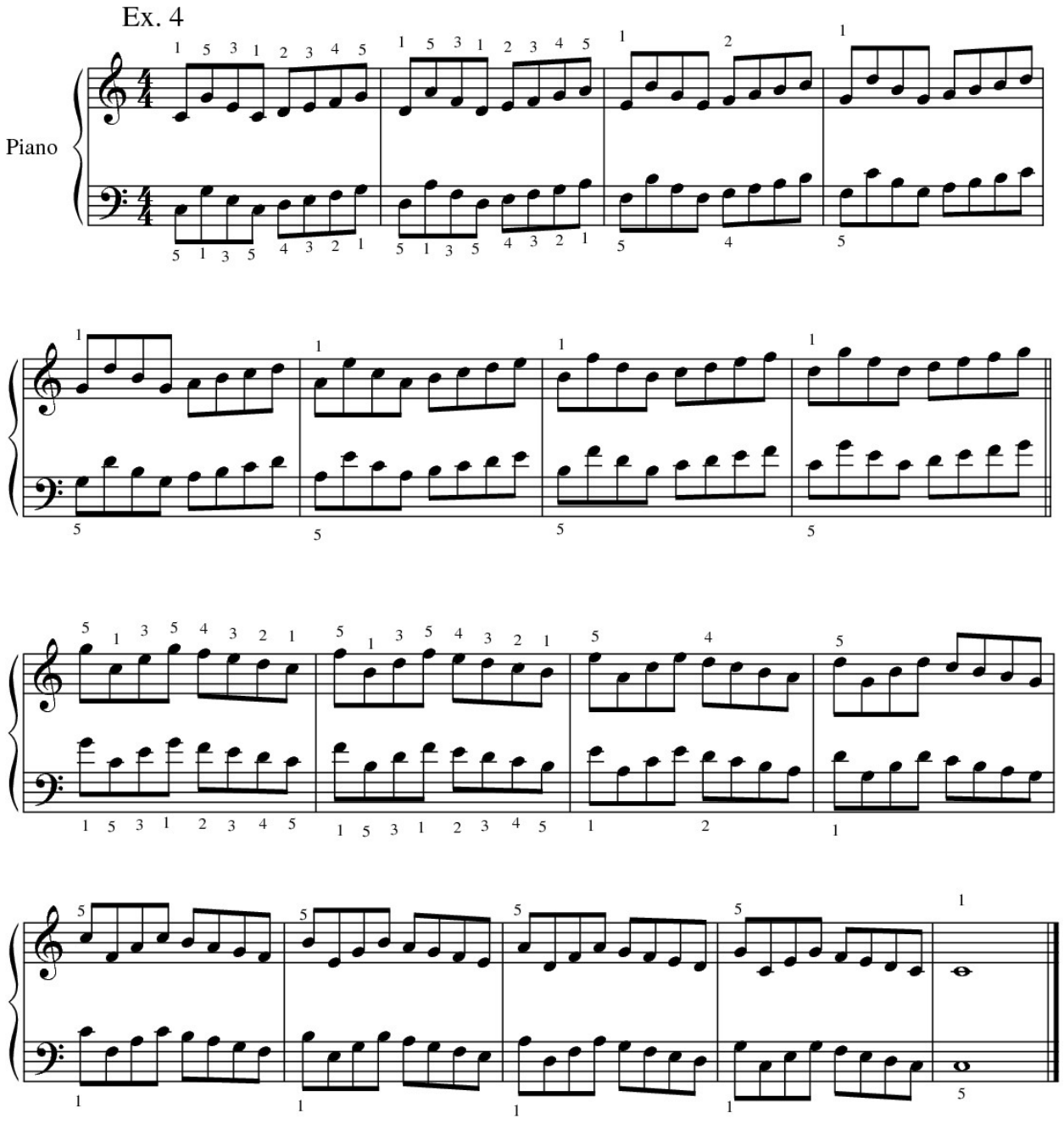
Five finger exercise

Mixing the step and the skip



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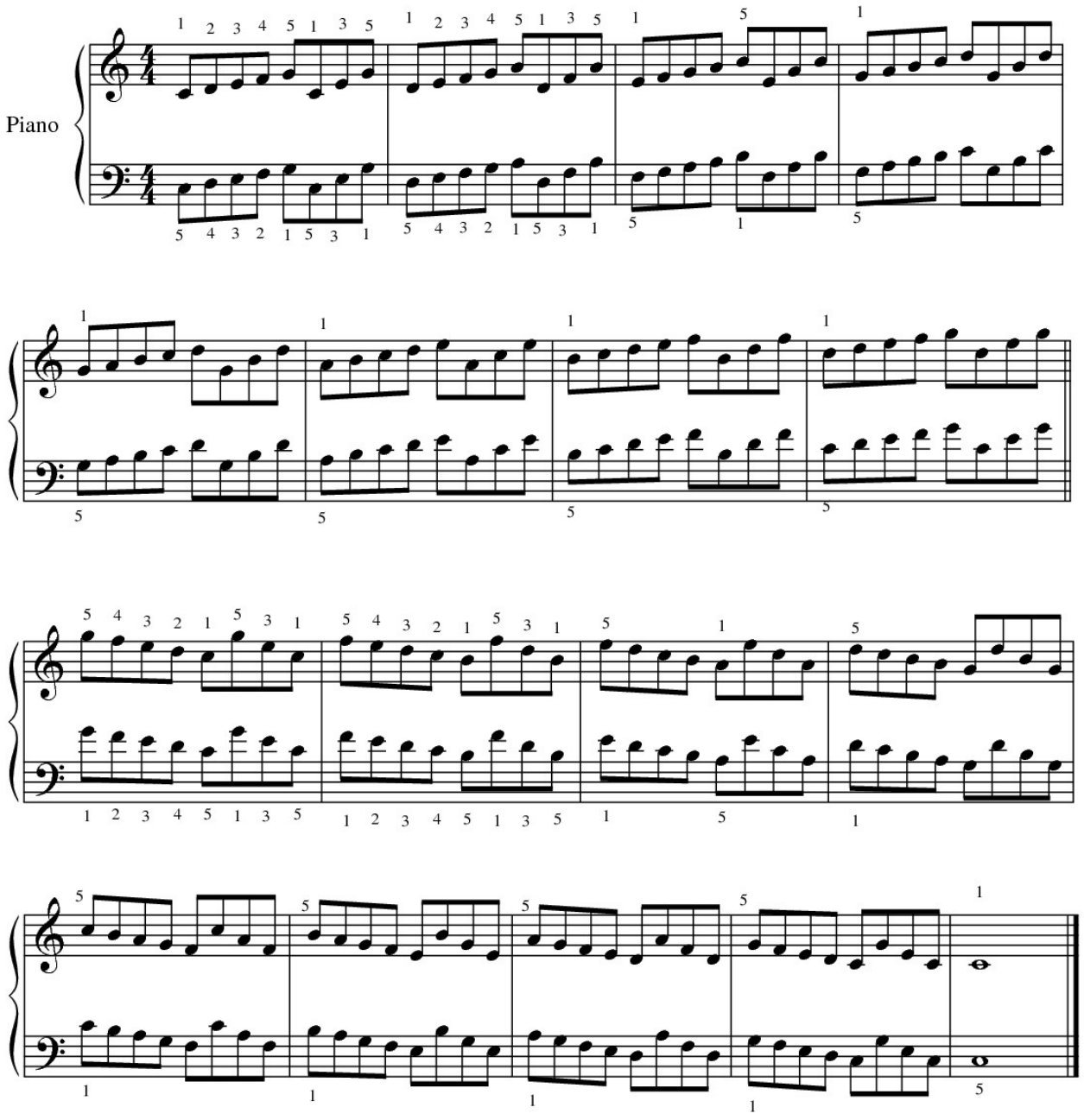
Five finger exercise

Mixing the step and the skip

Ex. 5



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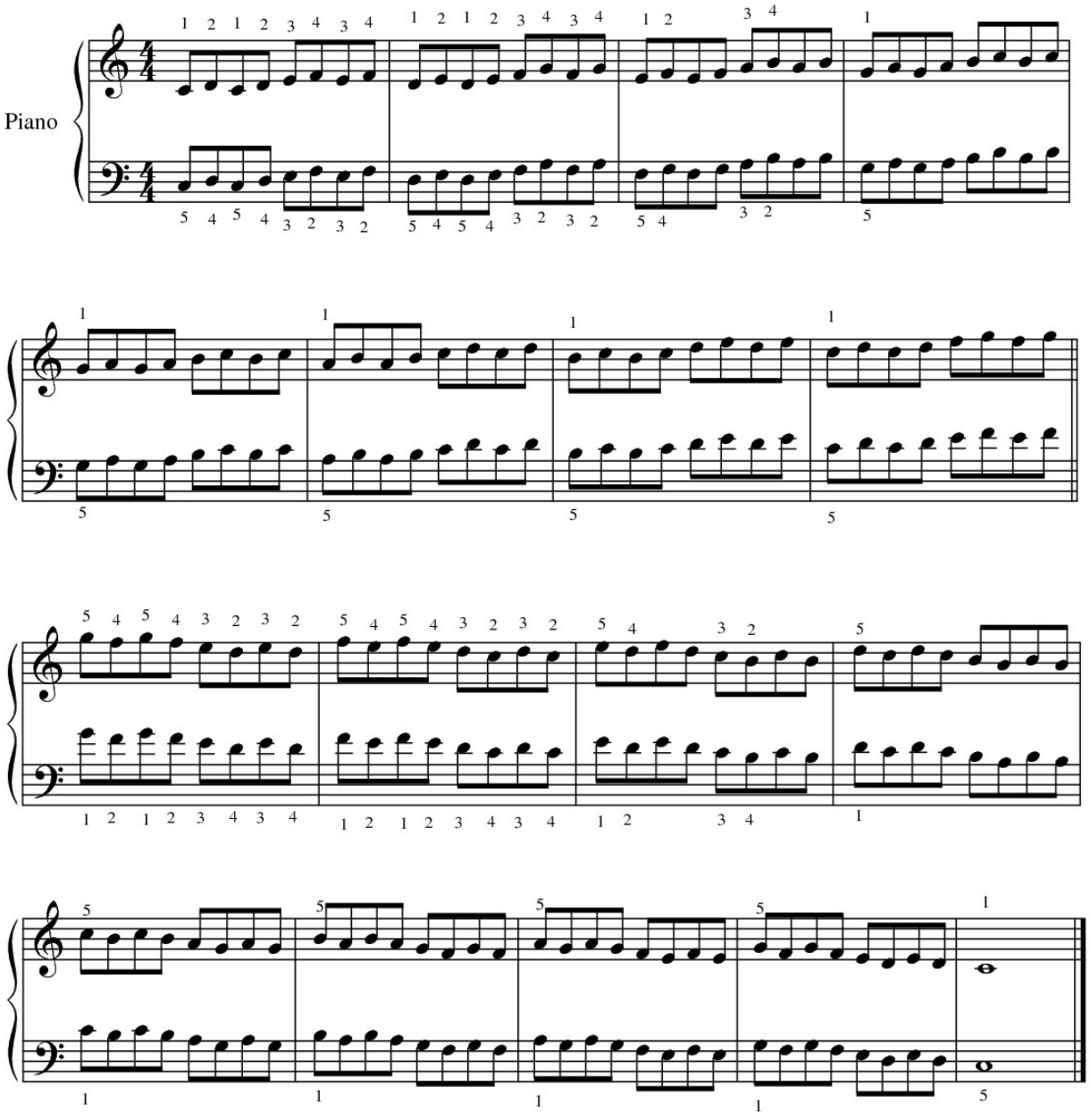
Five finger exercise

Practicing Intervals-Second

Ex. 1



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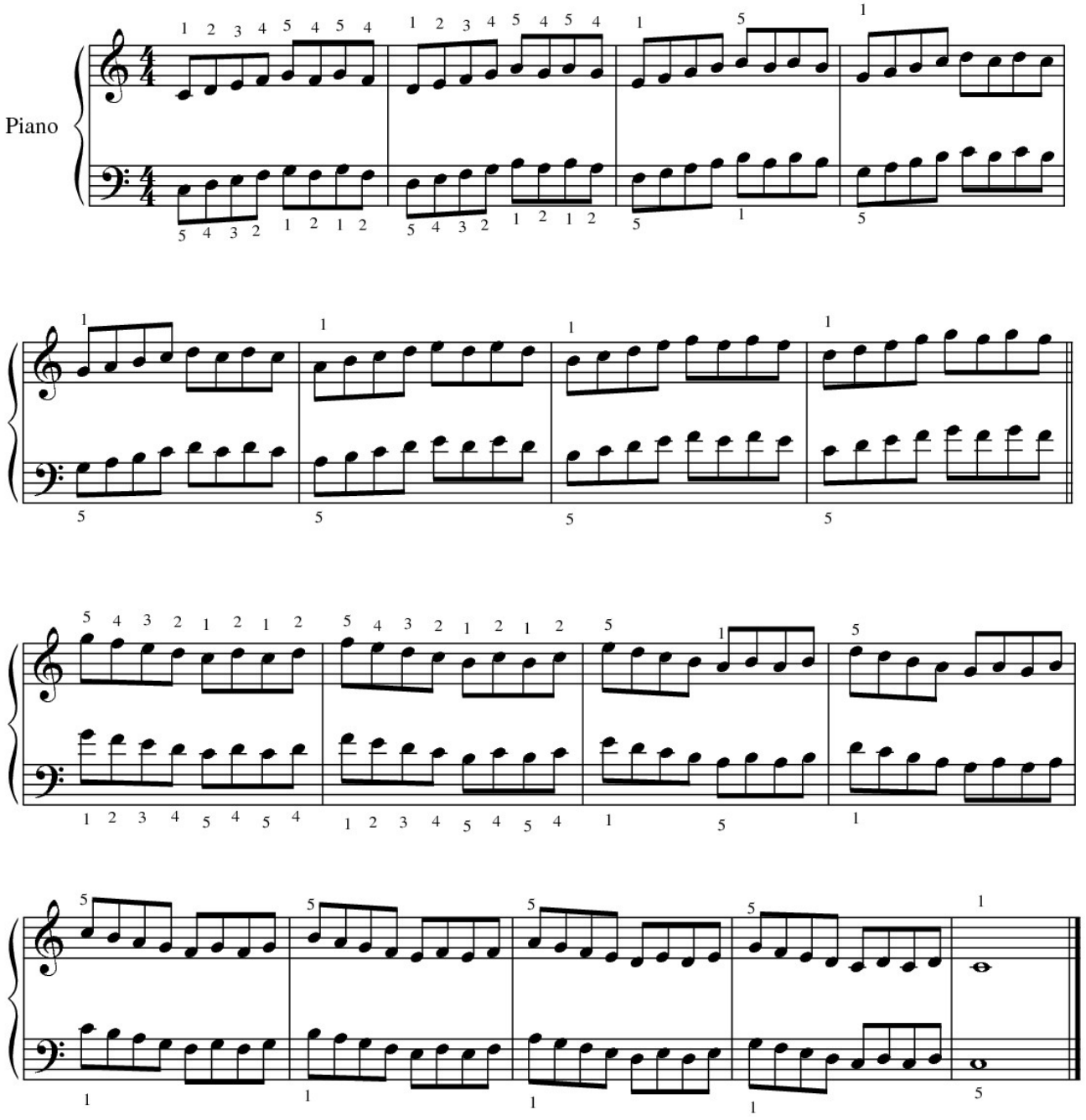
Five finger exercise

Practicing Intervals-Second

Ex. 2



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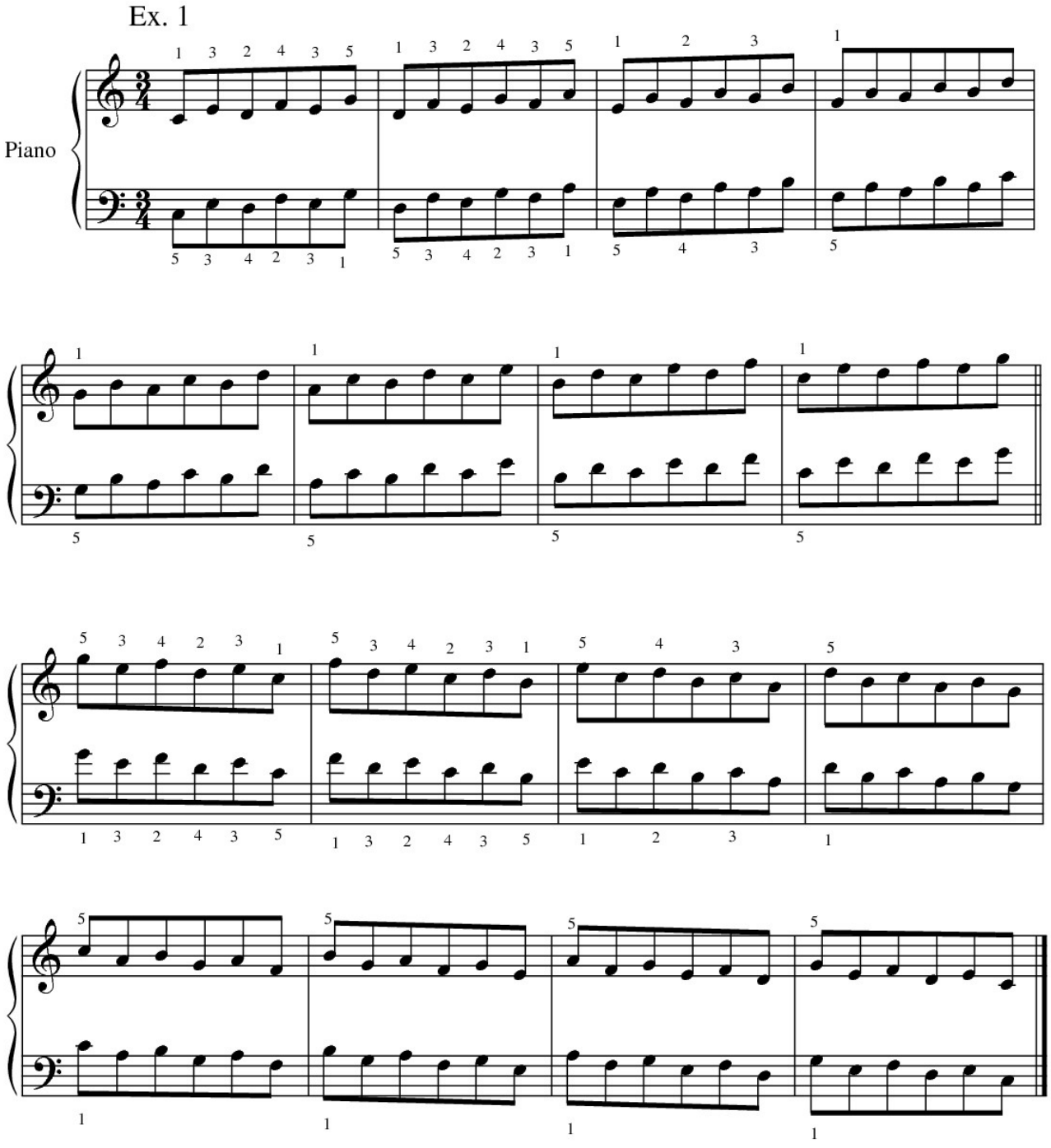
Five finger exercise

Practicing Intervals-Thirds

Ex. 1



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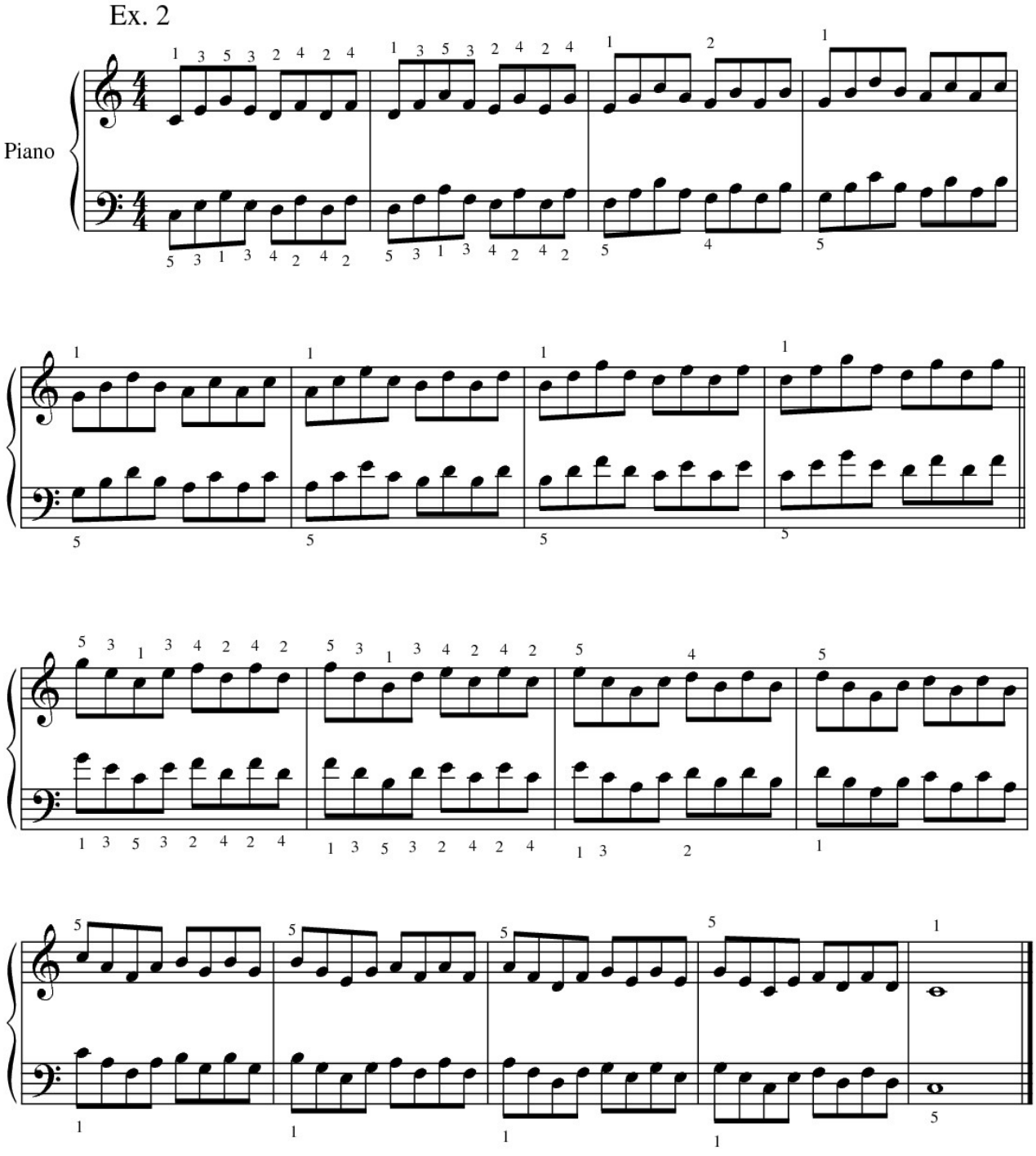
Five finger exercise

Practicing Intervals-Thirds

Ex. 2



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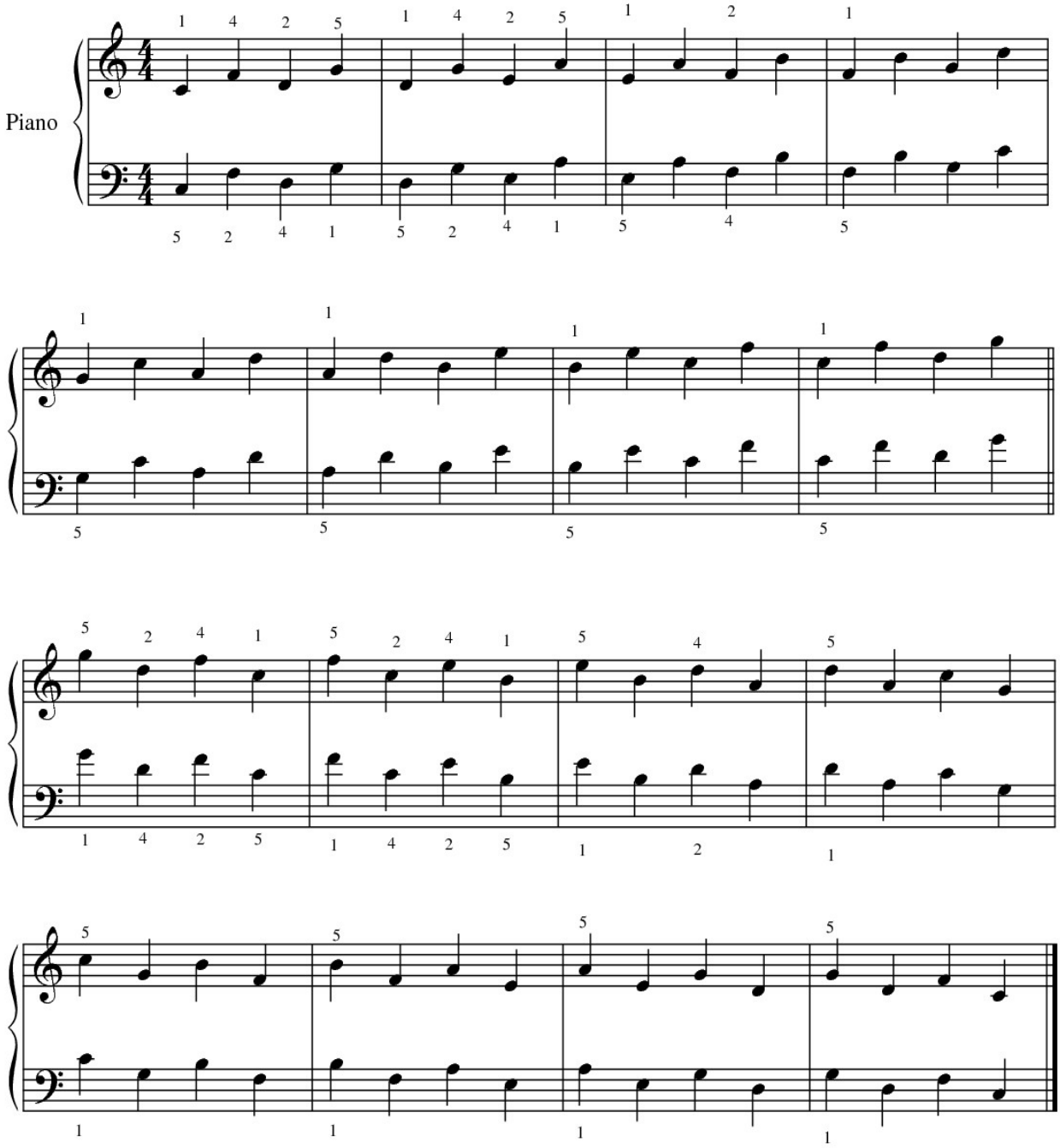
Five finger exercise

