

The PianoTrainer Scale Challenge

Welcome to **The PianoTrainer Scale Challenge**, an inspiring and flexible programme to motivate practice and encourage technical development. The following resources have been put together to support you and your students:

- An explanation of this programme with examples of each level and advice on when to use the commendation certificate. The full outline of levels is given in *The PianoTrainer Scales Workbook* pages 4-5.
- Information on how to devise your own assessment criteria.
- Student assessment forms with space to list which scales, arpeggios and broken chords to learn, what your assessment criteria is and your final assessment comments.
- Certificates for all levels and a commendation certificate.
- A blank circle of fifths form for your student to colour in when they've completed particular scales and to use as a practice motivator.

This challenge aims to be as flexible as possible – allowing you, the teacher, to put together an assessment that is bespoke to your student. This includes the assessment criteria itself. There is a space on the certificate to mention 'adaptations', so if you want to change what's included in each level you can: if your student can't manage the number of octaves, hands together or even the complete scale. This is particularly important for students with learning difficulties or disabilities – the aim is for the scheme to be accessible to everyone, which is possible because it is teacher assessed rather than accredited.

I've designed the challenge to motivate and inspire students of all ages to learn their scales, broken chords and arpeggios. As teachers, you will be aware of the benefits this brings to the learning process: improved key knowledge, awareness of the geography of the keyboard, technical assurance, finger strength and agility. There is so much to be gained.

Warmest wishes and happy musical making,

Karen Marshall



The award-winning *PianoTrainer* series: **The Foundation Pianist**, **The Intermediate Pianist** and **The Advanced Pianist** books are published by Faber Music. Available from all good retailers and online.

What is The PianoTrainer Scale Challenge?

The challenge is made up of four levels: Crystal, Bronze, Silver and Gold. Each requires a specific number of scales, arpeggios and broken chords to be learned. No keys are specified: the teacher picks the keys and scales that are most appropriate for their student at that point. See *The PianoTrainer Scales Workbook* (pages 4-5) for details of the numbers of scales required at each level.

Here are some examples of scales that can be performed at each level. These are only examples, however, and teachers should adapt accordingly. **Teachers can supplement the scheme to increase numbers of shapes or keys covered by using the commendation certificate. This is given when any 10 new shapes (scales, arpeggios or broken chords) are covered.**

Crystal Level: Elementary / Grade 1 plus (all one octave)
C major and A natural minor scale, arpeggio and broken chord
C major contrary motion and chromatic on D similar motion

Bronze Level: Late Elementary / Grade 2 plus (all two octaves)
G major, E minor, F major and D minor scale, arpeggio and broken chord
A natural minor contrary motion and D chromatic
Any major pentatonic scale.

Silver Level: Early Intermediate / Grade 3-4 (all two octaves)
D major, B minor, B flat major, G minor, A major, F sharp minor, E flat major and C minor: scale, arpeggio and broken chord
E flat major and C minor contrary motion
B flat and E chromatic scale in similar motion
Mixolydian modal scale on C, E minor pentatonic scale, D blues scale

Gold Level: Late intermediate / Grade 5 (all three octaves)
Scales, arpeggios and broken chords in every major and minor key
Similar motion on B and contrary motion on E flat chromatic scales
Contrary motion scales in A, B, E and D flat major and E, C sharp, G and B flat minor
Dominant 7th in D and diminished 7th on F
Dorian modal scale on F, D major and D minor pentatonic scale, F blues scale
C major in double thirds (hands separately) and Russian scale in C major

All levels are cumulative, so the previous level's scales must be completed before the next is begun. All scales learnt also need to be maintained, meaning that at Bronze Level a student is practising at least six keys (not just the four new keys).



The award-winning *PianoTrainer* series: **The Foundation Pianist, The Intermediate Pianist and The Advanced Pianist** books are published by Faber Music. Available from all good retailers and online.

How to create your assessment criteria

As this challenge is teacher assessed and isn't time restricted, the assessment criteria is up to the individual teacher. The examples below have been provided to give you some starting points. This quote by Murray McLachlan may also be an assessment statement you might like to bear in mind:

"Scales require stamina, strength, shape, security and sparkle."