Practicing Intervals-Fourth

Ex. 1



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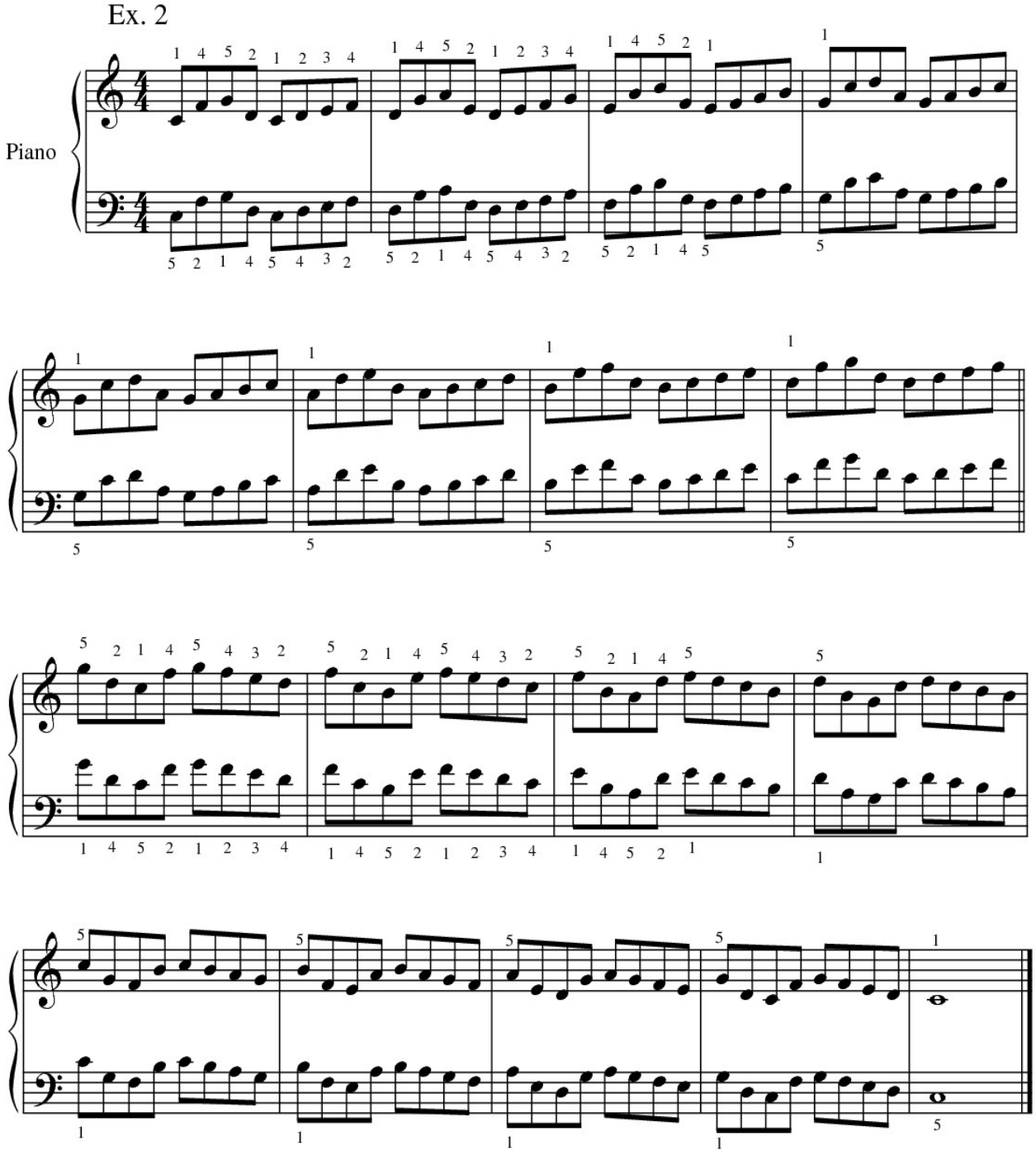
Five finger exercise

Practicing Intervals-Fourth

Ex. 2



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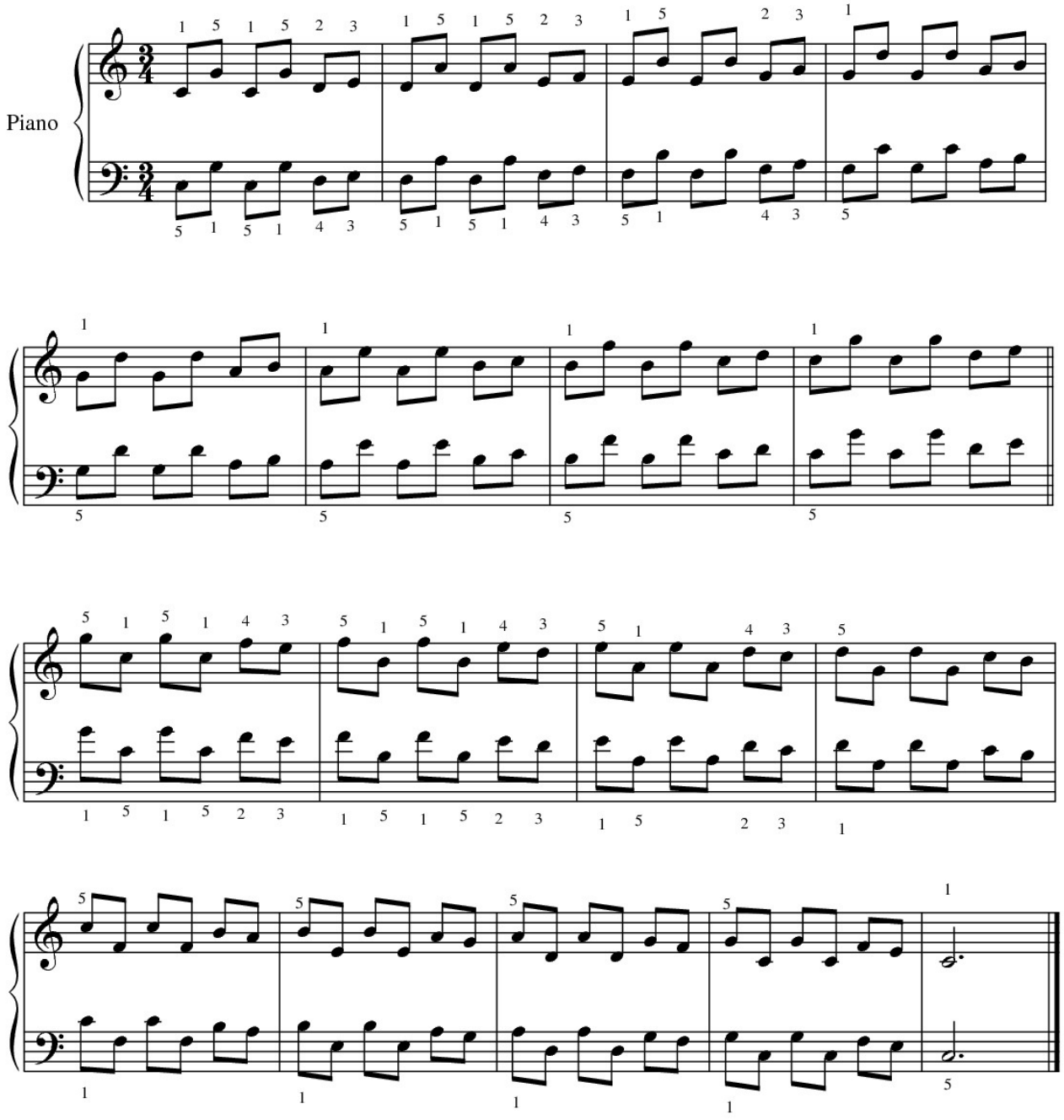
Five finger exercise

Practicing Intervals-Fifth

Ex. 1



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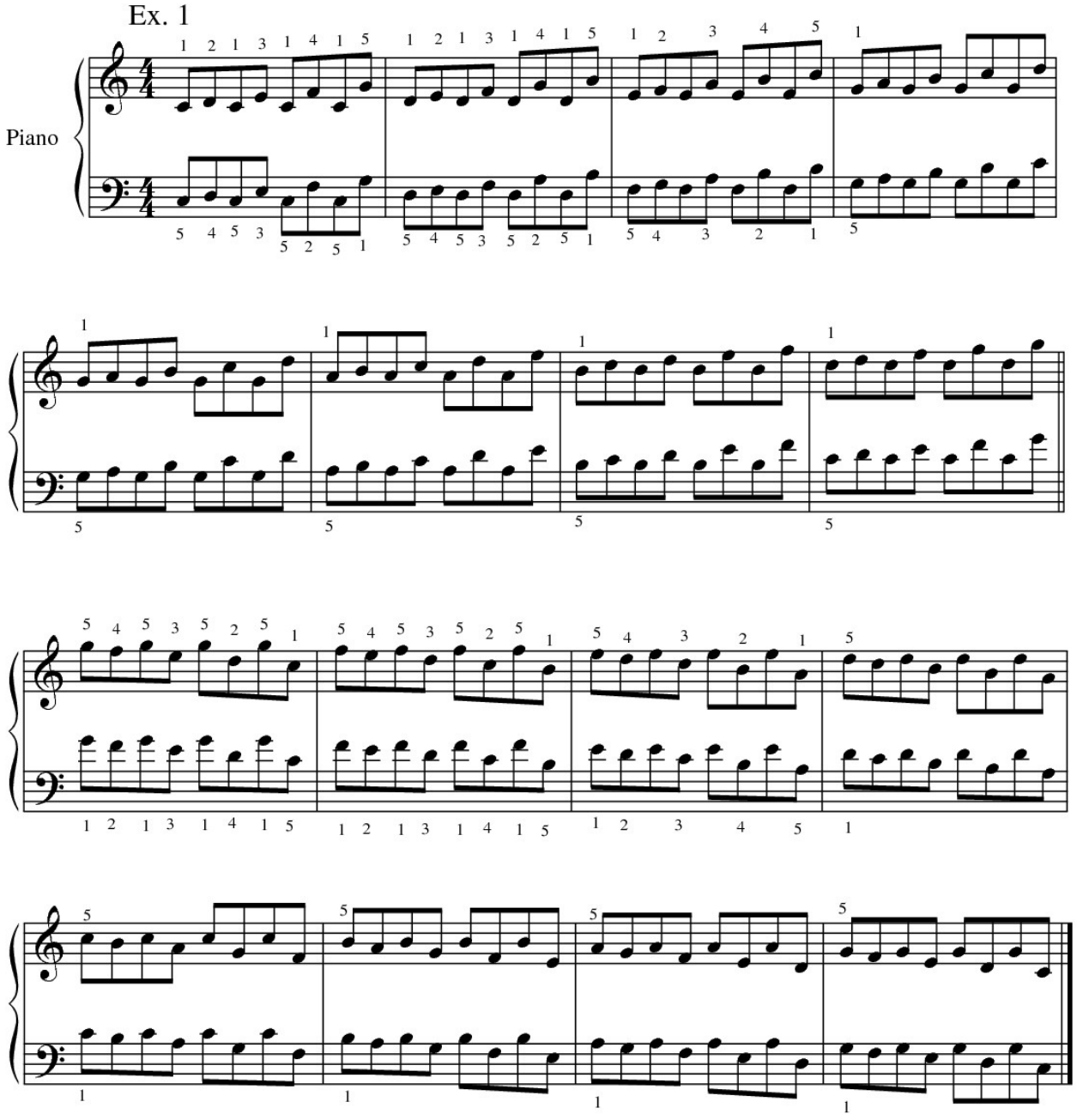
Five finger exercise

Mixing the Intervals



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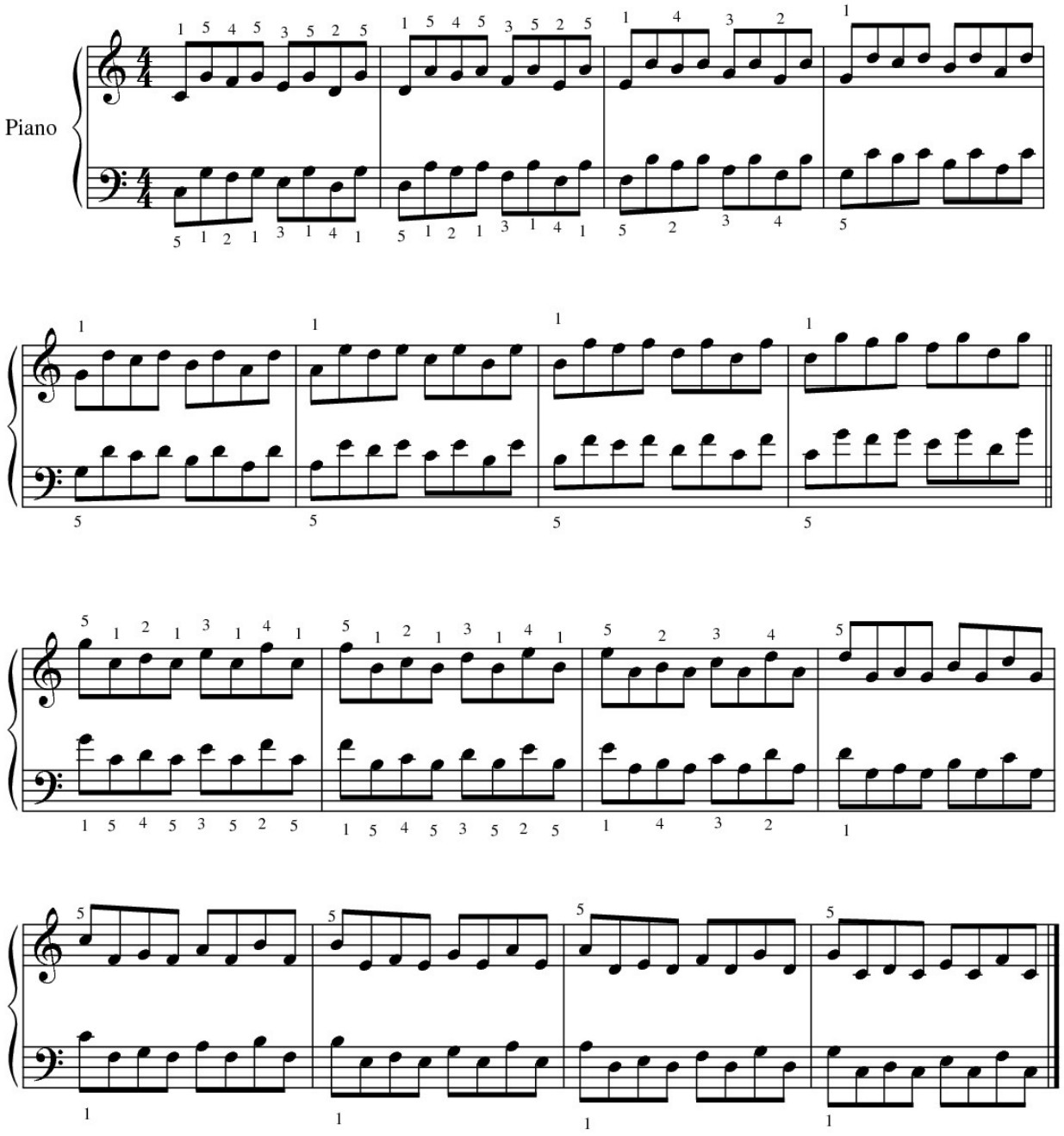
Five finger exercise

Mixing the Intervals

Ex. 2



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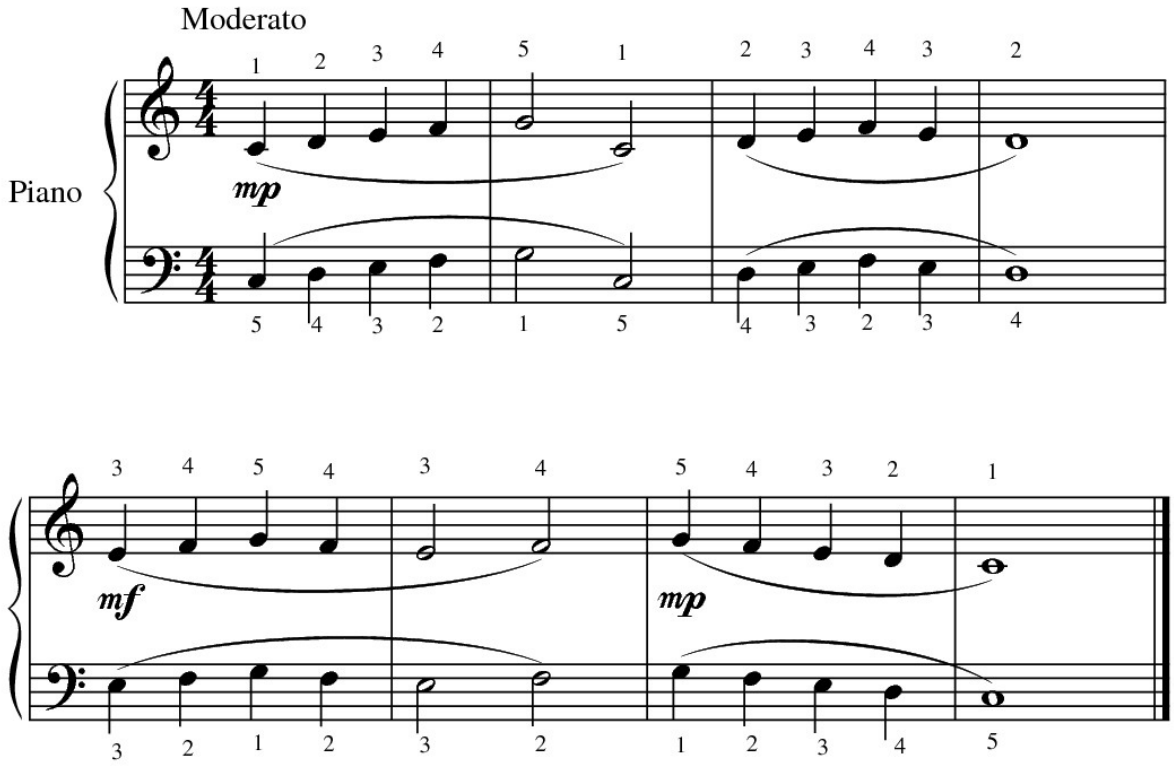
Practicing Legato only

Hands are playing together

Ex. 2



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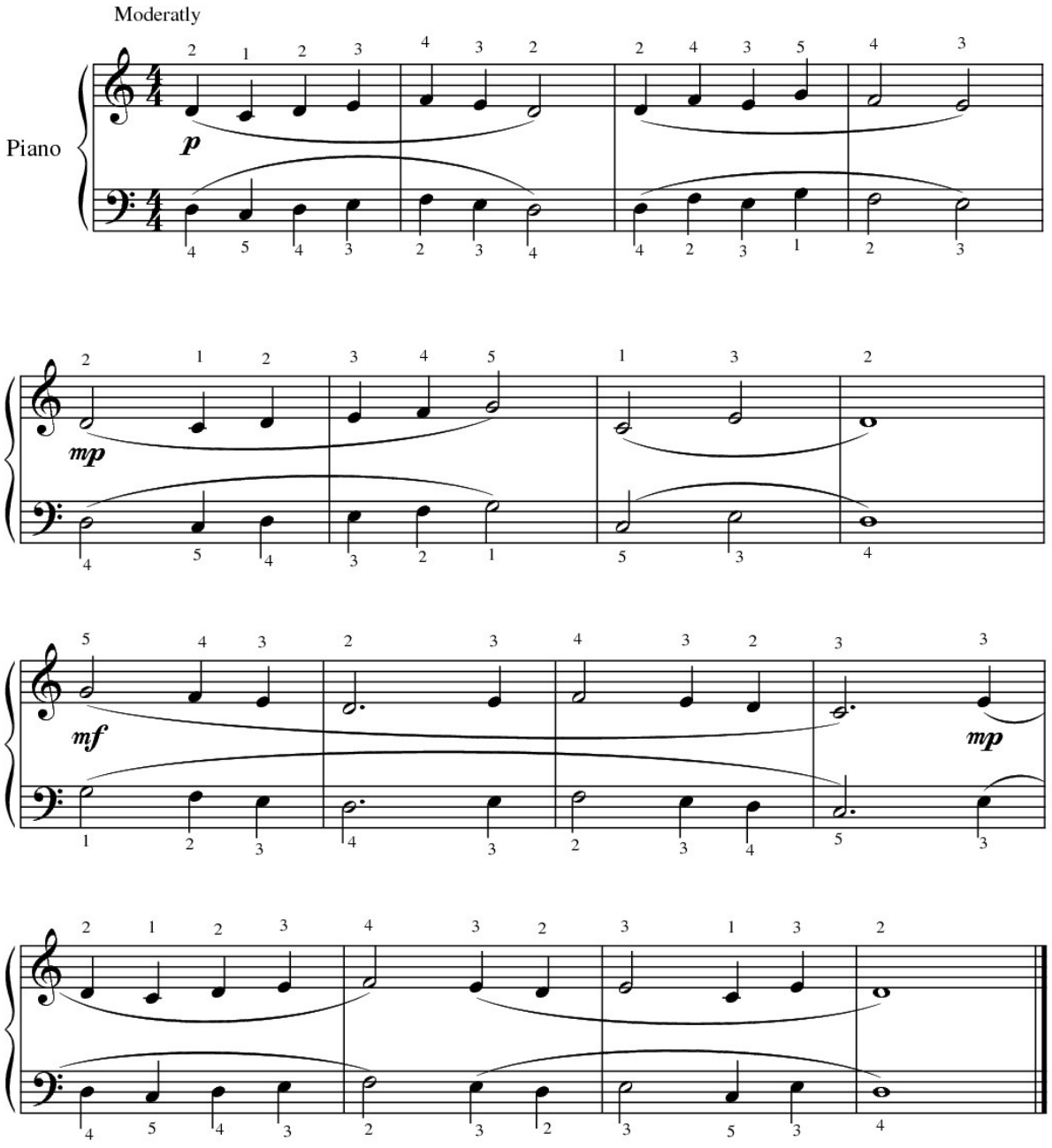
Practicing Legato only

Hands are playing together

Ex. 2



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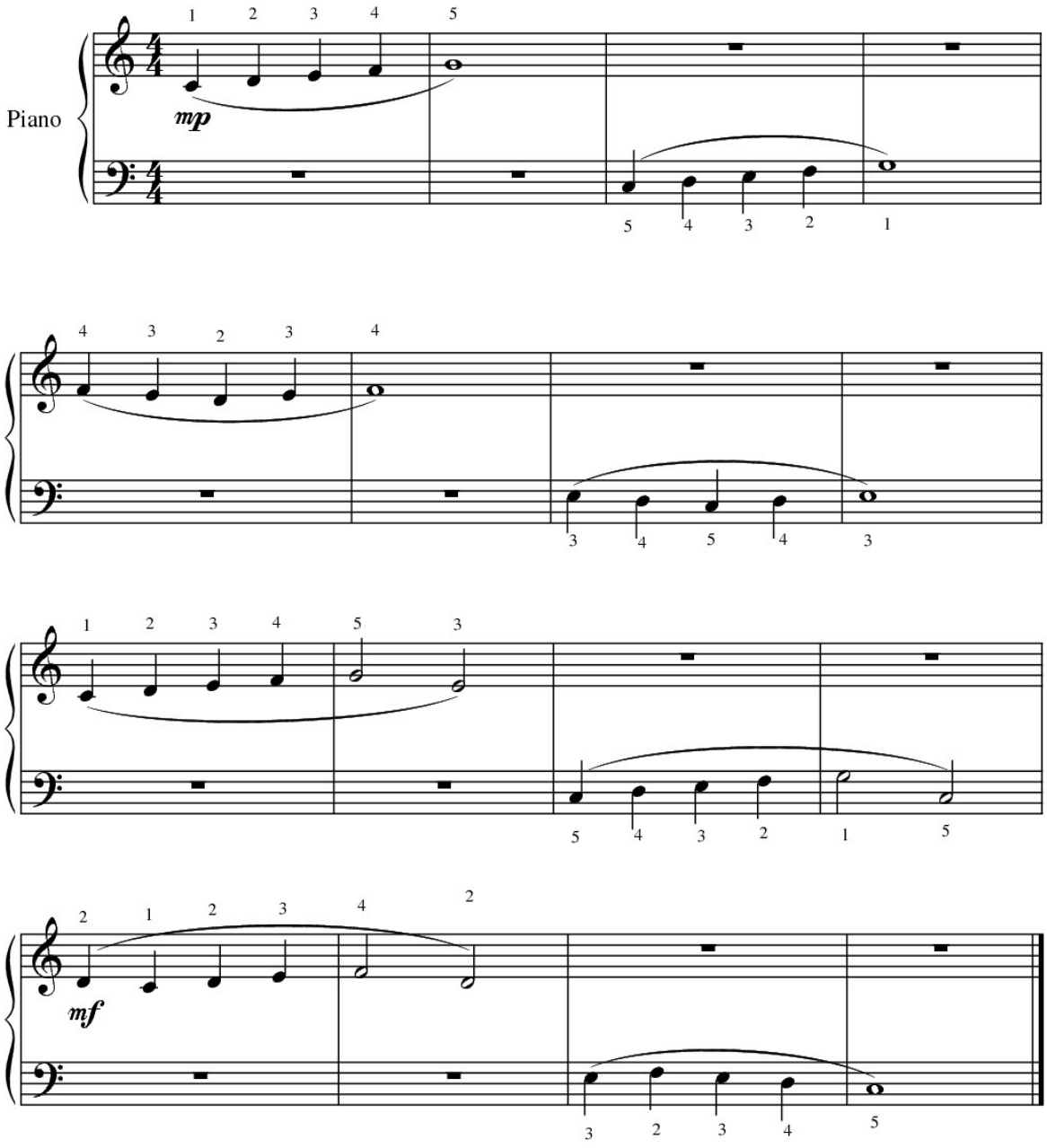
Practicing Legato only

Hands are playing separately

Ex. 1



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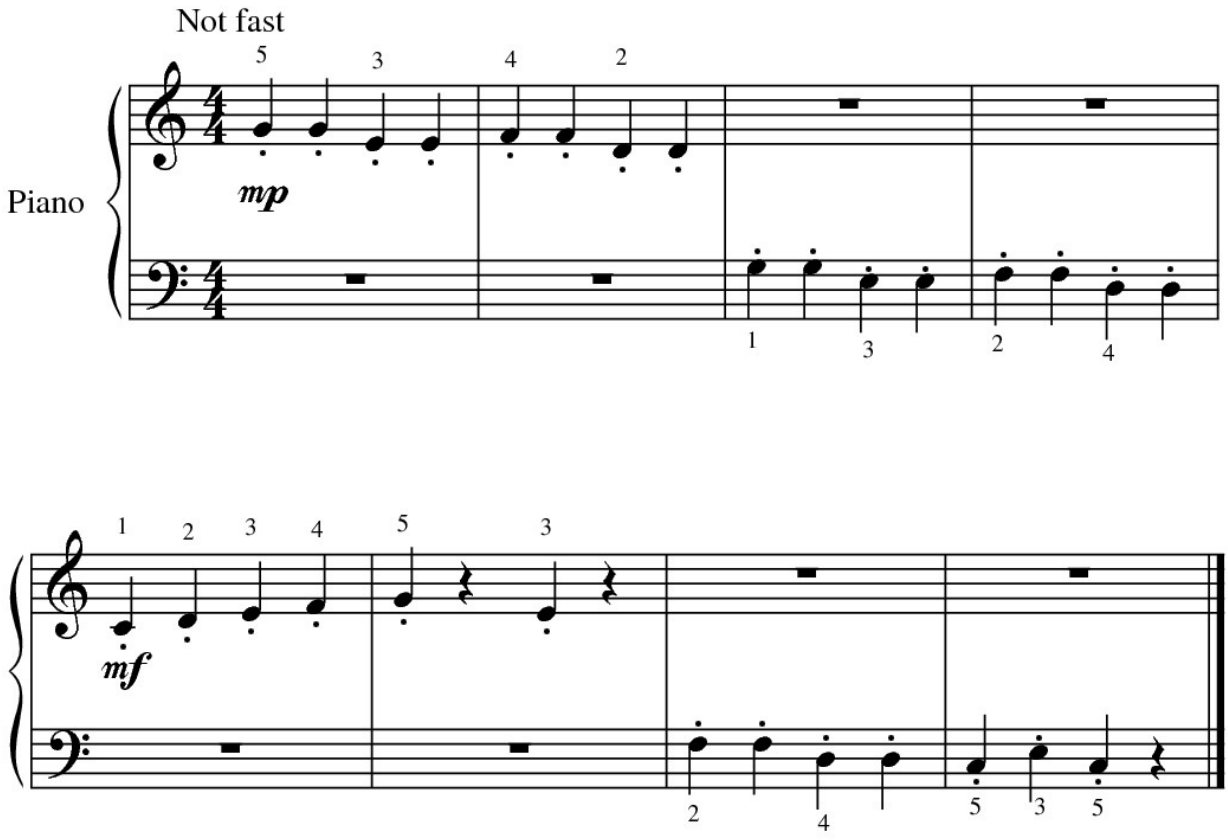
Practicing Staccato only

Hands are playing separately

Ex. 1



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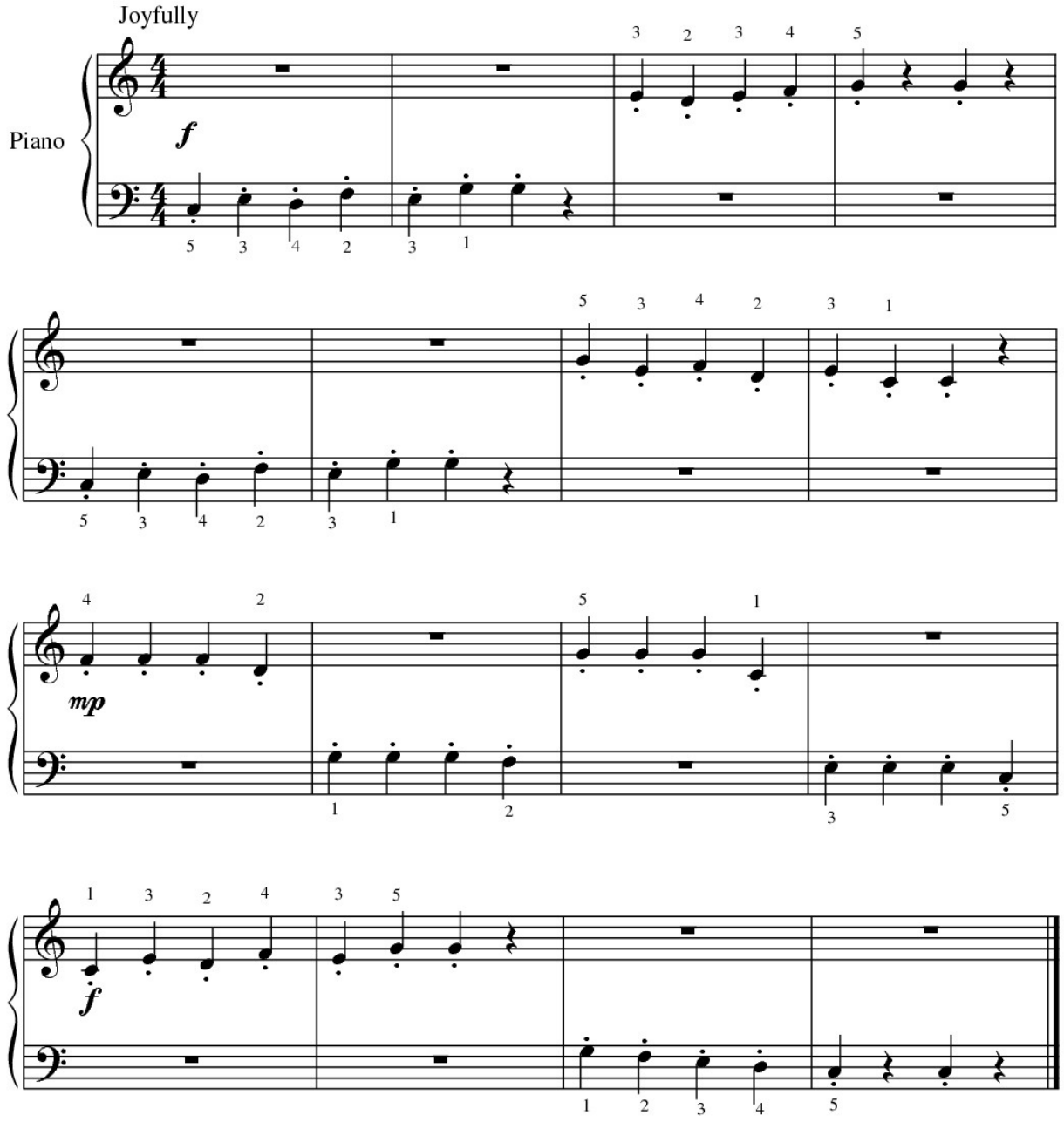
Practicing Staccato only

Hands are playing separately

Ex. 2



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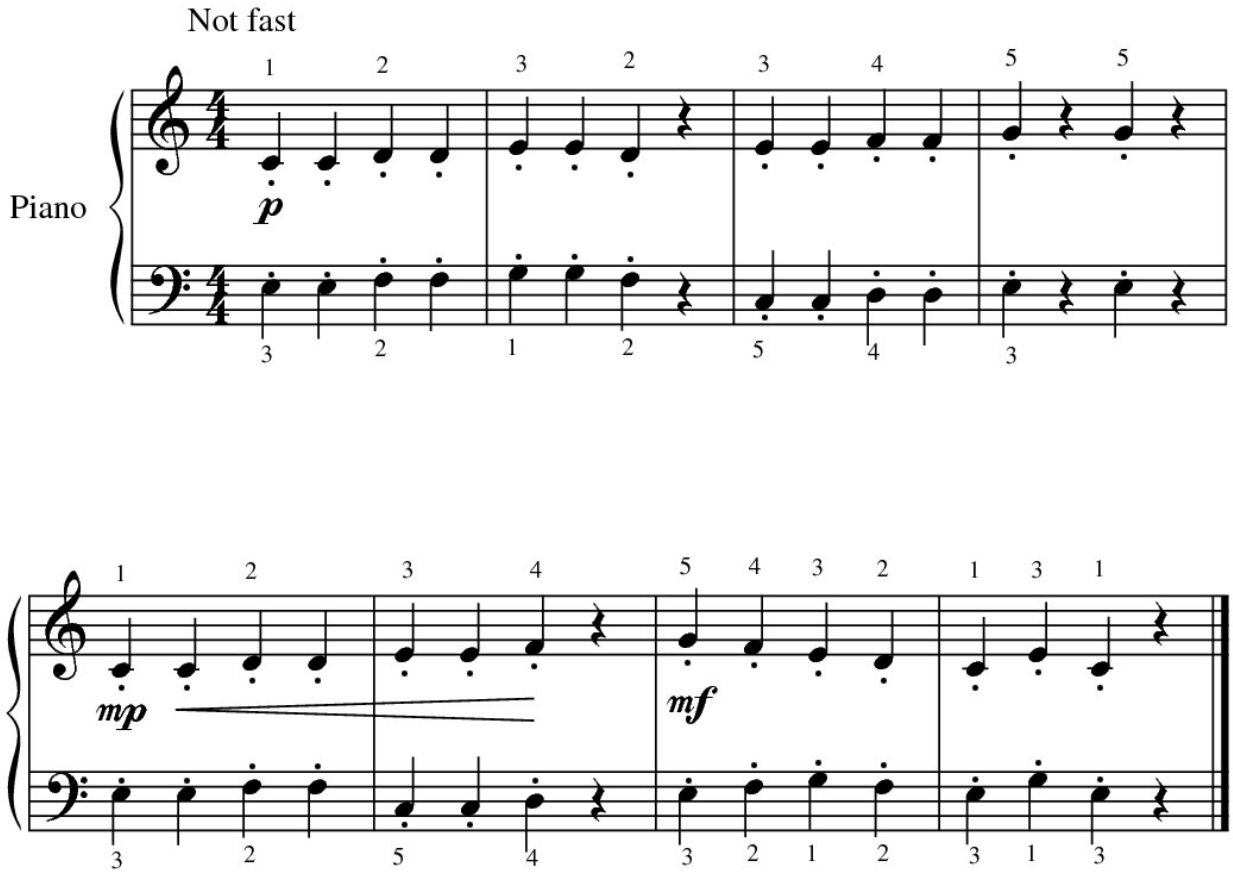
Practicing Staccato only

Hands are playing together

Ex.1



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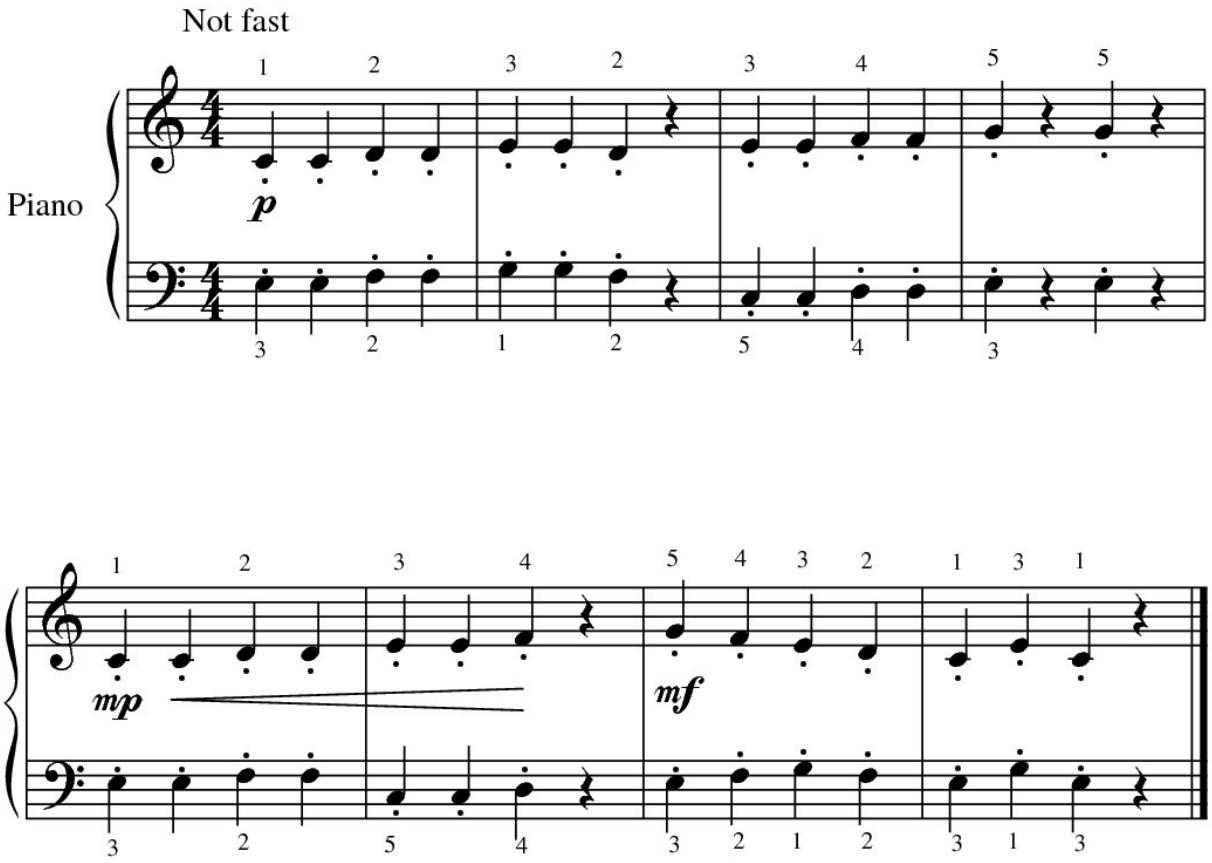
Practicing Staccato only

Hands are playing together

Ex.1



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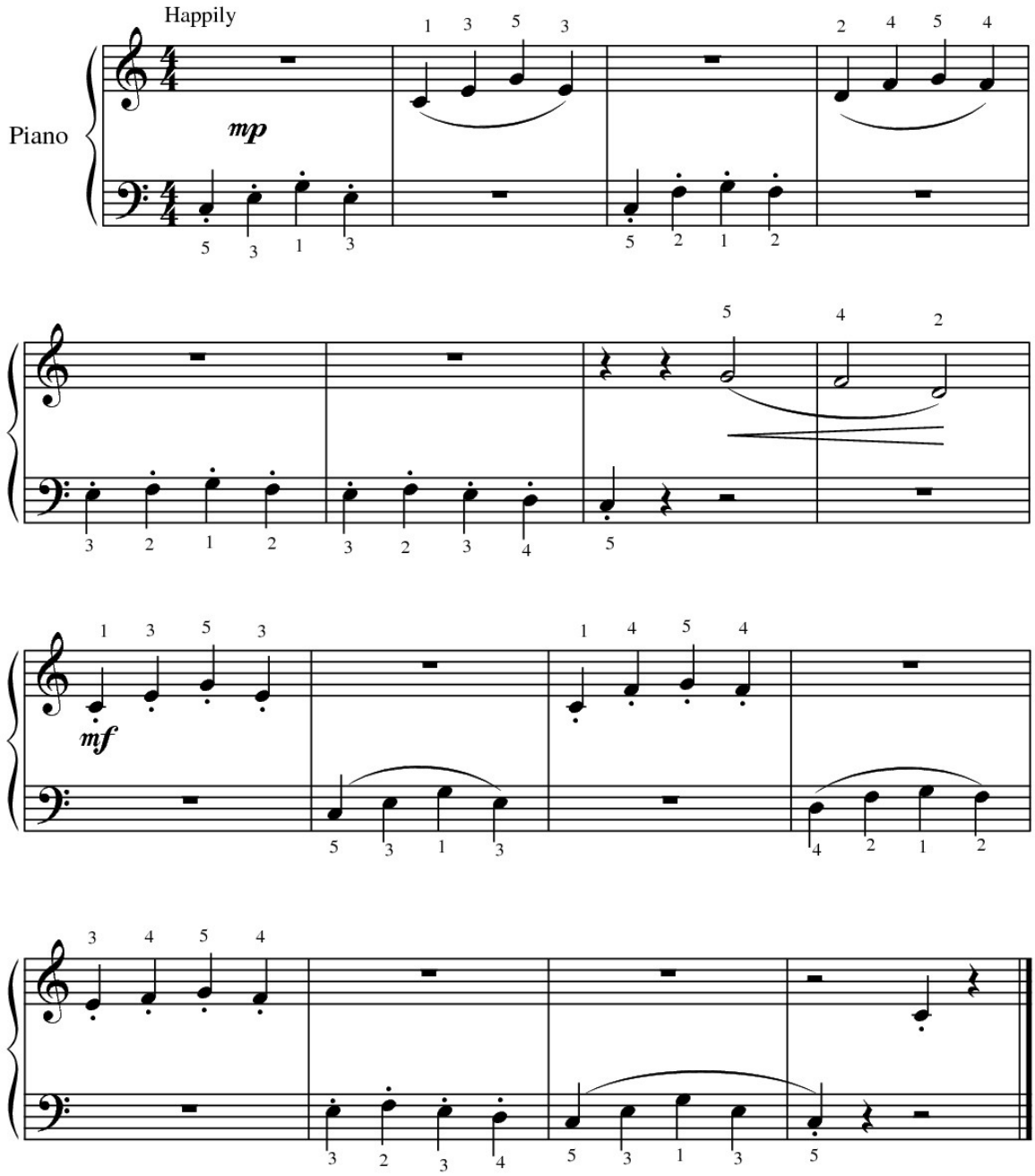
Mixing Staccato & Legato

Hands are playing separately

Ex.1



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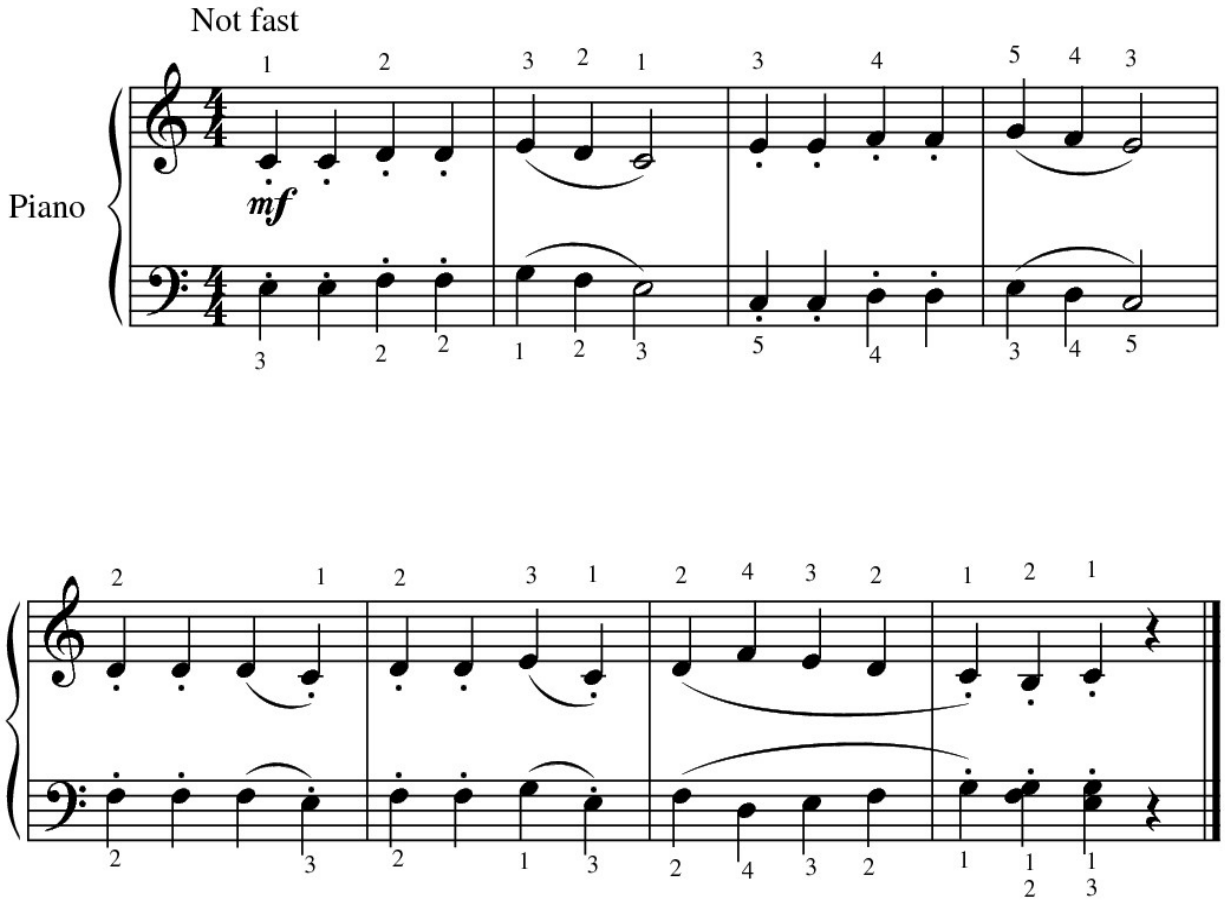
Mixing Staccato & Legato

Hands are playing together

Ex.1



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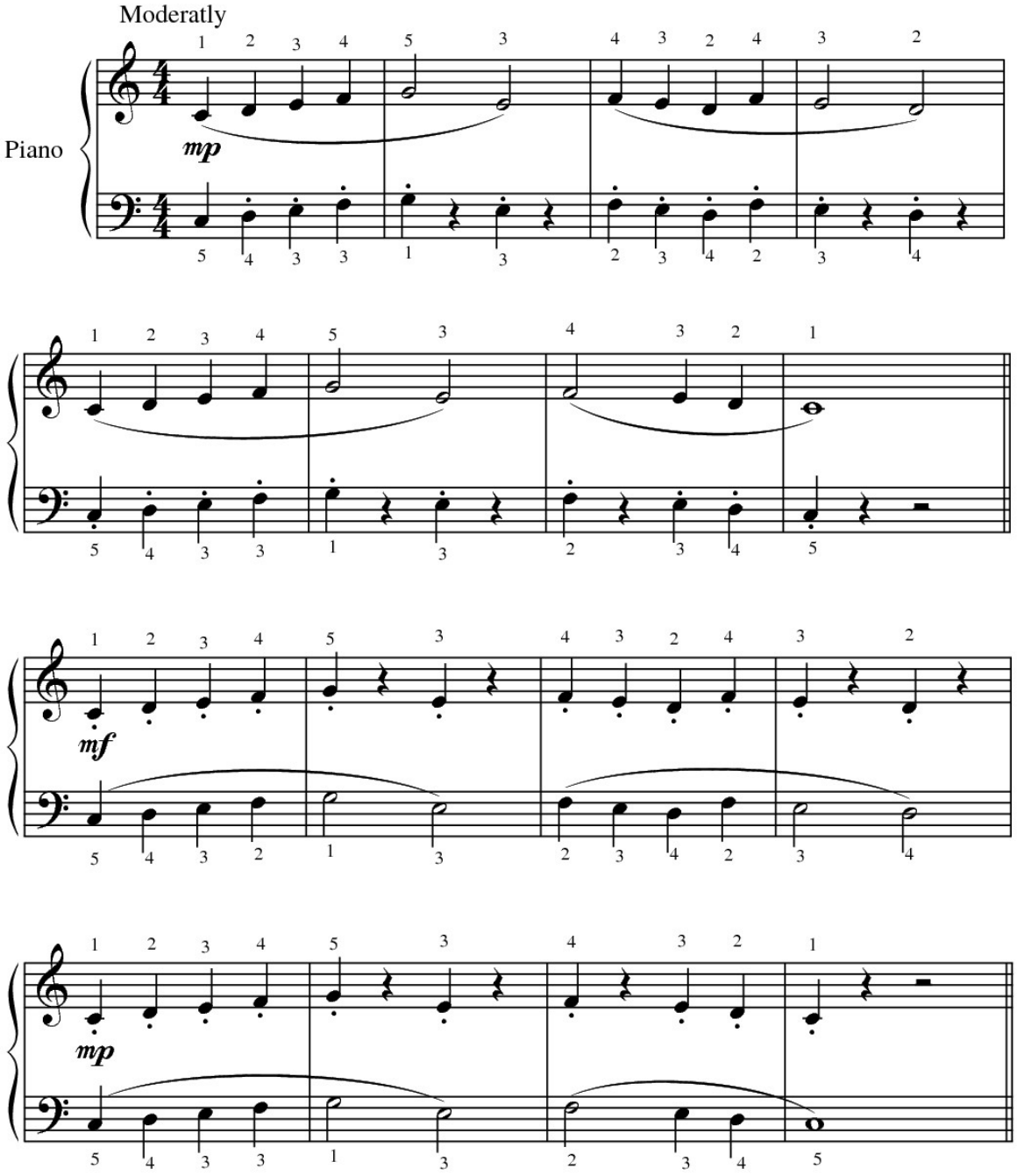
Mixing Staccato & Legato

One hand plays Legato while the other one plays Staccato

Ex. 1



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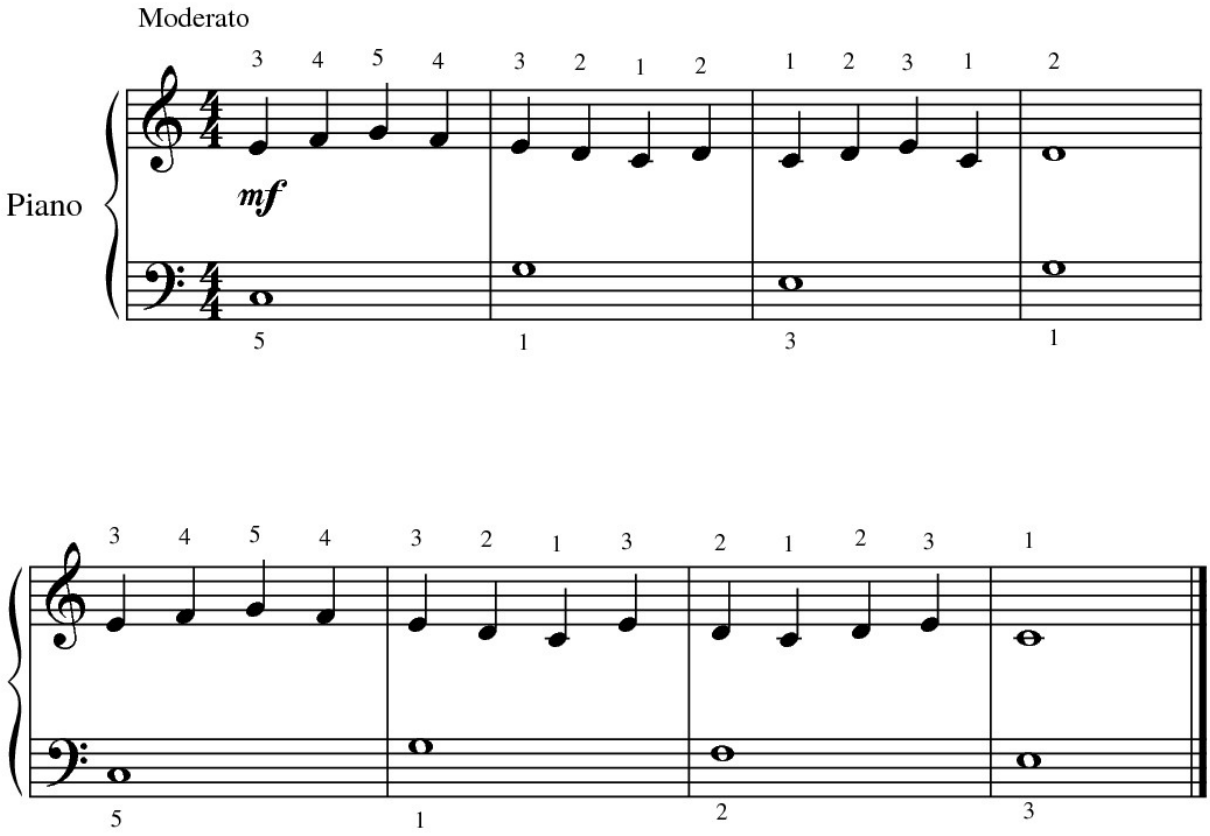
Coordination between hands

Four notes in right hand against one note in left



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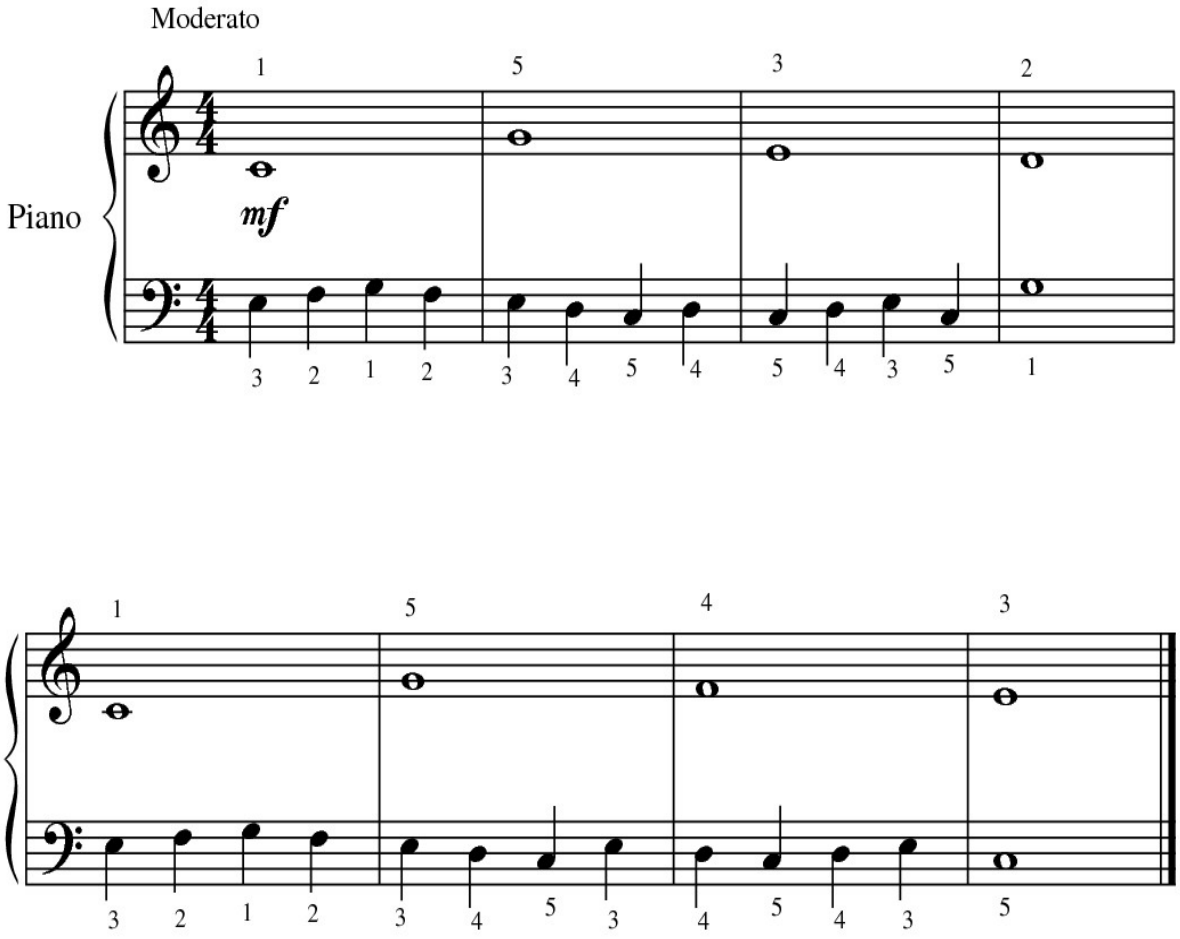
Coordination between hands

Four notes in left hand against one note in right



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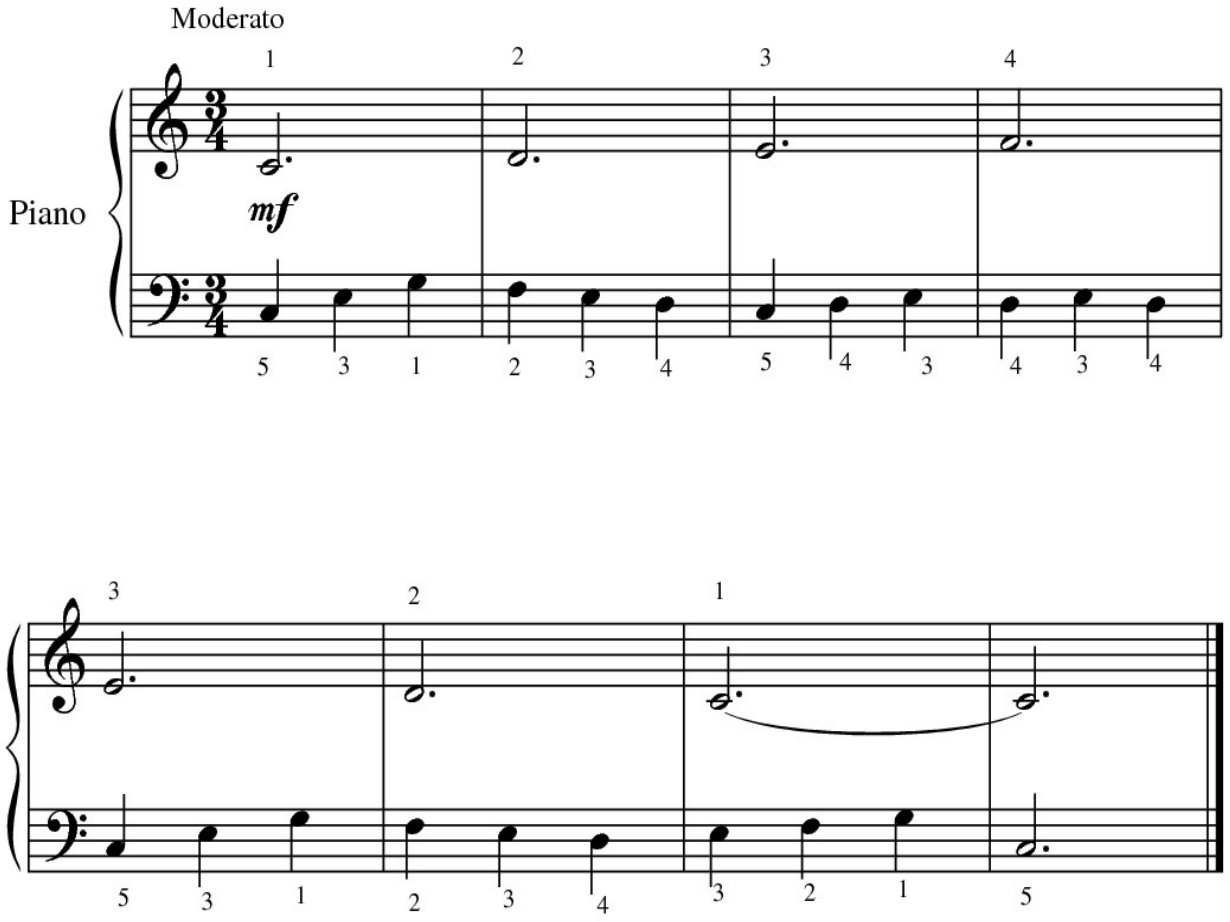
Coordination between hands

Three notes in left hand against one note in right



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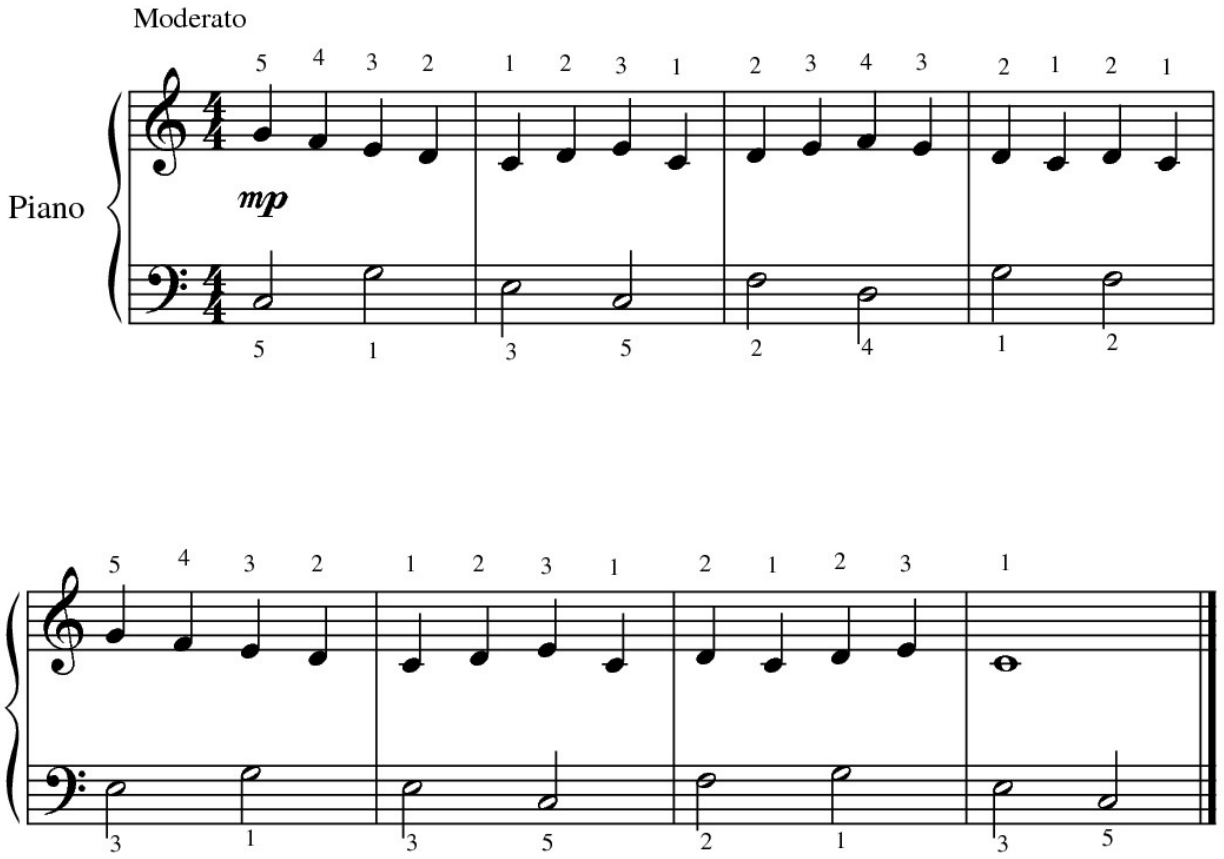
Coordination between hands

Two notes in right hand against one note in left



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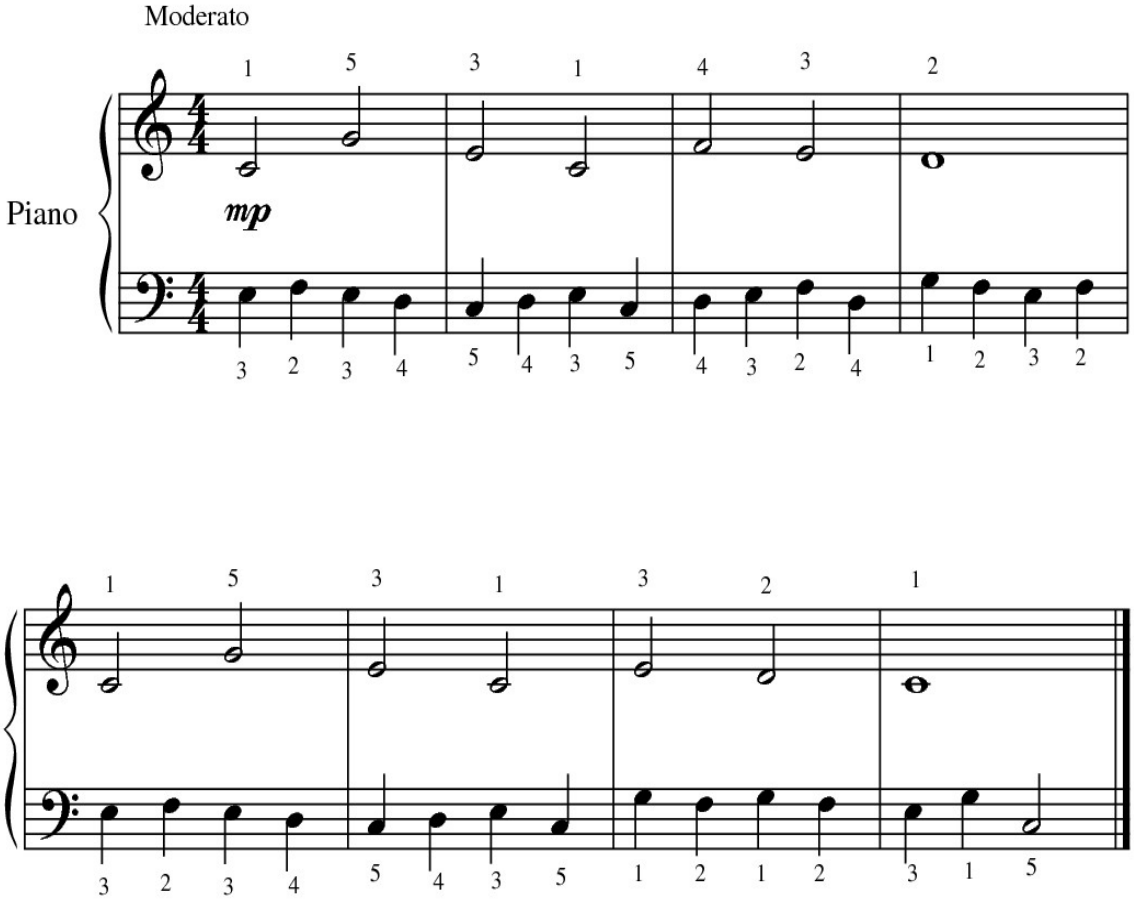
Coordination between hands

Two notes in left hand against one note in right



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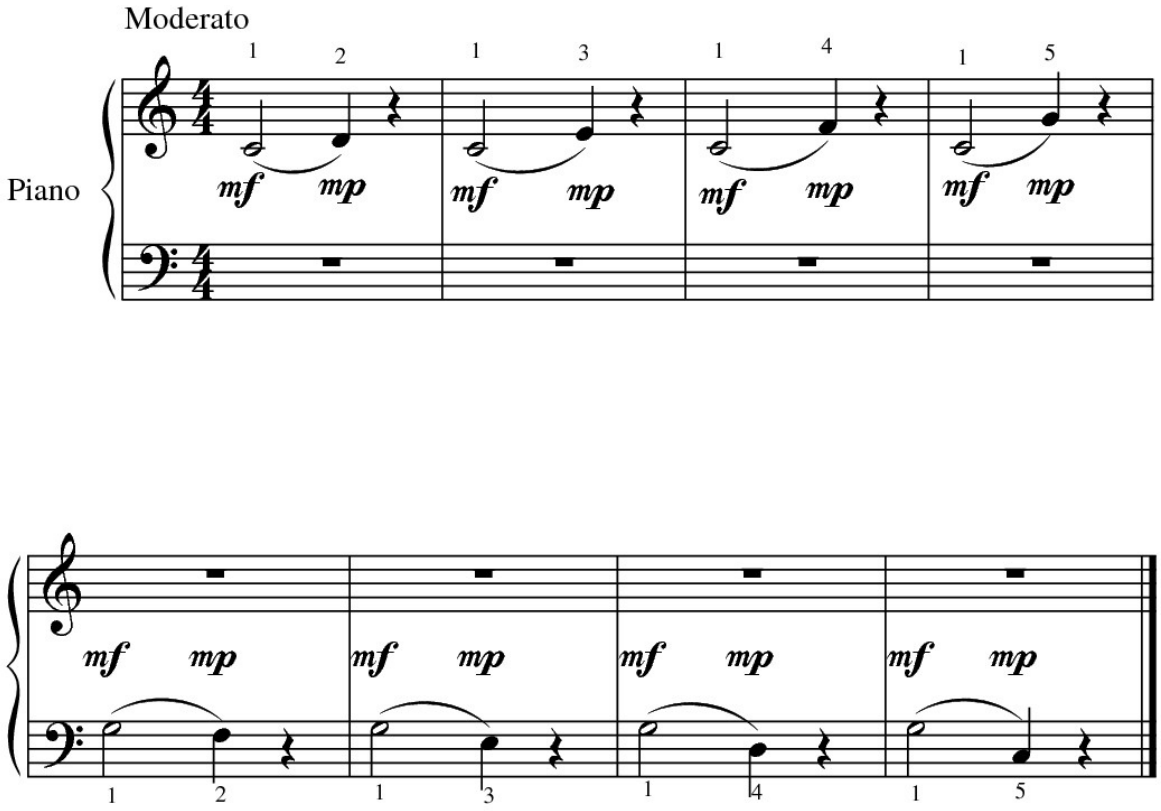
Two Note Phrase

Hands are playing separately

Ex. 1



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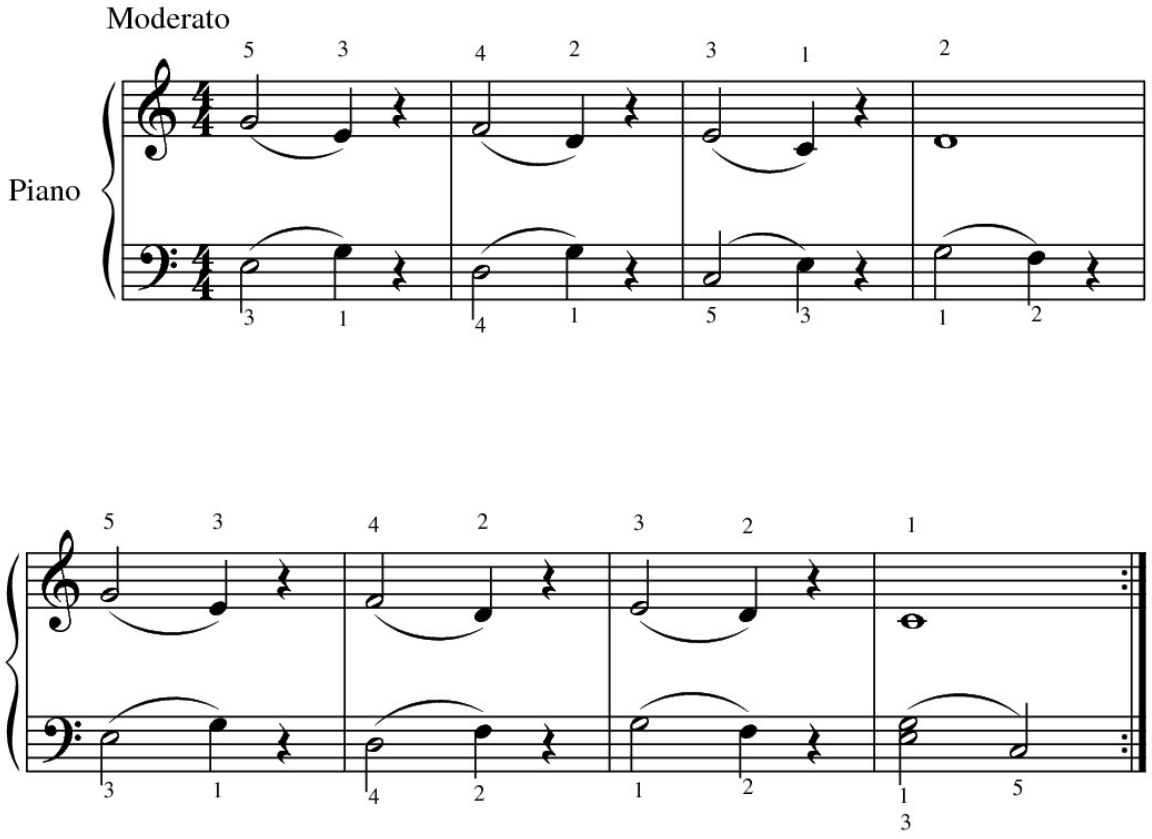
Two Note Phrase

Hands are playing together

Ex.2



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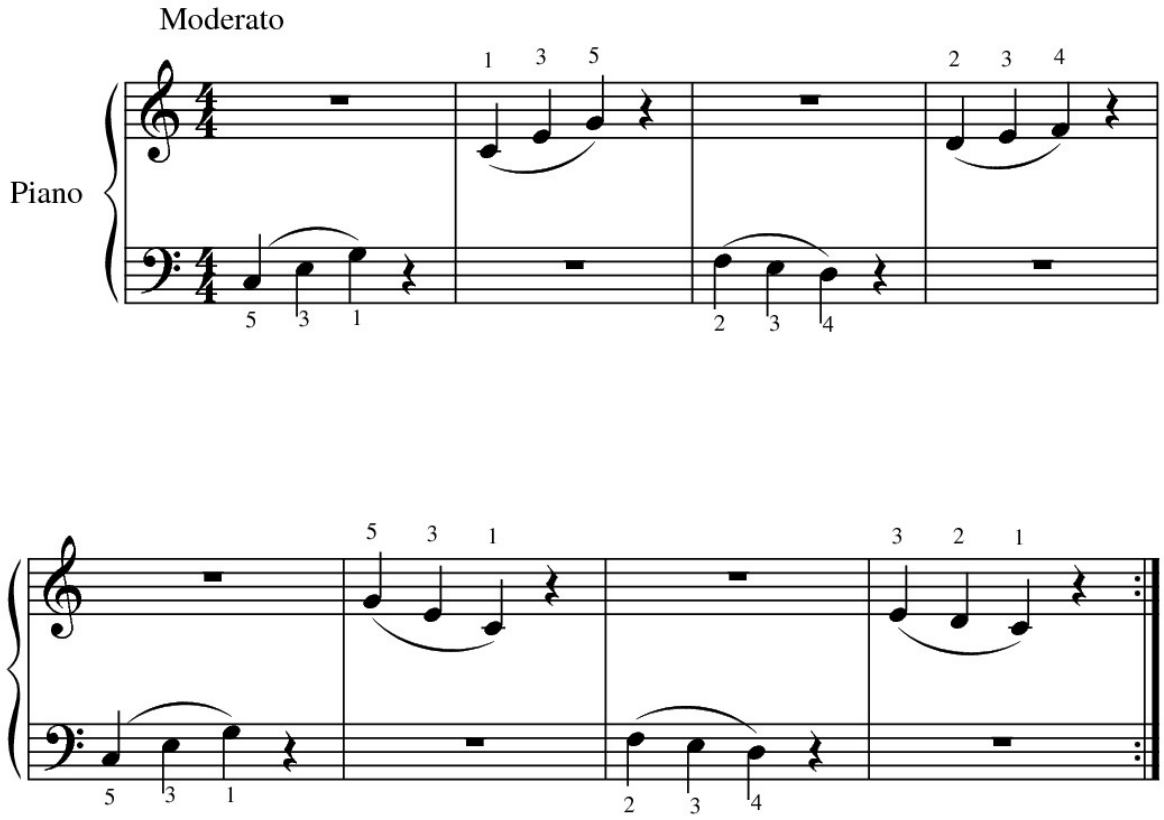
Three Note Phrase

Hands are playing separately

Ex.1

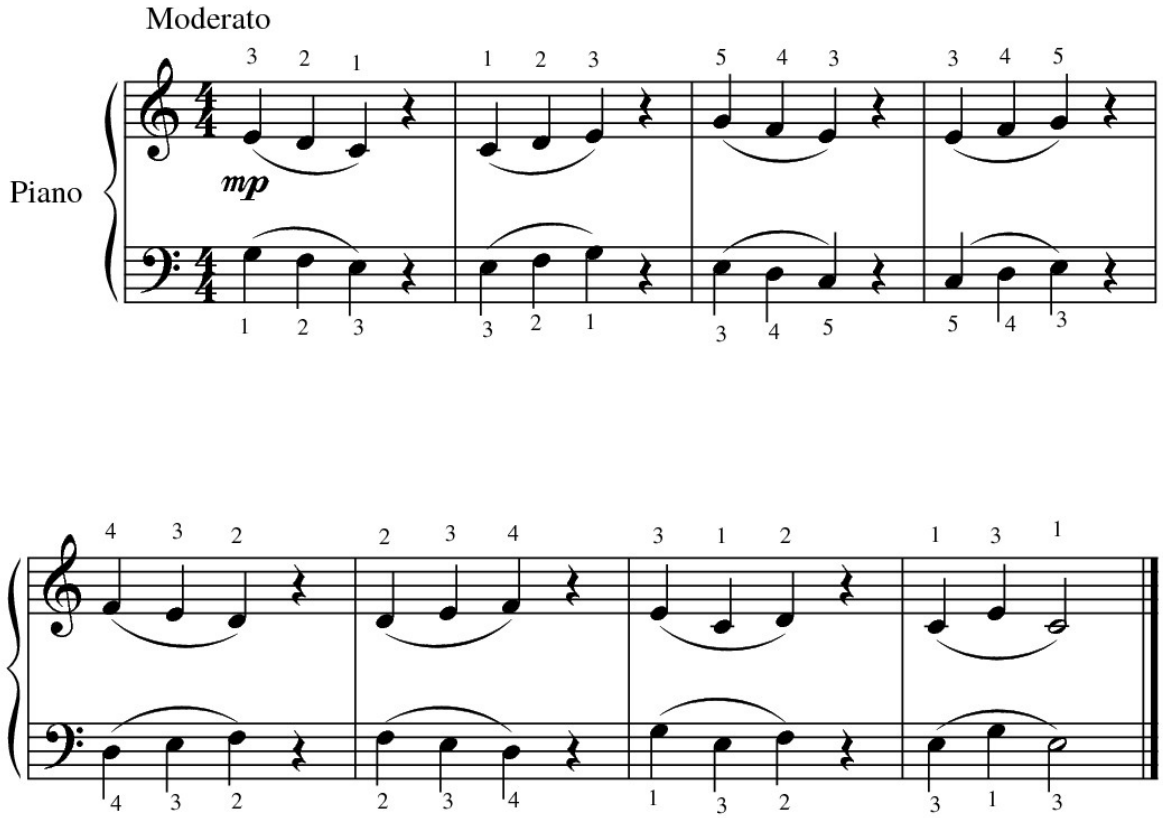


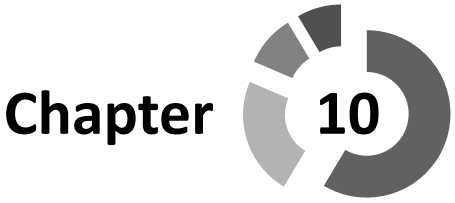
PROPERTY OF TENSTRINGS MUSIC INSTITUTE NIGERIA – www.tenstrings.org

Three Note Phrase

Hands are playing together

Ex.2





Creating & Playing Piano Chords

❖ Introduction to Chords

The *basic piano chords* are going to be very important to you in learning to play the piano. When you learn to understand chords you will be better able to read music and understand how to play the piano much easier.

Construction of Chords
Chords are made from musical intervals. A chord is composed of three parts. They are the root note, which gives you the name of the chord, a Major third or minor third and a Perfect fifth, Augmented fifth or a diminished fifth.

A Major chord has a root, Major third and Perfect fifth. A minor chord has a root, minor third and Perfect fifth. An Augmented chord has a root, Major third and Augmented fifth. A diminished chord has a root, minor third and diminished fifth. Please refer to the section on intervals in Part 1 for more details.

Making a Chord
Now that you know the basic construction of each type of chord, you can being to create a chord. Major chords are the easiest to create. Simply choose any note as the root note. Now you choose the Major third, which is simply three notes from the root note. Now finish the chord with a Perfect fifth note which is five notes from the root note. An example would be a D chord. D is the root, F is the Major third and A is the Perfect fifth.
As you move into minor chords, diminished and augmented chords the notes you will use will include not only the white keys, but the black keys on your keyboard. It is simplest to start learning chords with the Major chords. For more information check out the Piano Basics page.

Playing Around with a Chord
Most of the time you will be playing a chord with all three notes together. Using our example, a D chord, you would play D, F and A together to form the chord. However, when you start looking at how chords are used in music you will see that they are not always played together. Sometimes you may just use two of the notes or you may play the notes separately.
You can play around with a chord to see all the different ways that you can use the notes within the chord together and separately to create a nice sound. Chords are usually used in the bass clef and played with the left hand, but they can also be use in the treble clef and played with the right hand. Try playing chords with both hands and experimenting to see what you can do with chords.

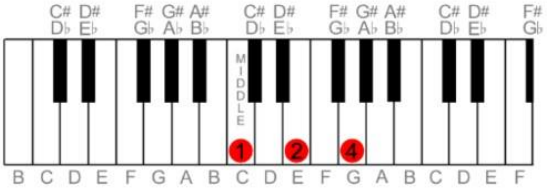
The Importance of Chords
Have you ever been listening to someone play the piano and they strike a note that doesn't seem to

sound right? Part of the importance of chords is helping you to see how the notes harmonize or go together. This is especially important for you if you are trying to learn to write your own music. You can use chords in many ways to create many wonderful songs on the piano. Through understanding the **basic piano chords** you can begin to see how music is written and become a song writer yourself.

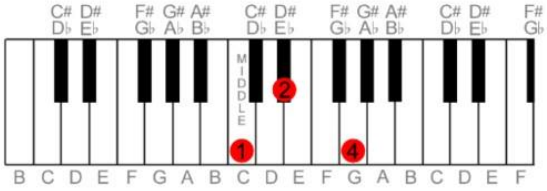
❖ Chord Positions on all Keys

C

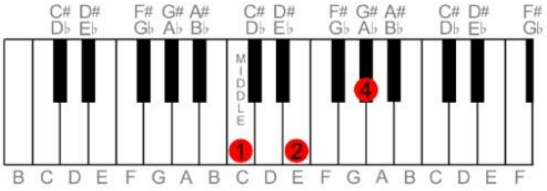
C Major



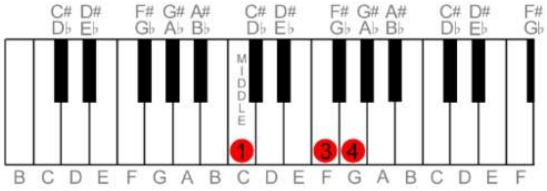
C Minor



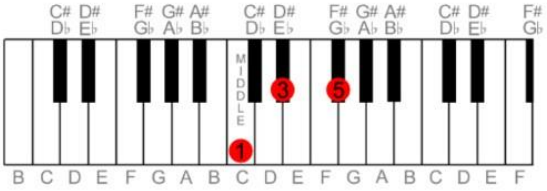
C Augmented Triad



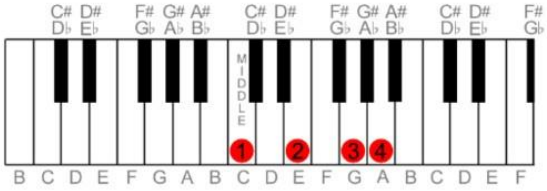
C Suspended 4th



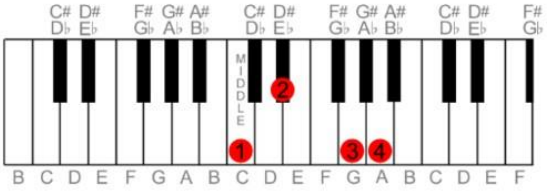
C Diminished Triad



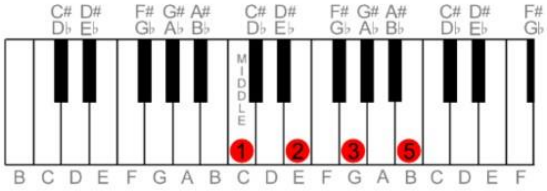
C Major 6th



C Minor 6th



C Major 7th



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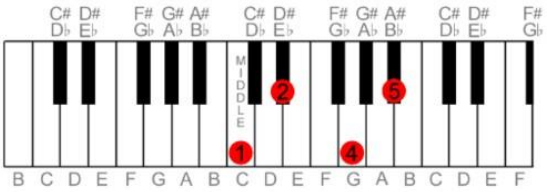
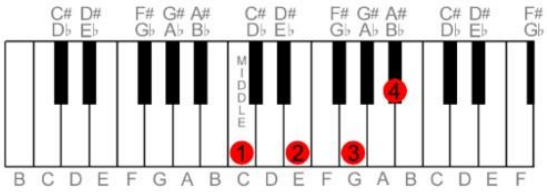
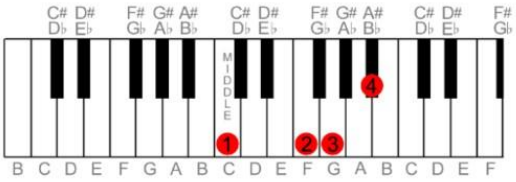


C Dominant 7th

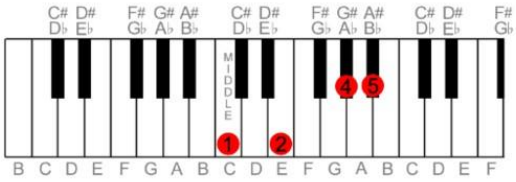


C

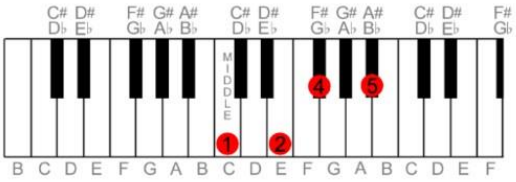
C Dominant 7th sus4



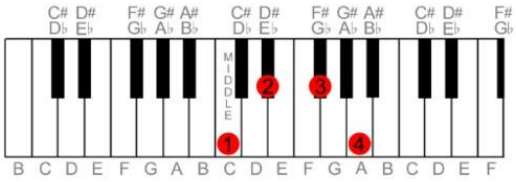
C Dominant 7th Augmented 5th



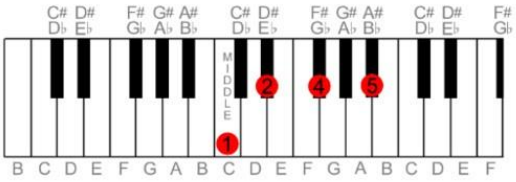
C Dominant 7th Flattened 5th



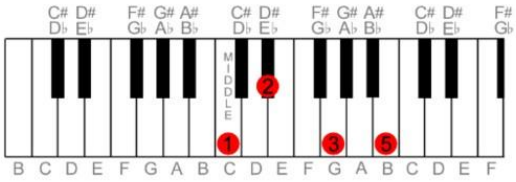
C Diminished 7th



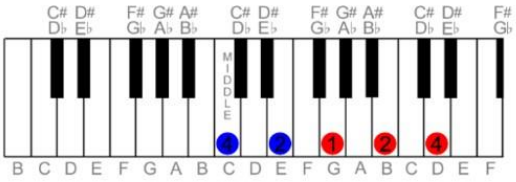
C Minor 7th Flattened 5th



C Minor-Major 7th



C Major 9th



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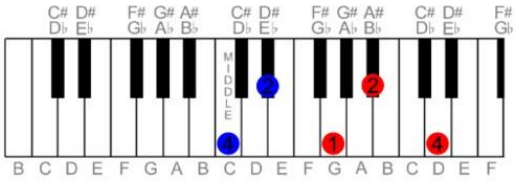

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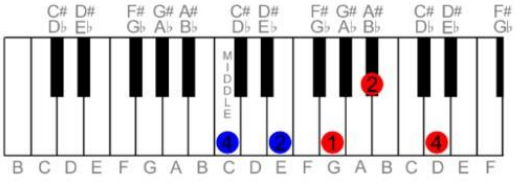

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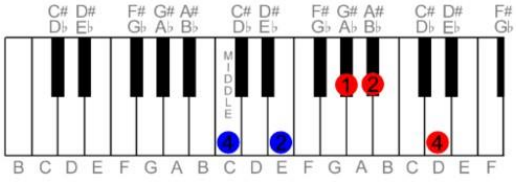

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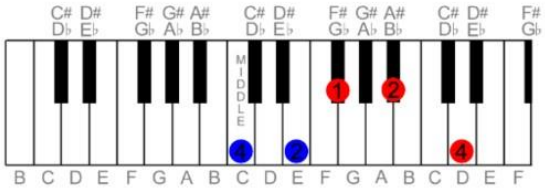
C

C 9th Flattened 5th



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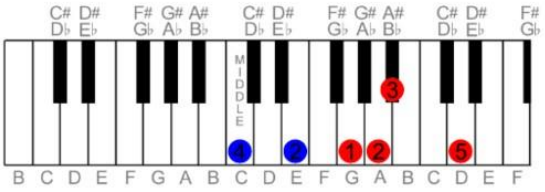
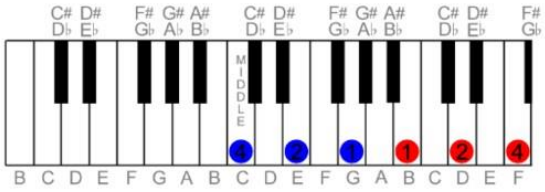


C Major 11th



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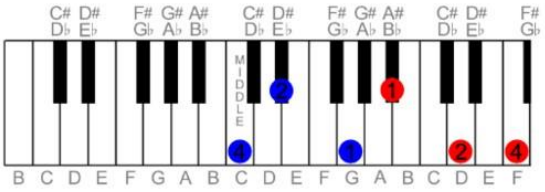

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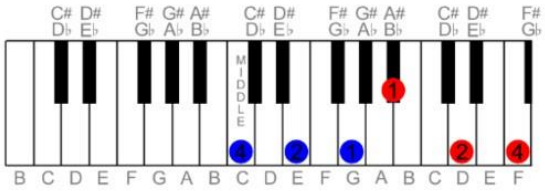

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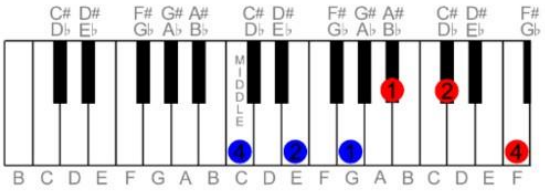
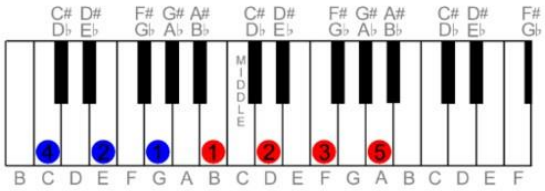
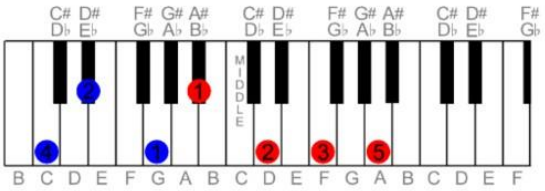


C Major 13th



C Minor 13th



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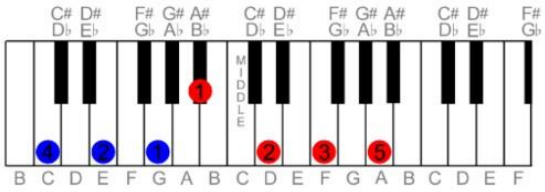

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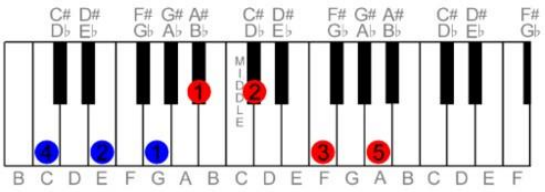
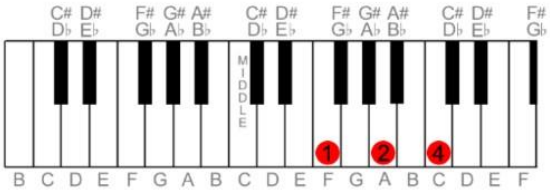
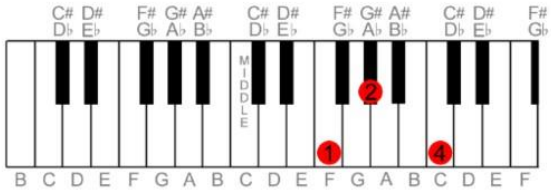


F

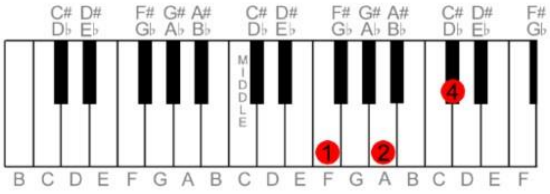
F Major



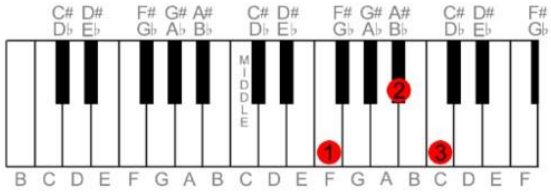
F Minor



F Augmented Triad



F Suspended 4th



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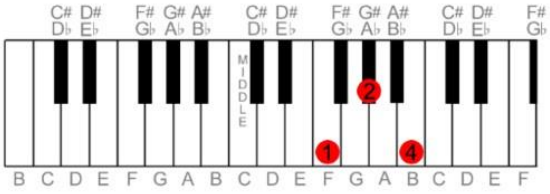
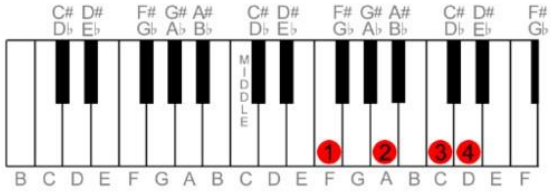


F Major 6th



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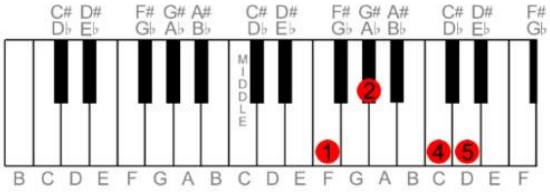

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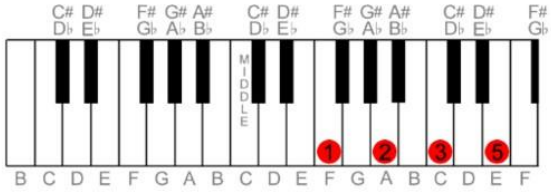

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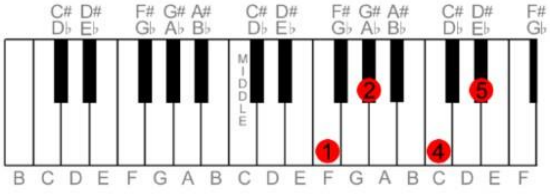

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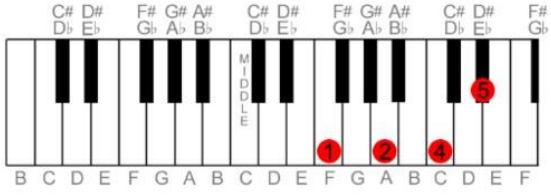

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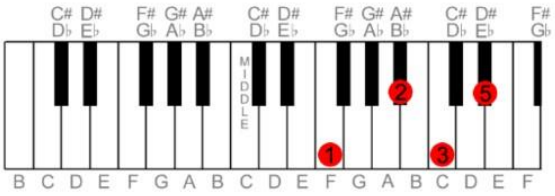

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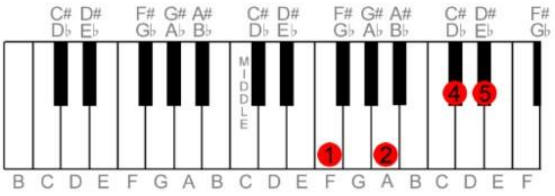

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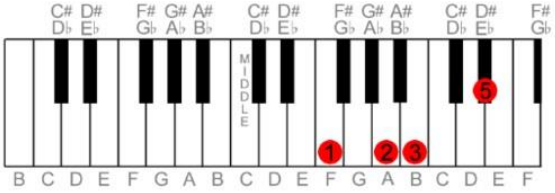

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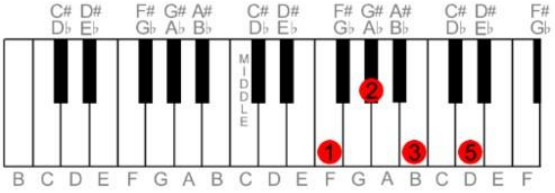

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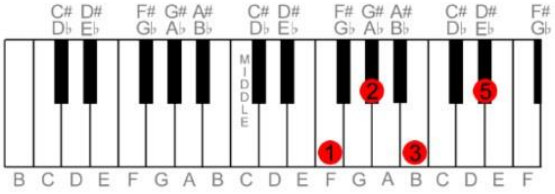

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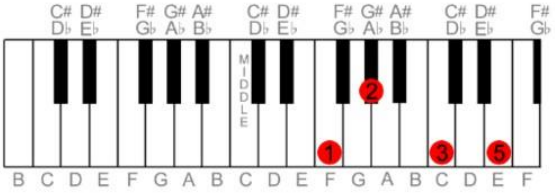

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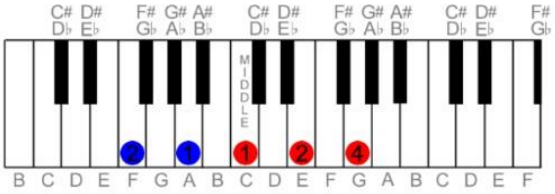

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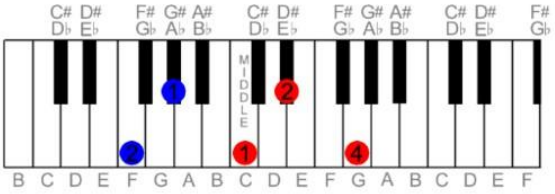

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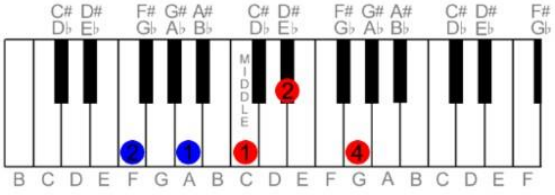

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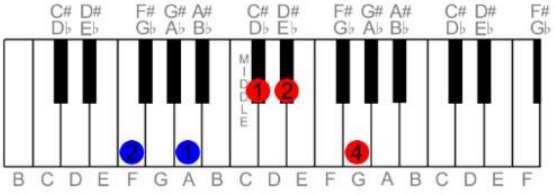

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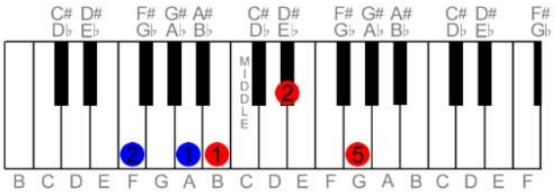

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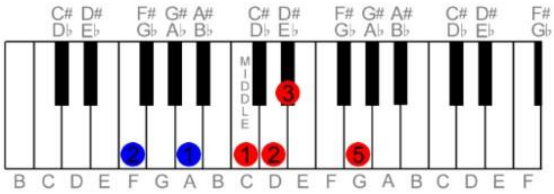

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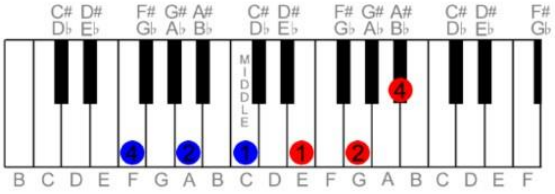

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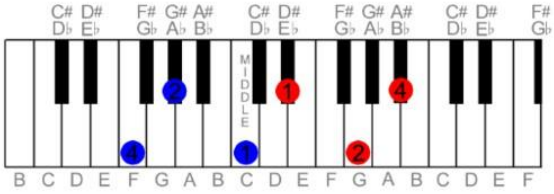

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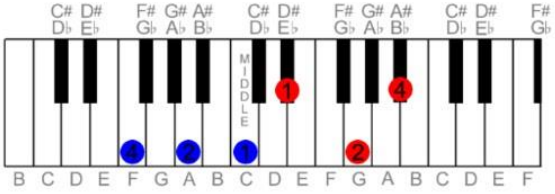

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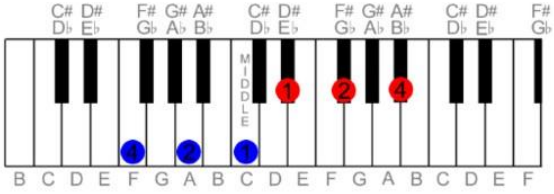

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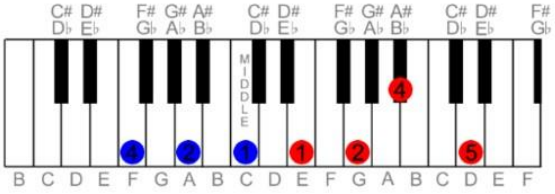

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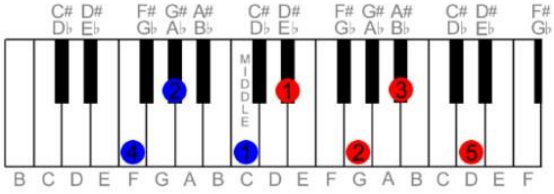

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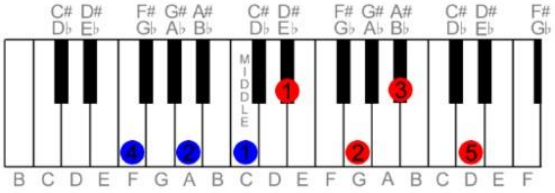

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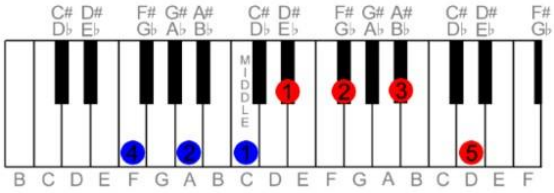
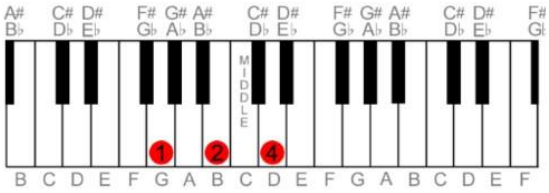
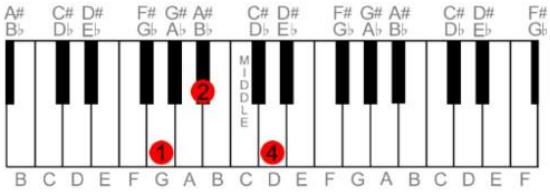


G

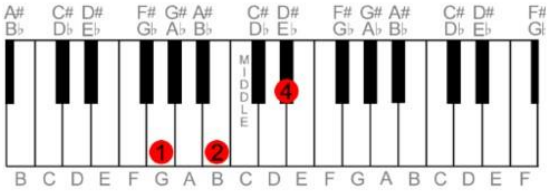
G Major



G Minor



G Augmented Triad



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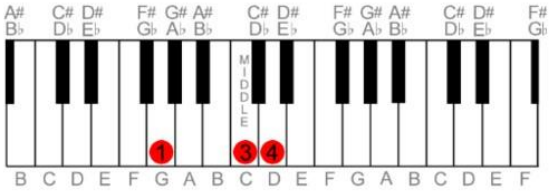

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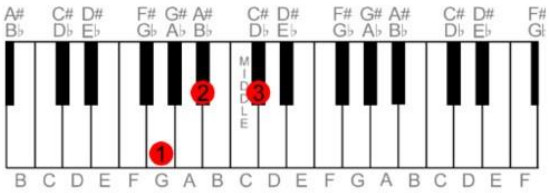

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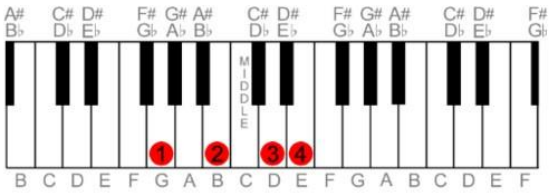

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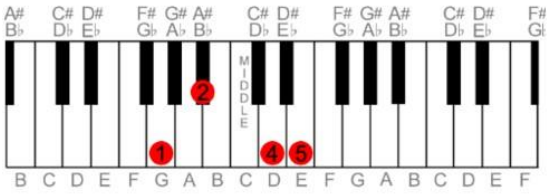
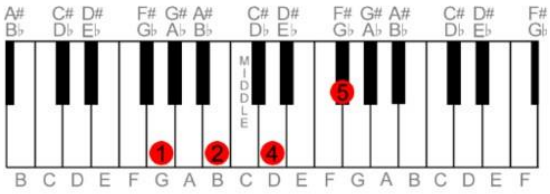


G Major 7th



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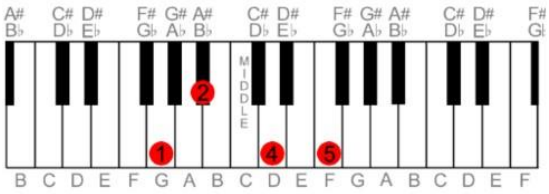

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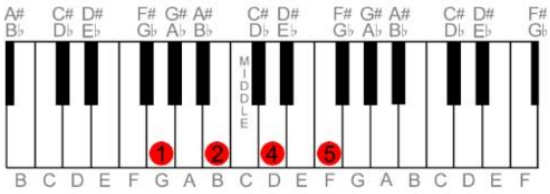

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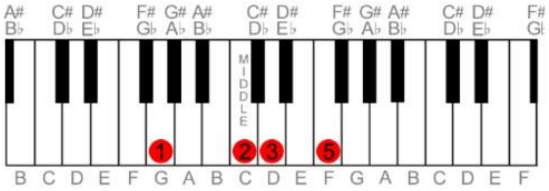
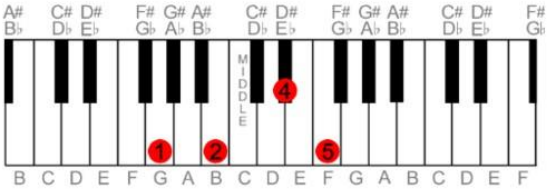
G

G Dominant 7th sus4



G Dominant 7th Augmented 5th



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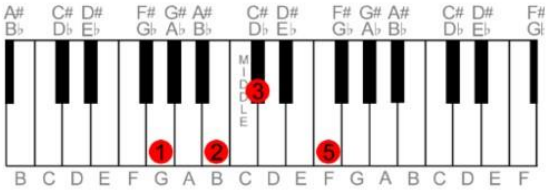
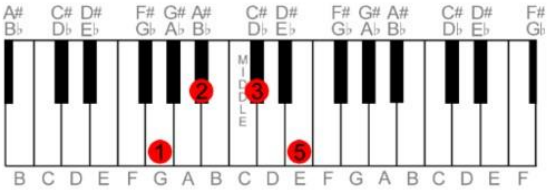


G Diminished 7th



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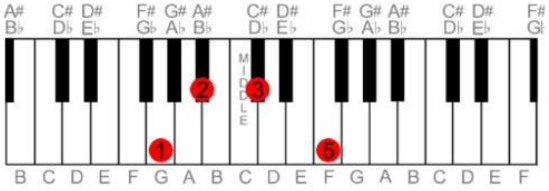

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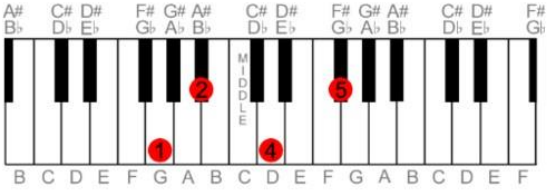
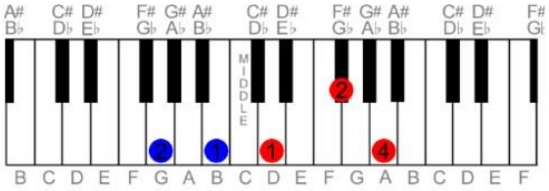


G Major 9th



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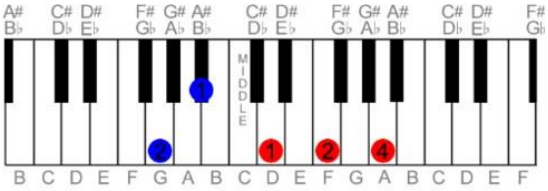

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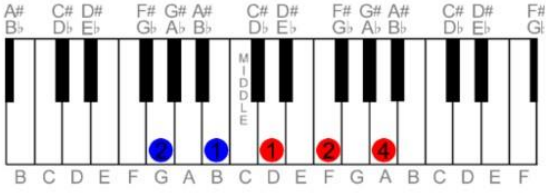

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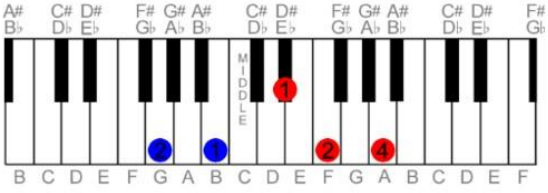

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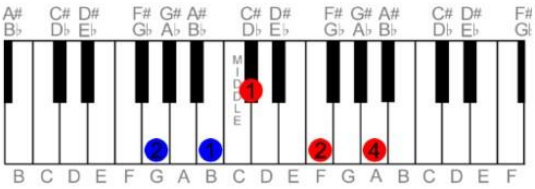
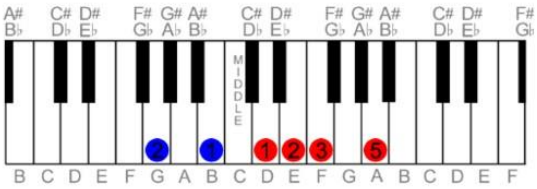
G

G 9th Flattened 5th



G 9th Add 6th



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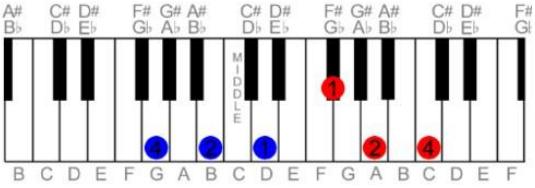

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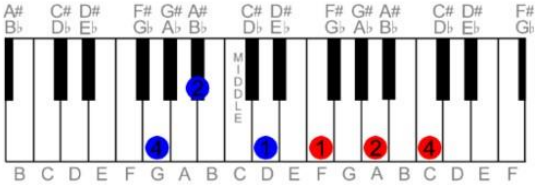

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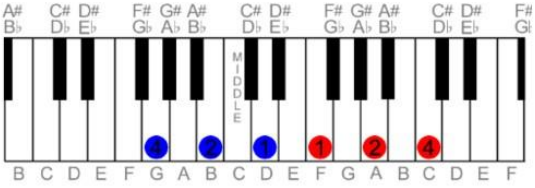

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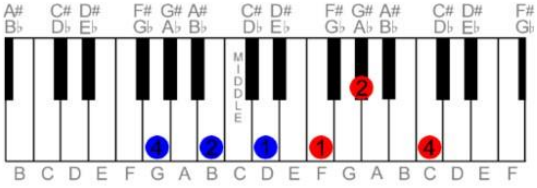

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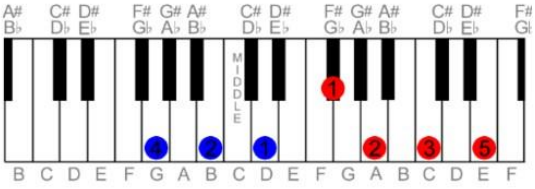
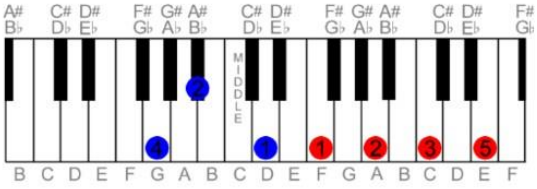
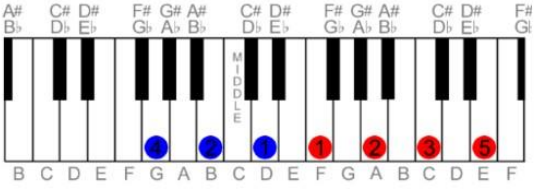


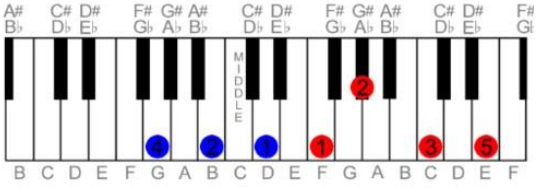
G Minor 13th



G Dominant 13th

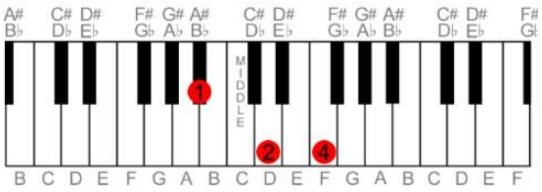


G 13th Flattened 9th

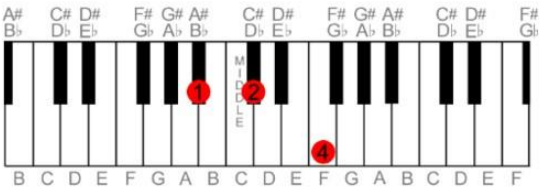


B♭/A#

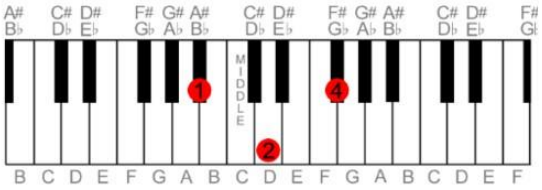
B♭ Major



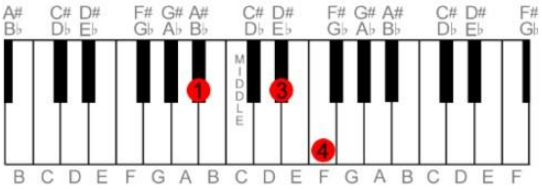
B♭ Minor



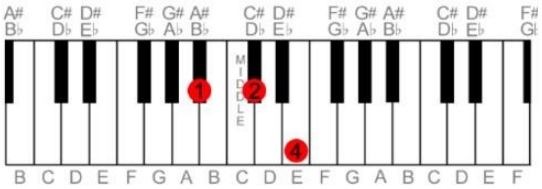
B♭ Augmented Triad



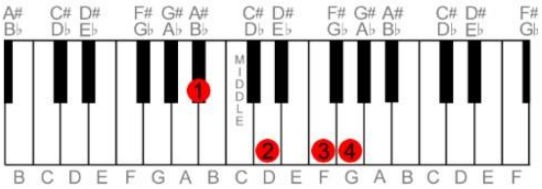
B♭ Suspended 4th



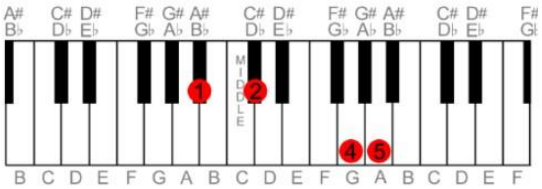
B♭ Diminished Triad



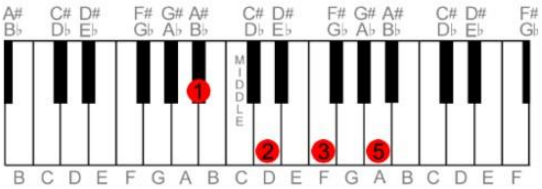
B♭ Major 6th



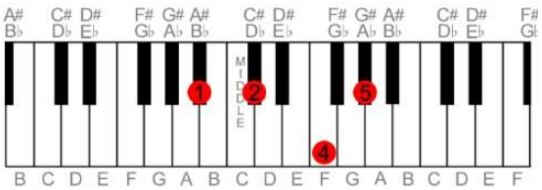
B♭ Minor 6th



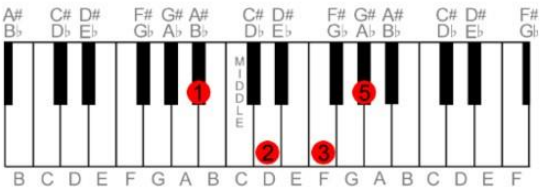
B♭ Major 7th



B♭ Minor 7th



B♭ Dominant 7th



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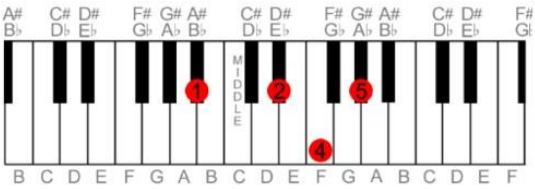
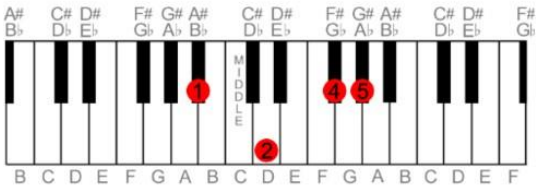
B♭/A#

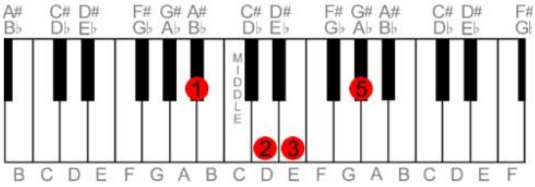
B♭ Dominant 7th sus4



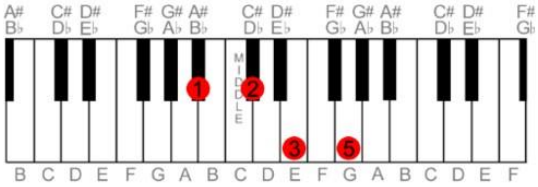
B♭ Dominant 7th Augmented 5th



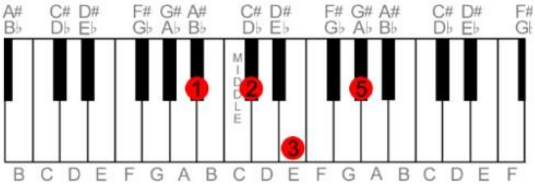
B♭ Dominant 7th Flattened 5th



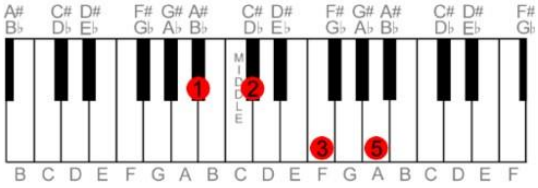
B♭ Diminished 7th



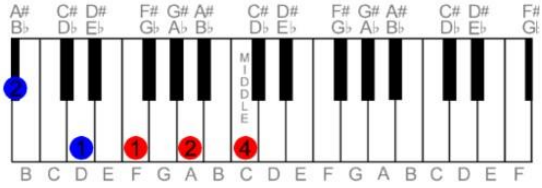
B♭ Minor 7th Flattened 5th



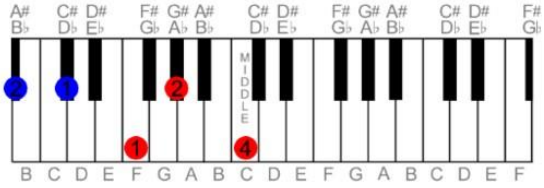
B♭ Minor-Major 7th



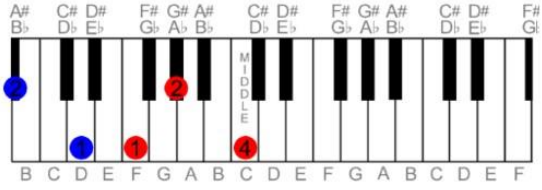
B♭ Major 9th



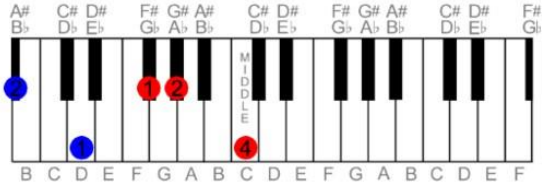
B♭ Minor 9th



B♭ Dominant 9th

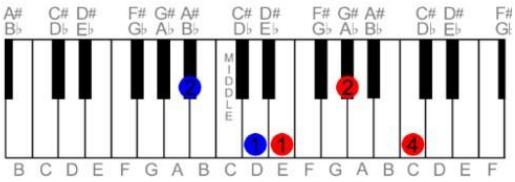


B♭ 9th Augmented 5th

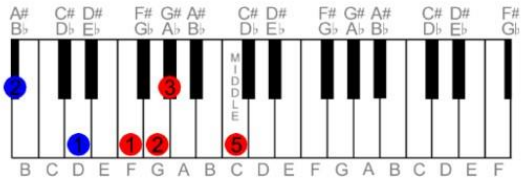


B♭/A#

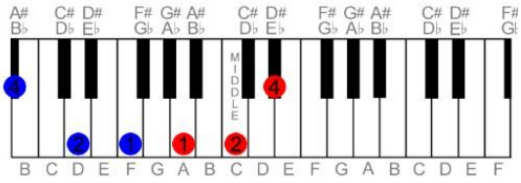
B♭ 9th Flattened 5th



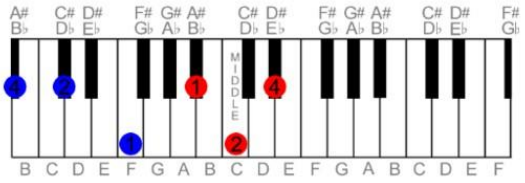
B♭ 9th Add 6th



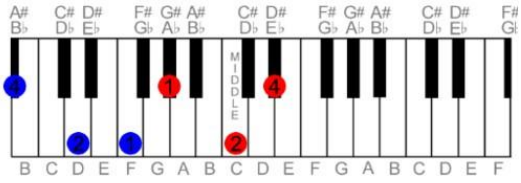
B♭ Major 11th



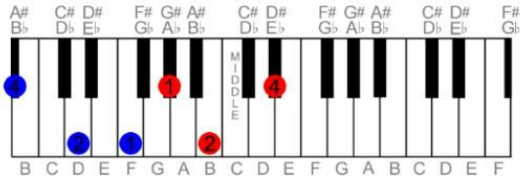
B♭ Minor 11th



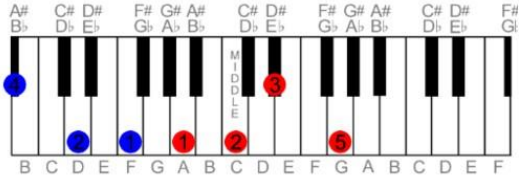
B♭ Dominant 11th



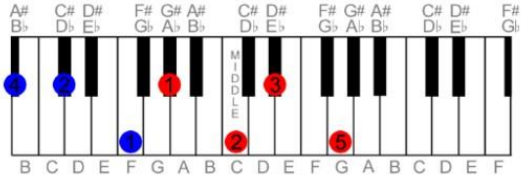
B♭ 11th Flattened 9th



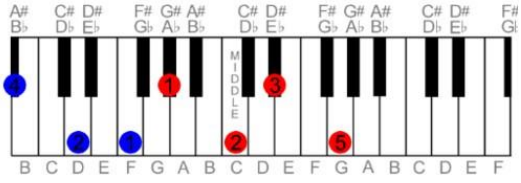
B♭ Major 13th



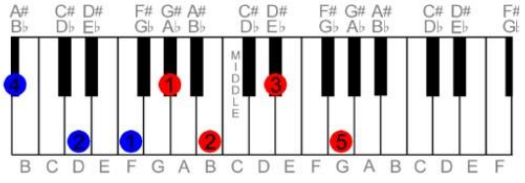
B♭ Minor 13th



B♭ Dominant 13th

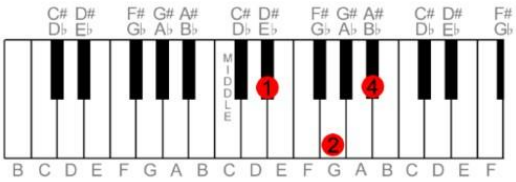


B♭ 13th Flattened 9th

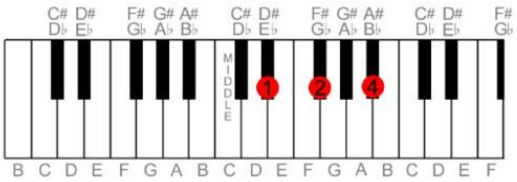


E♭/D#

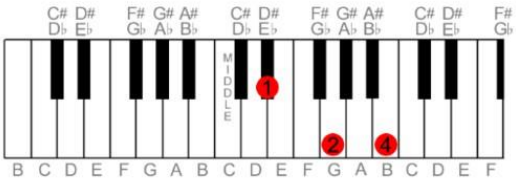
E♭ Major



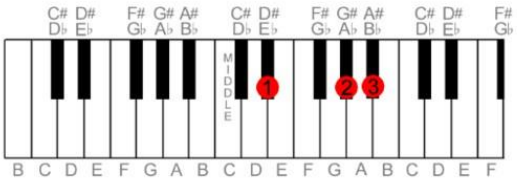
E♭ Minor



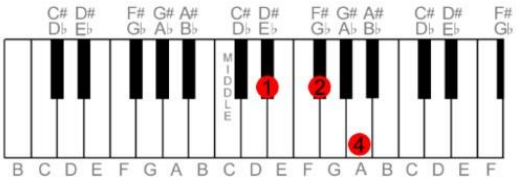
E♭ Augmented Triad



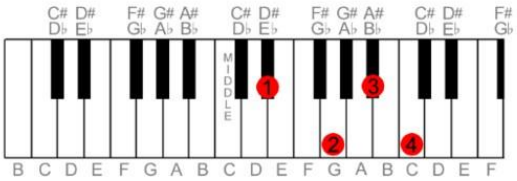
E♭ Suspended 4th



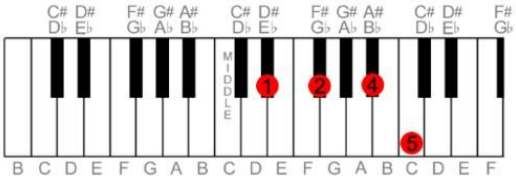
E♭ Diminished Triad



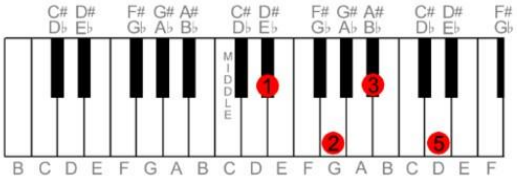
E♭ Major 6th



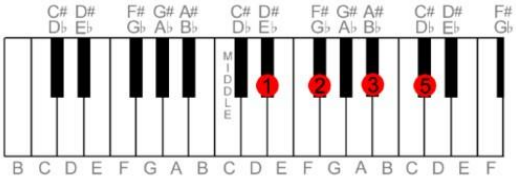
E♭ Minor 6th



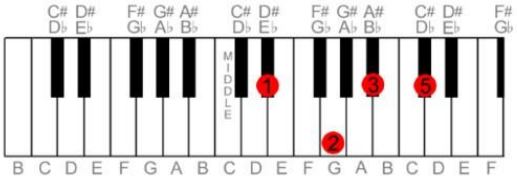
E♭ Major 7th



E♭ Minor 7th

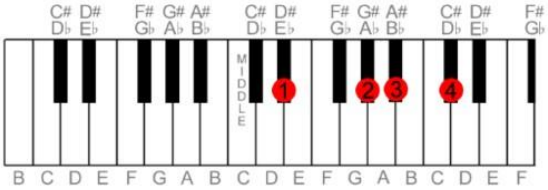


E♭ Dominant 7th

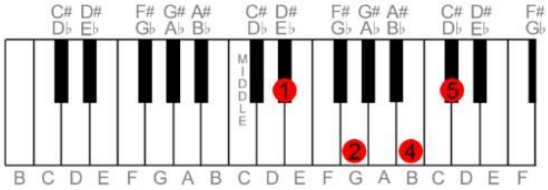


E♭/D#

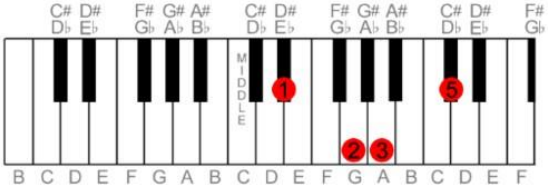
E♭ Dominant 7th sus4



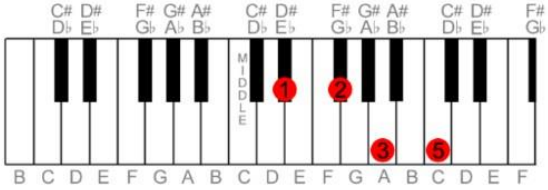
E♭ Dominant 7th Augmented 5th



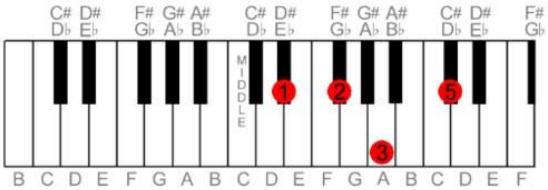
E♭ Dominant 7th Flattened 5th



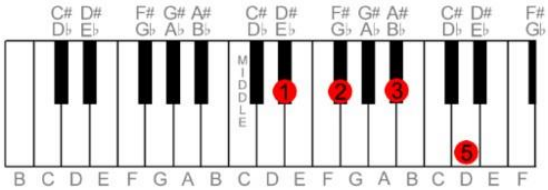
E♭ Diminished 7th



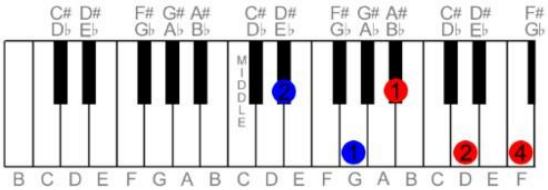
E♭ Minor 7th Flattened 5th



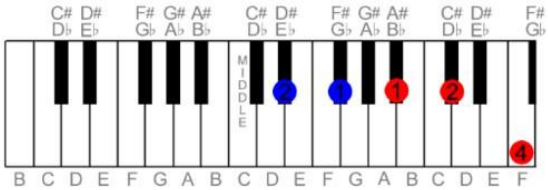
E♭ Minor-Major 7th



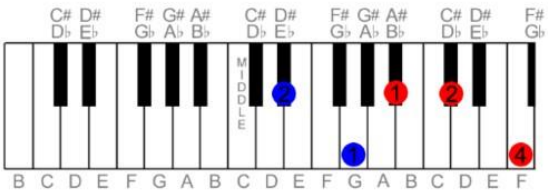
E♭ Major 9th



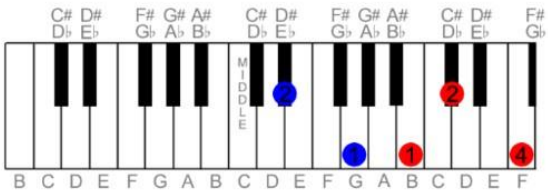
E♭ Minor 9th



E♭ Dominant 9th

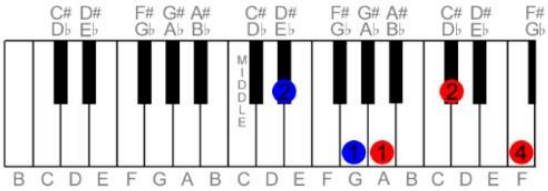


E♭ 9th Augmented 5th

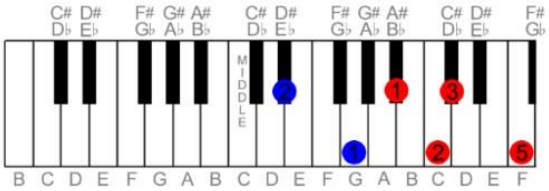


E♭/D#

E♭ 9th Flattened 5th



E♭ 9th Add 6th



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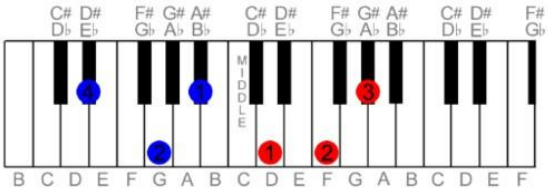

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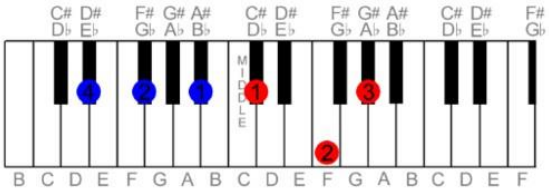

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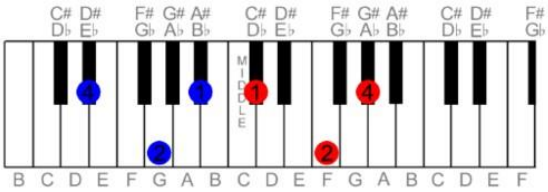

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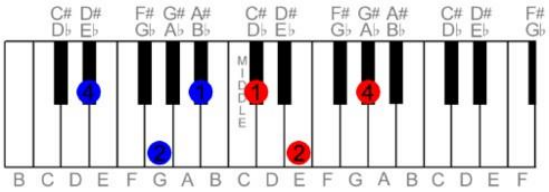

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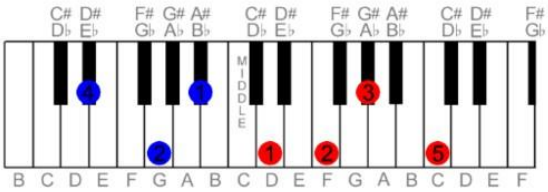

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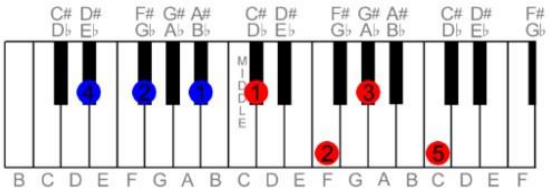

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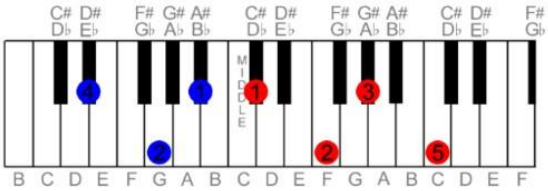

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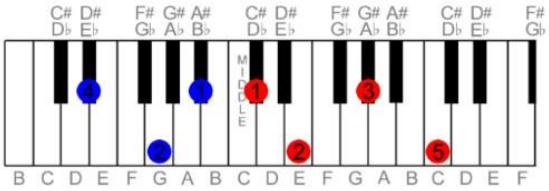

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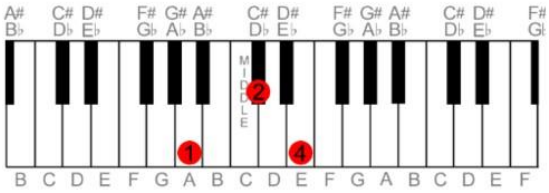
A

A Major



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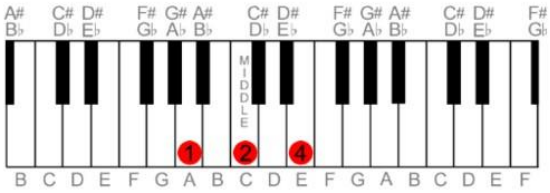
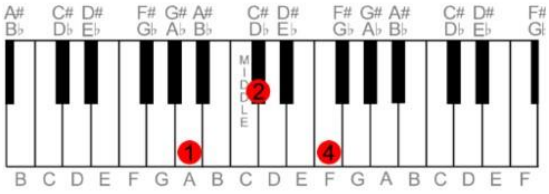
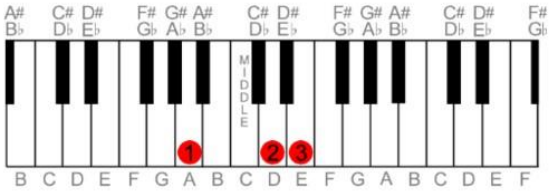


A Augmented Triad



A Suspended 4th



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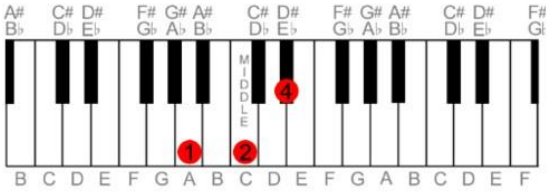

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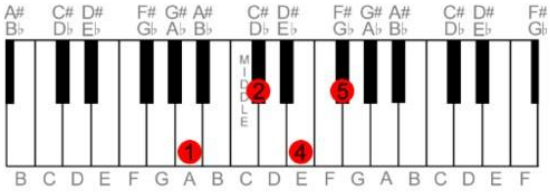

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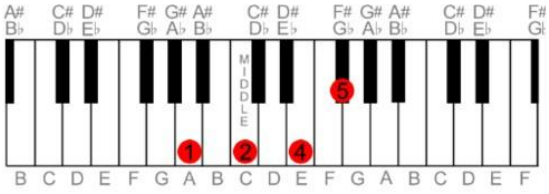
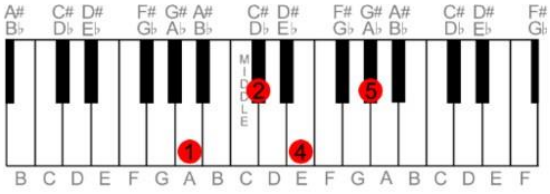


A Major 7th



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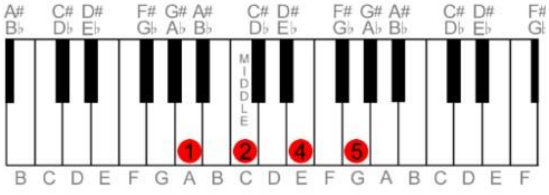

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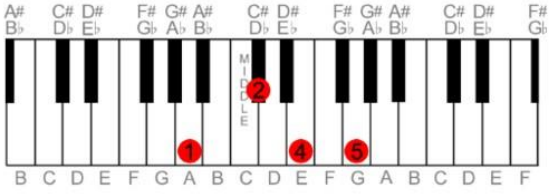

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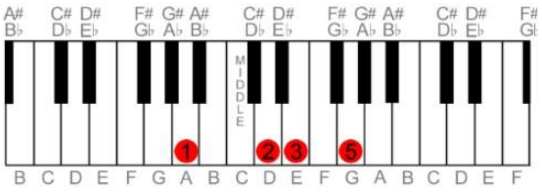
A

A Dominant 7th sus4



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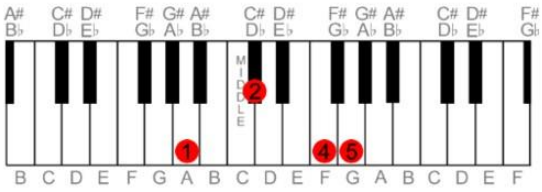

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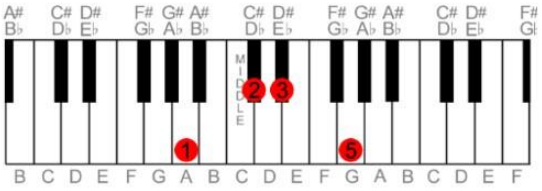

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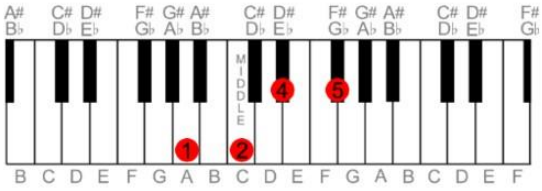

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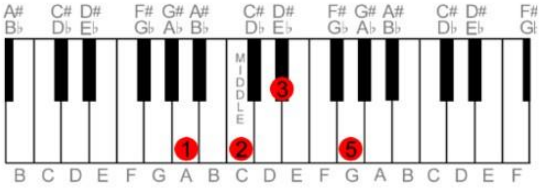
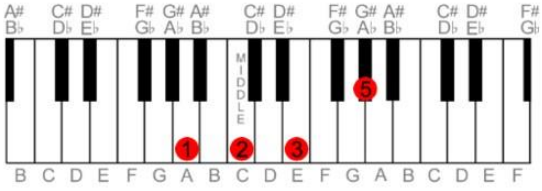


A Minor-Major 7th



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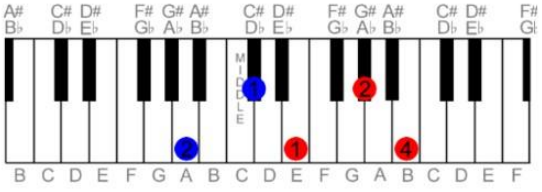

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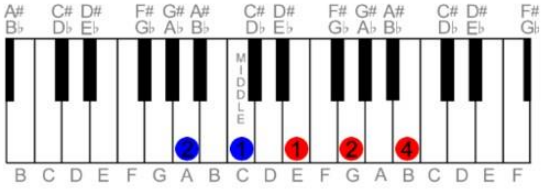

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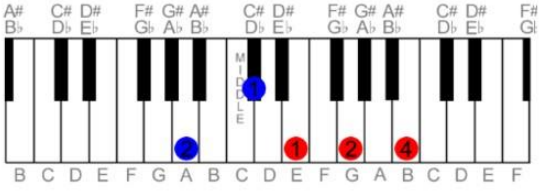

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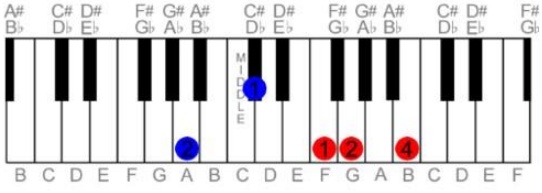

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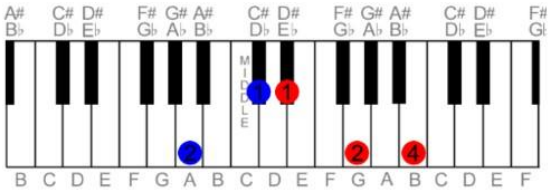

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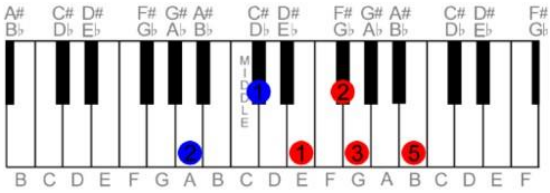

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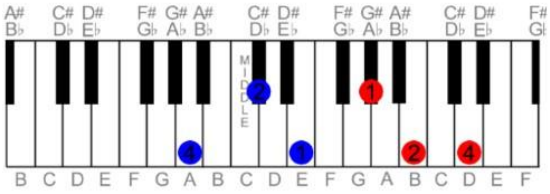

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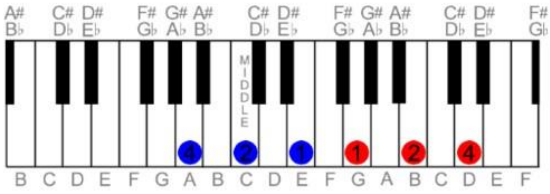

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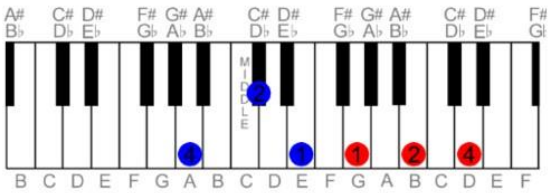

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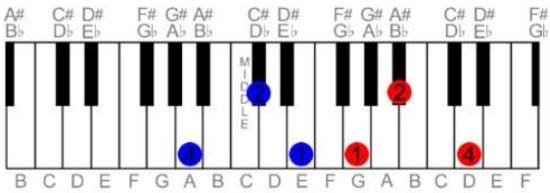

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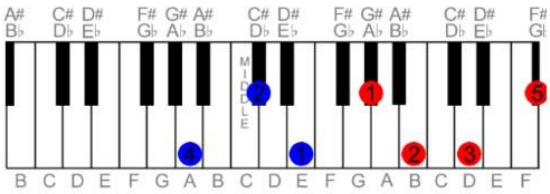

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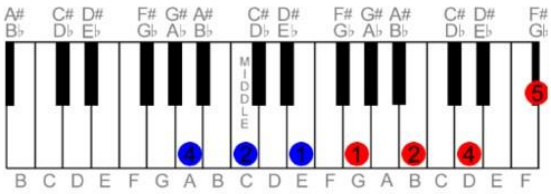

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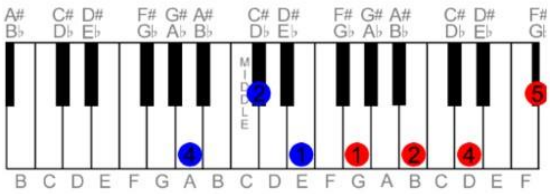

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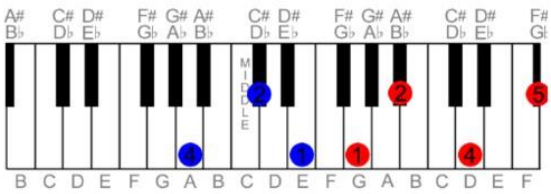
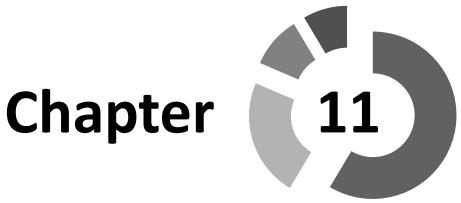




Mastering the Piano

❖ Tips & Tricks for proficiency on the Piano

For beginner pianists, and especially younger children or players with small hands, building up the dexterity of your hands and fingers can do wonders for your playing. Just as singers need to warm up their most important muscle with vocal warm-ups, piano players need to take their fingers into consideration.

Here are 5 great exercises to improve your finger strength and dexterity:

1. Scales
Piano scales and arpeggios may be boring, but they work. Not only do they help to reinforce knowledge of the notes in each key signature, but they help develop finger strength and rhythm. Try playing major, minor and chromatic scales, and major and minor arpeggios, both single-handed and in unison in a variety of ways:
-legato (notes smooth)
-staccato (notes played shortly and sharply)
-regular rhythm
-alternative rhythm (for example: hold the first note of each octave for longer than the other six notes)
-alternative accents (for example: every third or fourth note)
-inverted (same start note, right hand plays ascending notes while left hand plays descending notes).

2. Stretches
-Play two notes of at least an octave apart, with thumb and fifth finger.
-Play a third note somewhere in between, with another finger.
-Jump staccato from the lower to the higher note and back.
-Hold thumb down on one note and play ascending staccato notes as far as possible with one of your fingers.

3. Work your weaker hand
Many pianists have one hand that is weaker than the other. Scales (see #1) will help, as will practicing parts usually played by your stronger hand.

4. Work your weaker fingers
Generally, the little (fifth) finger is weaker than the other fingers in the hand. Significantly differing

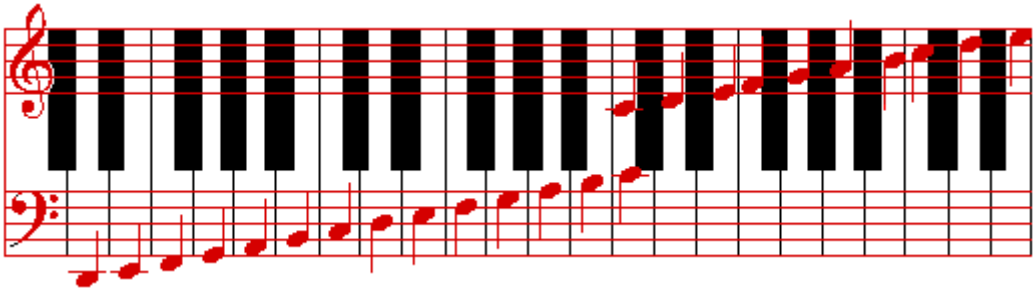
finger strengths will make it difficult to maintain even playing. To combat this, try the following:
-Practice playing scales with even volume across all fingers.
-Play two alternating notes with your weakest finger and a stronger finger. Maintain an even rhythm and volume.
-Play a run of three notes with your weakest finger and two stronger fingers. Again, maintain even rhythm and volume.

5. Key and Tempo
Try playing pieces or phrases of music you know well at different speeds and in different keys.
-Dexterity can be challenged at faster tempos.
-Steady rhythm can be challenged as tempos change.
-Different fingers can be stretched and strengthened as a piece of music is played in a new key.

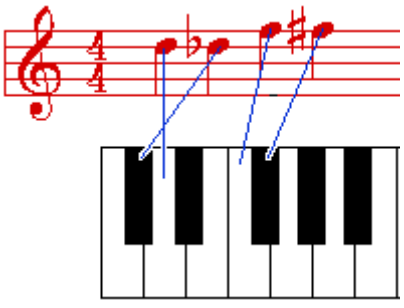
Become Proficient

Keyboard Layout

The following graphic indicates which keys on the piano keyboard correspond with the notes on a staff of music. There is no need to know the names of the notes. Just press the key on the piano that corresponds with the note on the written music, as shown on the following image. The black image represents the piano keyboard while the red image represents the notes on a sheet of music overlaid on the piano keyboard. (The notes that correspond with the black keys are not displayed.)



If the written note has a ♯ in front of it, play the note immediately to the right on the keyboard. If the written note has a ♭ in front of it, play the note immediately to the left on the keyboard. For example:



Relaxation

Try to touch the piano keys lightly and gently. If your fingers are rigid, stiff, with the anxiety of trying to get the right notes at the right time, it will be much more difficult to get it right. A relaxed hand is much easier to get the the right place at the right time.

Enjoyment

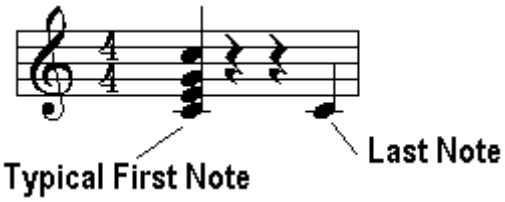
Play something you like and that you are familiar with. In time, you will be able to look at any sheet of music and play something close to what is written, but there is no sense adding the burden of playing unfamiliar music on top of learning to press the right key. When we learned to type, we learned by typing familiar words. We didn't learn to type obscure chemical names or technical jargon. The same applies to the piano. When starting out, play what is fun for you. Anything you play will develop your skill.

If you are practicing to play by ear, play what you are familiar with: advertising jingles, TV theme music, popular folk songs, etc.

For improving Fluidity:

Do you play by ear? I recommend you try it. I found that my fluidity went up greatly when I started playing by ear. Or in other words, without any music, sit down and play the melody to some songs that are very familiar to you. Add some harmony as appropriate. This should be music that you have not previously played from a printed page. **Playing by Ear**

Also, the grand mystery to playing by ear is deciding which note to start out on. If you choose that note properly, the rest of the music is greatly simplified. It also helps if you play the music in the key of C (no sharps or flats). To choose the first note, hum the last note in the song as a C. Then hum the first note in the song, and match it to the piano. This is simplified, because the starting note will typically be one of the notes in the base cord of the last note. (see drawing below)



For Improving Memory:

Another idea that has more to do with biology than anything else, is to play the piece you are learning immediately before going to bed. It should be the last thing you do before laying your head on the pillow. During the day, our brain stores many things in short term memory. These memories are transferred to long term memory during sleep. If you are doing anything after your practice, the memories of your practice session will tend to get overwritten by the events you do later in the day. Playing the song one time just before bed, will bring these memories to the foreground. They will be transferred to long term memory more efficiently.

Keeping the Rhythm

The trick is to play what you play in the proper rhythm, even if you only play a portion of the song. In other words, practice keeping the rhythm going at the expense of everything else. Don't play the cords, or play one or two notes in the cord rather than the whole thing. Before long, you will be able to get more and more notes included in the cords, or you will learn which notes are optional. In most cases nobody but you will realize that there is a note missing.

Where to Put your fingers

For scales:

The orthodox technique, for example if you are going up the scale with the right hand, would be to play the first three notes starting with your thumb, and then after playing the note under your middle finger to play the next note with your thumb again. (The thumb crosses under.) Going back down the scale, starting with the pinky on your right hand, you would play five notes, and then your middle finger would cross over the top of the thumb to play the next lower note.

Playing with the left hand is a mirror image of what the right hand does.

For regular music:

The same sort of arrangement applies, but it is also common to just pick up your hands and move them so that they span the next sequence of notes you are expecting to play.

Playing with Both Hands

(Nearly always) play with both hands, don't try to separate them.

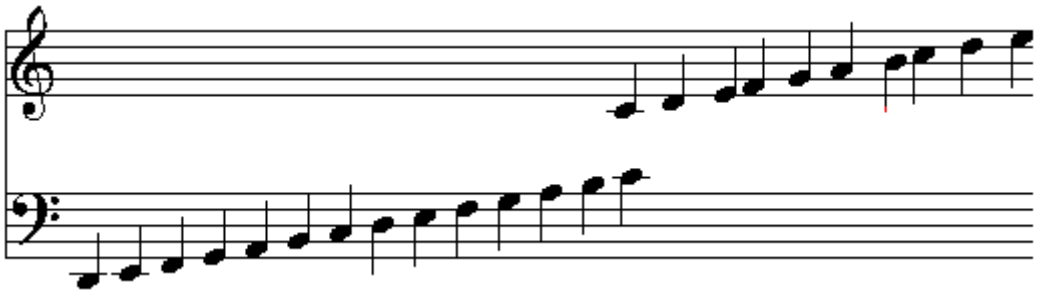
Don't worry about skipping a note here or there in the harmony. If you don't get there in time, just go on to the next one, or make up a harmony! Few listeners will be able to tell. After a while your left hand will develop a feel for where the notes might be expected to be. After a while, your right hand will be able to pick out the melody essentially by ear without having to pay so much attention to the notes on the page, thus allowing you to pay more attention to the left hands harmonies. These two trends will combine together to make playing easier and easier. Doing a little bit of playing by ear, and a little bit of sight reading new music, will help to strengthen these trends.

Children and the Piano

So often, a parent will say, "Don't touch the piano", or "Quit making such awful noise on the piano", then the parent wonders why the children don't want to play the piano when formal lessons start. Children learn best by doing. Let them goof with the keys while you play. (It's less intrusive if you put them on the right side of you!) Or let them make horrible sounds by themselves, and if they accidentally play something that sounds good, be sure to acknowledge it, so it will be more likely to occur in the future.

Finding the Notes

To make learning sheet music easier, take a staff of music, cut it up into little pieces, and tape the pieces to the appropriate key on the piano, right up next to the body so they won't be in the way. Here's some notes if you want to try this at your place. You can tell where they go by looking at the staff at the top of this page.



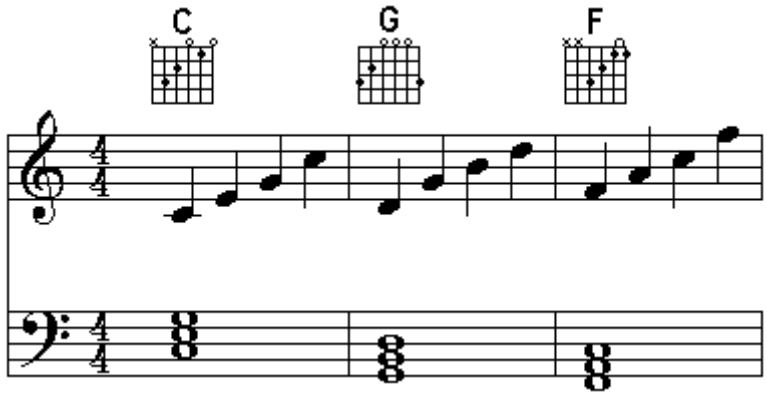
Finding Music

The library is a great place to find music. Especially if you are learning to sight read. You can check out a book, play the songs in it a few times, and then go on to another book. This way, you always have a fresh challenge and don't get bored with the same old stuff.

Fake Books

Another fun book to play from is called a fake book. They typically come with just the melodies of the songs, and perhaps recommendations for what cords sound good with a particular part of the melody. You make up your own accompaniment as you feel best. To the uninitiated, it sounds like full blown sheet music, but the pianist knows what's really going on.

The cords illustrated below, on the bottom staff, are the most typical cords in the key of C, which is the simplest key to play in. The notes on the top staff are typical of what notes you might be playing at the same time as playing the cord.



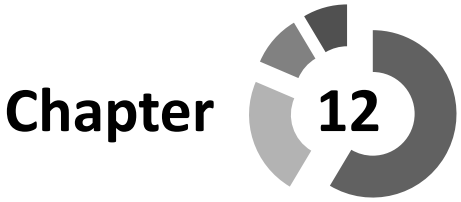
I usually go about it the other way around. If I'm playing a C note in the melody, I will typically form a C cord with the left. If I'm playing a D with the right hand, I'll typically form a G cord with the left. There's no hard and fast rules, play what sounds good. (The small grids above the staff are for guitarists.)

Organs and Synthesizers

They're all played about the same way. On the piano, folks will often use the sustain pedal so that the note can be played, and then your fingers immediately leave the note and go onto another note. On the organ, you will need to keep your fingers on the key for as long as you want it to make a sound. Synthesizers may allow you to set this behaviour.

A Parting Word

And finally, relax. It's so easy with quick moving songs to let the fingers get all tensed up with the challenge of being on the right key at the right time.

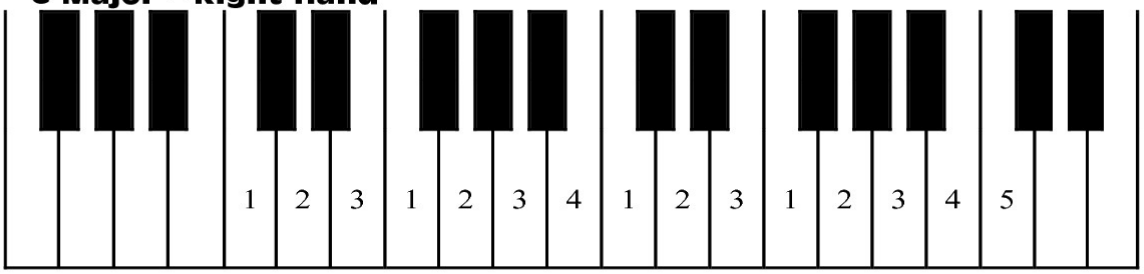


Scale Exercises

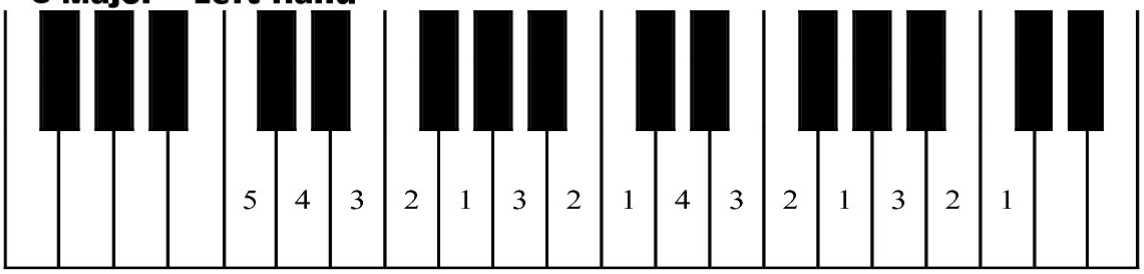
(Piano Scales and their Fingering Positions)

Major Scales

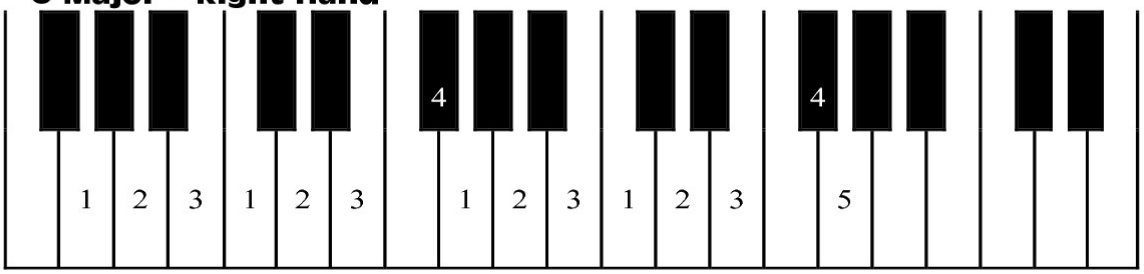
C Major – Right Hand



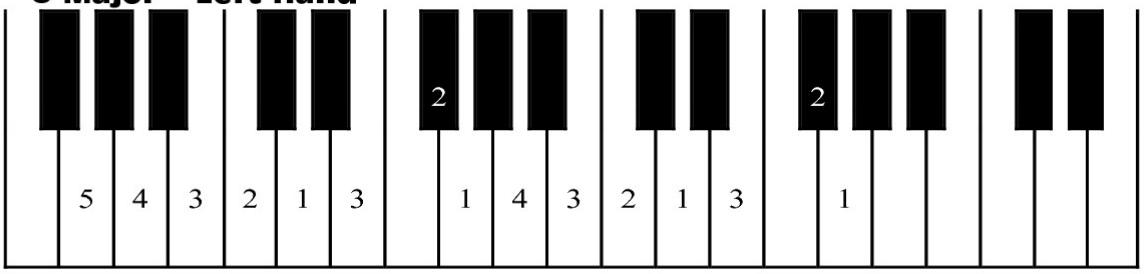
C Major – Left Hand



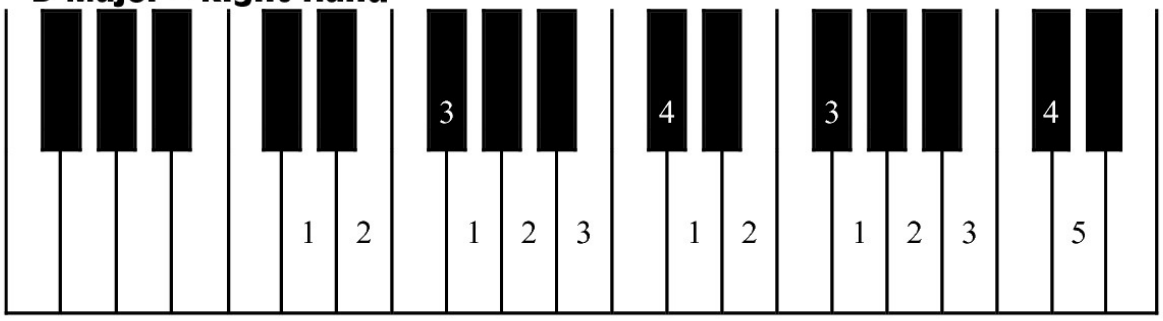
G Major – Right Hand



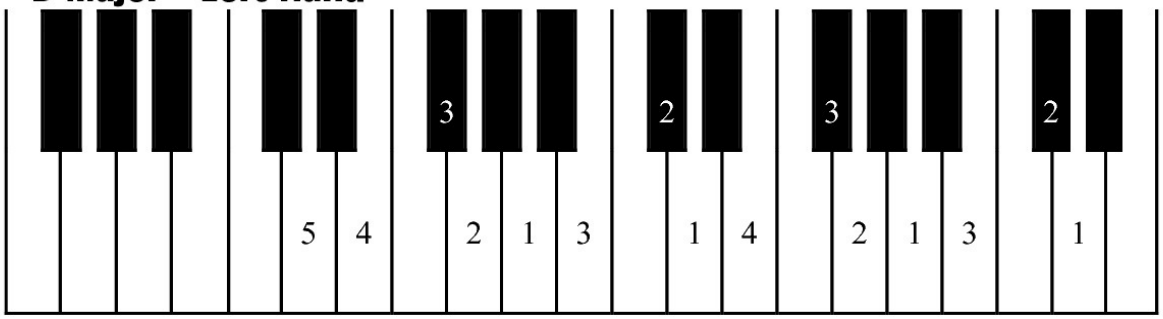
G Major – Left Hand



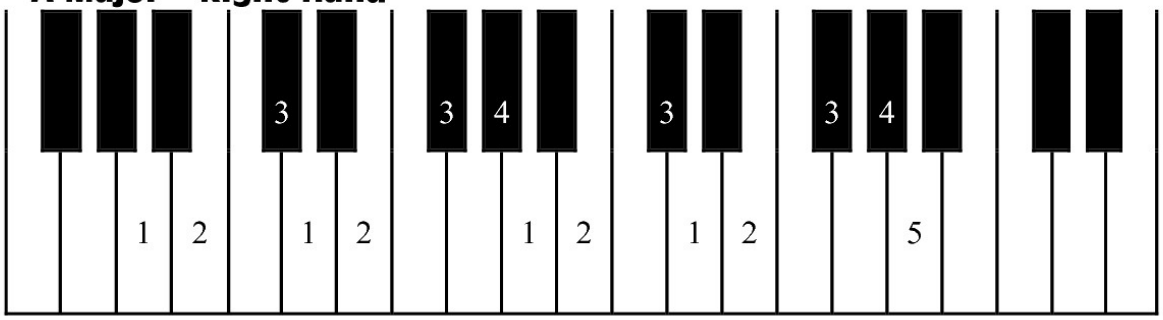
D Major – Right Hand



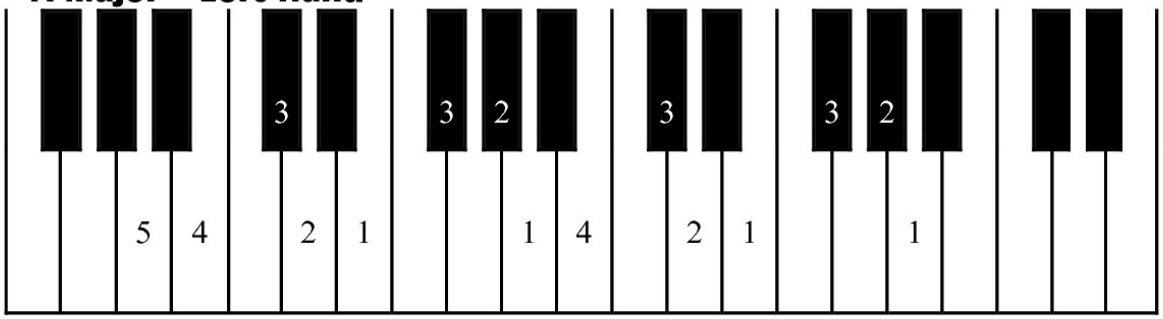
D Major – Left Hand



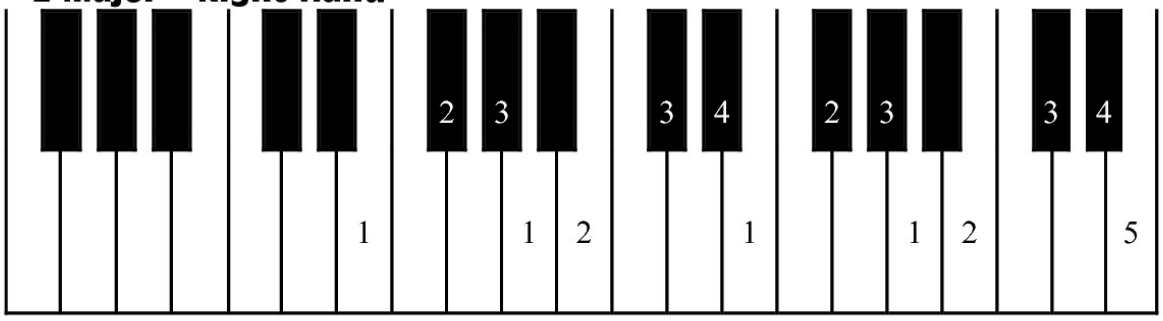
A Major – Right Hand



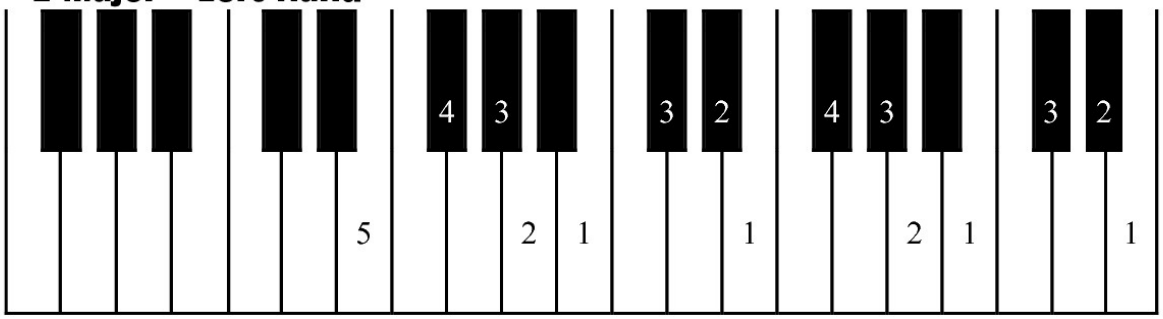
A Major – Left Hand



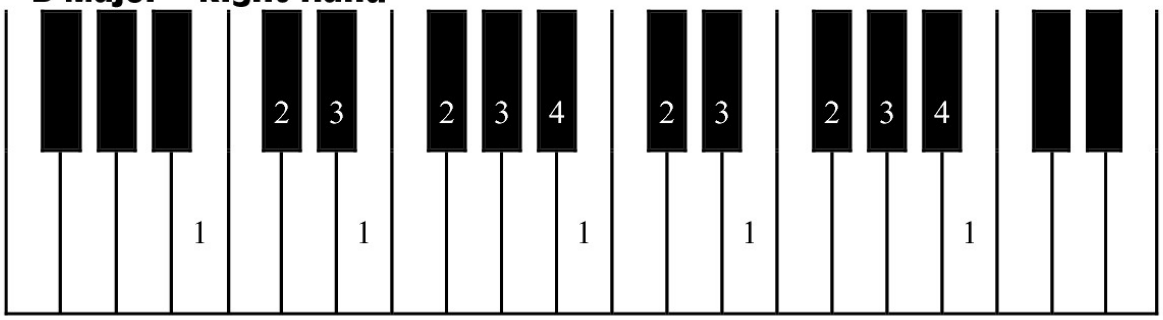
E Major – Right Hand



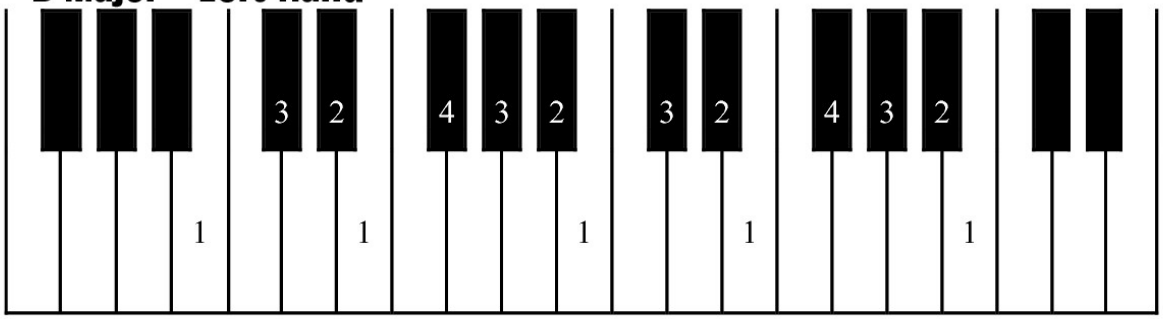
E Major – Left Hand



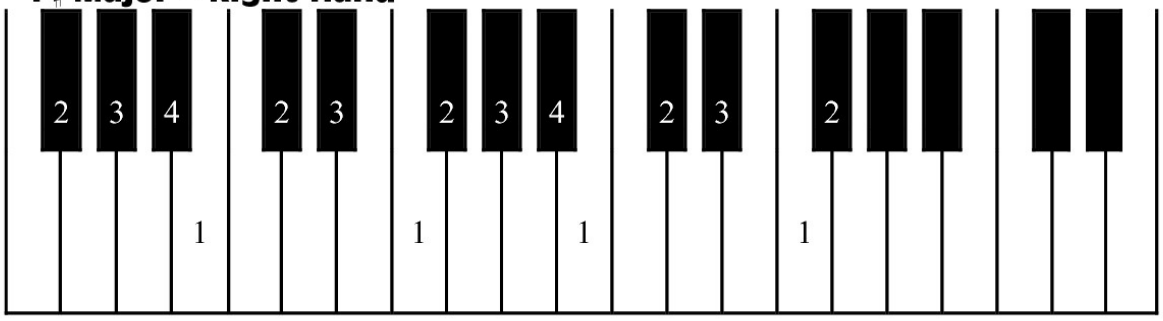
B Major – Right Hand



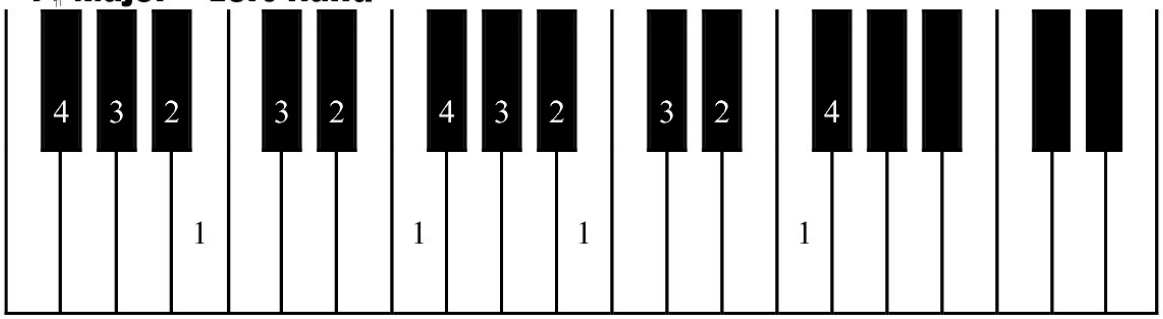
B Major – Left Hand



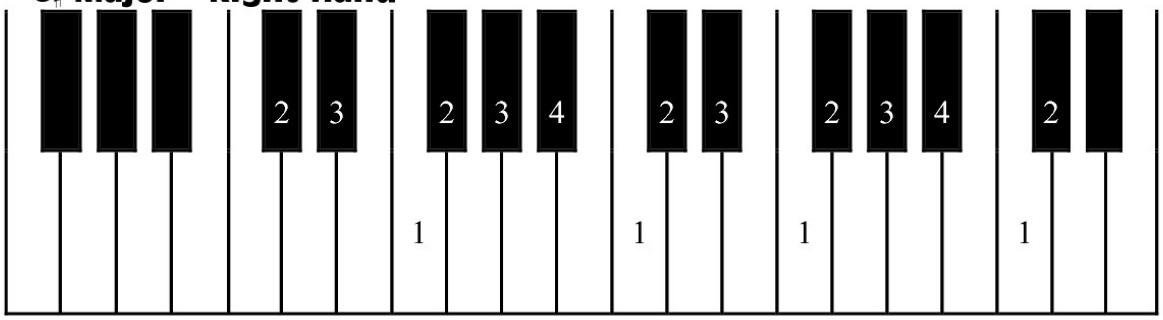
F♯ Major – Right Hand



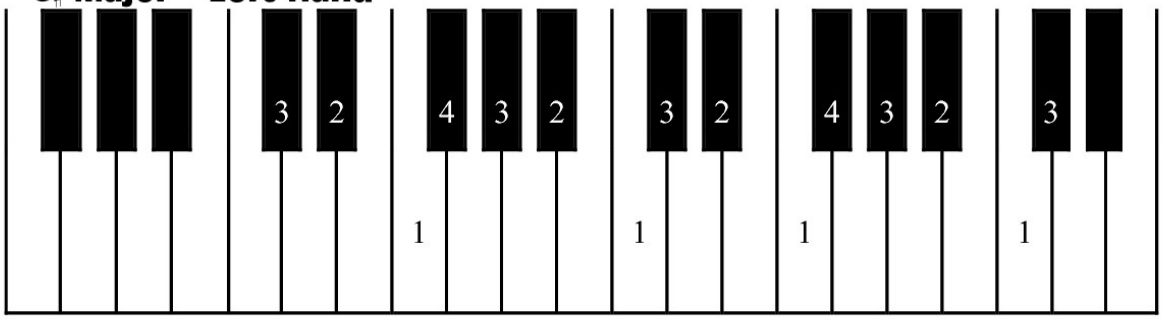
F♯ Major – Left Hand



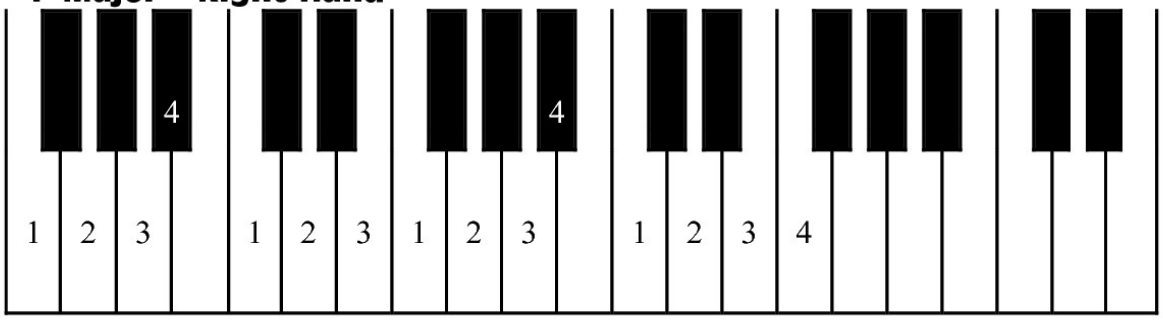
C♯ Major – Right Hand



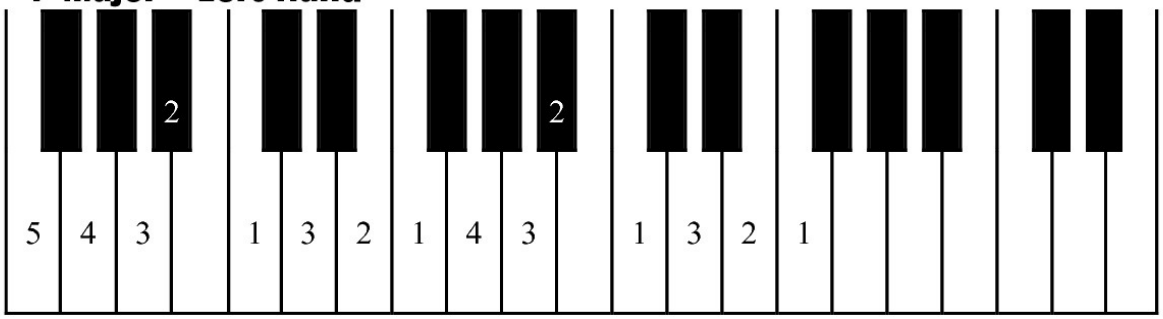
C♯ Major – Left Hand



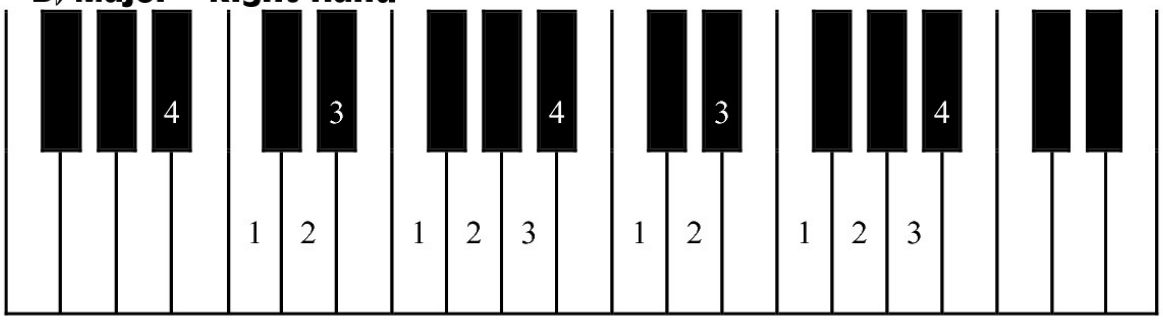
F Major – Right Hand



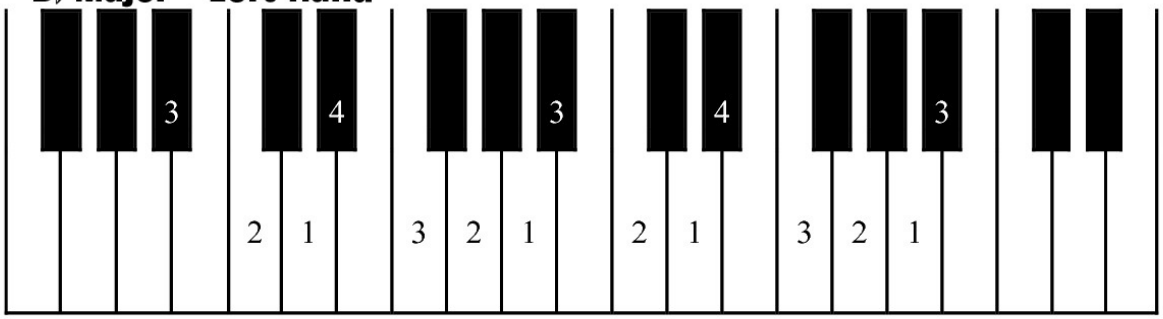
F Major – Left Hand



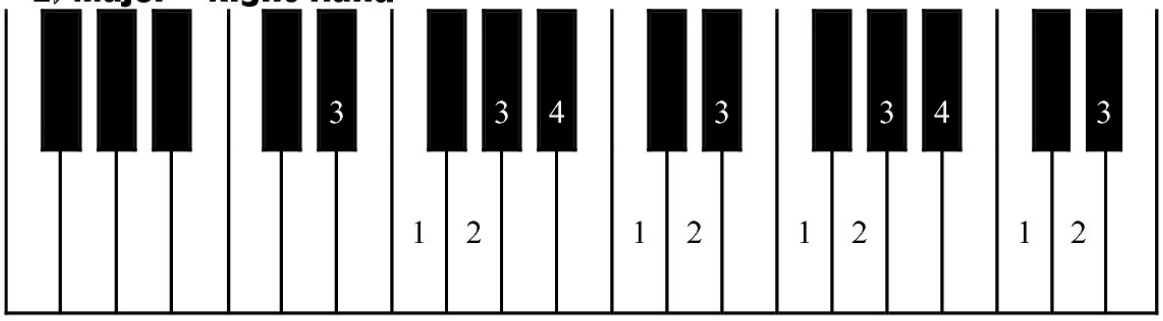
B♭ Major – Right Hand



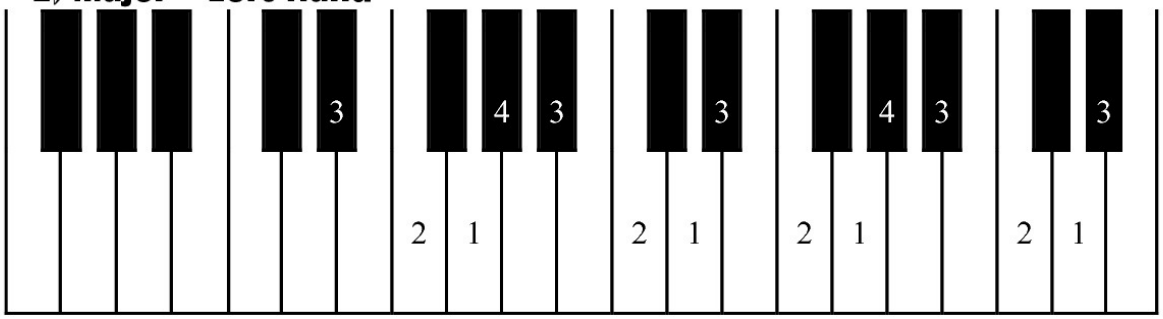
B♭ Major – Left Hand



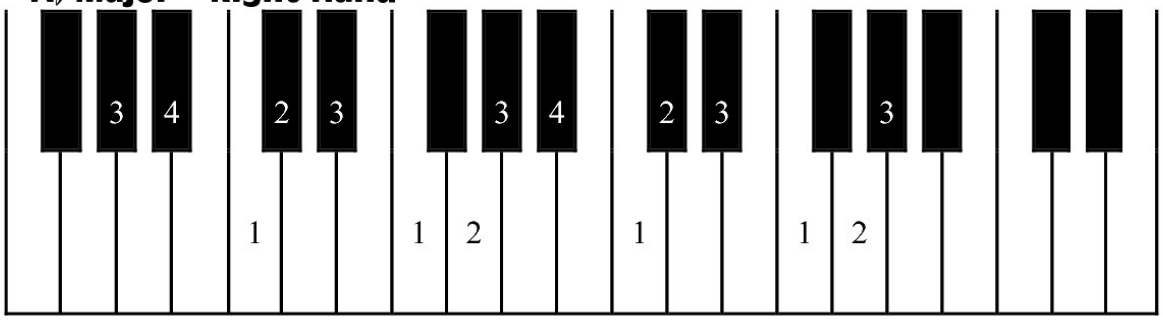
E♭ Major – Right Hand



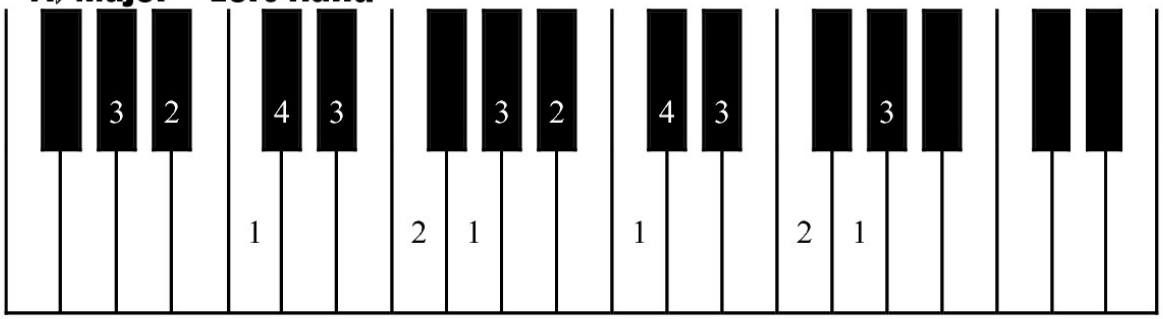
E♭ Major – Left Hand



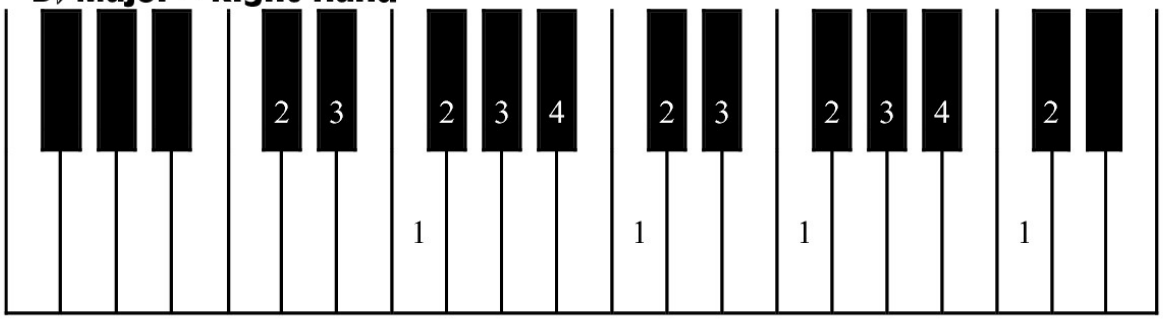
A♭ Major – Right Hand



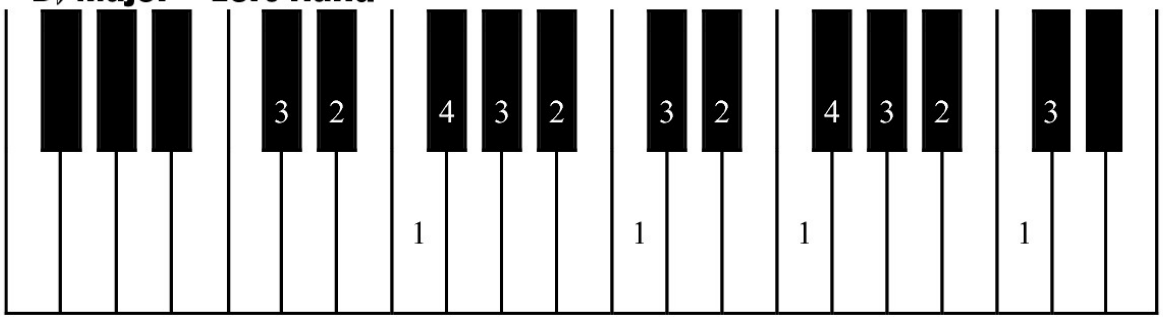
A♭ Major – Left Hand



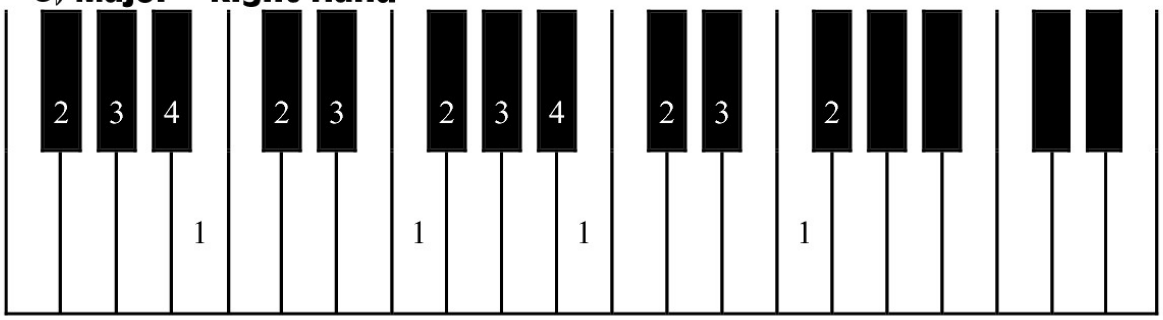
D♭ Major – Right Hand



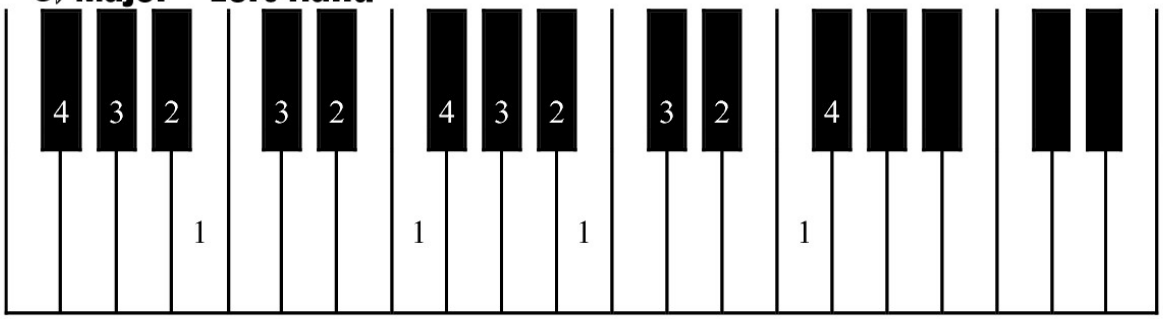
D♭ Major – Left Hand



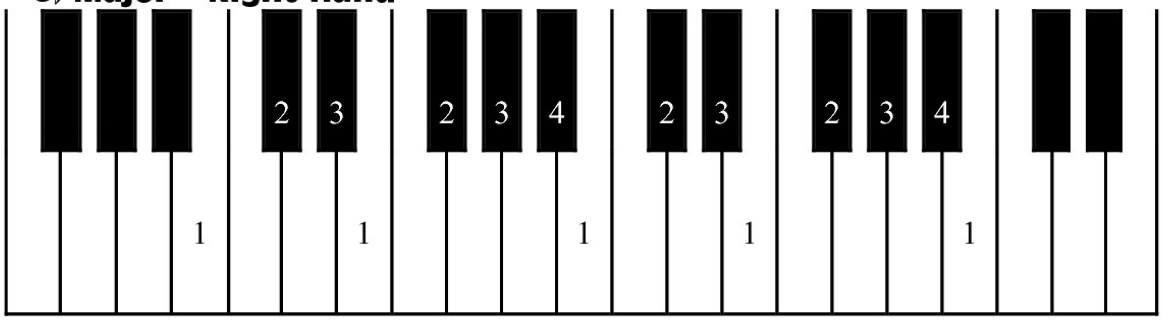
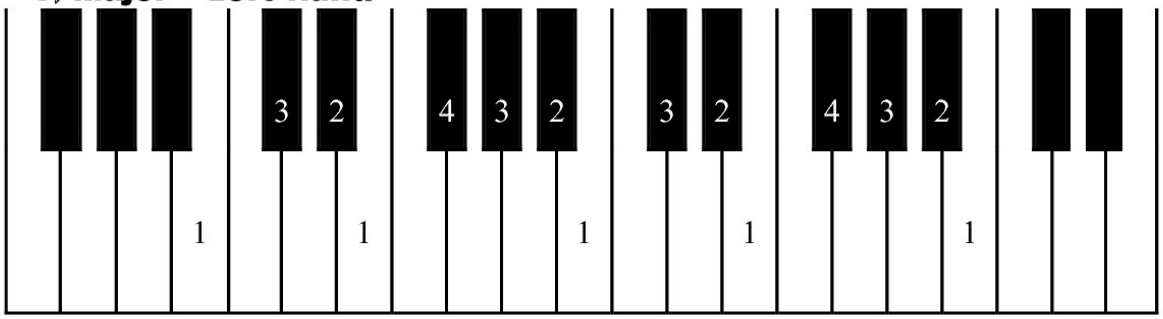
G♭ Major – Right Hand



G♭ Major – Left Hand



C♭ Major – Right Hand



C♭ Major – Left Hand