Aspects to consider

- Do you want a whole studio (or whole teaching practice) assessment criteria or a one that is specific to each student?
- What accuracy in terms of notes and fingering do you expect?
- What speed/metronome mark (if any) is the minimum you require at each level?
- What speed of response (recall) do you expect at each level?
- What level of tone production and musical performance is required? Can you demonstrate this to your students?
- What are your technical requirements, specifically relating to articulation (legato and staccato), dynamics, evenness and control of finger work?

There is a space to record your assessment criteria on the student assessment forms on the following pages.

Writing your assessment statements

A good assessment statement describes what has been achieved (as in a grade exam) but can also go beyond this. As a basis you will want to include details of accuracy, speed, quality of musical shape and so on. But you can also include:

- General encouragement, commenting on the amount of time and effort spent learning the scales and overcoming difficulties. A simple 'Well done!'
- How students can move forwards with future technical work and what achieving this level means in terms of repertoire that can now be embarked on.

For example:

"The scales were all accurate and even, with a good tempo. There was some musical shaping and a firm touch, resulting in an even tone. During the learning process you have shown impressive resilience. Even though E flat major was challenging, you worked at it by breaking the scale down into smaller parts. Fingering was learnt methodically and it was a joy to see your progress. Now that you know all these shapes, embarking on pieces in keys of three sharps or flats will be much easier and learning some easy sonatinas will give you the opportunity to exploit your new-found skills. Well done on some outstanding work to achieve your Silver Level!"



The award-winning *PianoTrainer* series: **The Foundation Pianist, The Intermediate Pianist and The Advanced Pianist** books are published by Faber Music. Available from all good retailers and online.

Examples of possible assessment statements:

Comments on what is heard:

"All the notes and fingering are known and the scales were played at an appropriate tempo."

"The shapes were played accurately for the most part, with just the odd slip."

"There is good musical shaping and the finger work is controlled. Technical foundation is evident."

"The scales, arpeggios and broken chords were played with an immediate response and at a good tempo."

"Various articulations and dynamics were successfully produced with a musical sound and shape."

"All played accurately and with sound technical skills."

Remember to mention the learning process and provide encouragement – possible because this is teacher assessed and not an accredited examination.

"A highly productive term's work with many hours of practice put in. Well done on your diligence."

"You can now play scales, broken chords and arpeggios in six keys, due to your hard work and determination. Bravo!"

"There has been a high level of effort, conscientiousness and care. Well done on some superb work."

"Even though you found fingering a challenge you stuck at it and have reaped the rewards. Congratulations on a fantastic effort!"

"A job well done! Your finger work is more even now and this has resulted in a wonderful performance of a Bach Invention."

For adapted exams for those with learning difficulties or special circumstances:

"The scales, arpeggios and broken chords are known to the best of the student's ability."

"Significant progress has been made and a high level of commitment and effort has been displayed, with several hours' practice given to learning the shapes."

"There is some musical intention and also attention to detail in terms of notes, fingering and technique."

"There has been a high level of achievement for this student."



The award-winning *PianoTrainer* series: **The Foundation Pianist, The Intermediate Pianist and The Advanced Pianist** books are published by Faber Music. Available from all good retailers and online.

The PianoTrainer Crystal Level Challenge

Name:

Date:

Well done on taking up **The PianoTrainer Crystal Level Challenge**. Learning your scales, arpeggios and broken chords will help your piano-learning journey in many ways – from better technique and essential theory knowledge to understanding of keys and the geography of the keyboard. The following scales have been selected by your teacher for you to achieve this level.

Crystal Level scales, arpeggios and broken chords requirements
With details of numbers of octaves, articulation and dynamics

Teacher assessment criteria
Accuracy, speed and performance requirements

Teacher assessment comments

Date

The level of this assessment is based on your teacher's requirements. It is not an accredited qualification, but a formative (teacher-assessed) level.



The award-winning *PianoTrainer* series: **The Foundation Pianist, The Intermediate Pianist and The Advanced Pianist** books are published by Faber Music. Available from all good retailers and online.

The PianoTrainer Bronze Level Challenge

Name:

Date:

Well done on taking up **The PianoTrainer Bronze Level Challenge**. Learning your scales, arpeggios and broken chords will help your piano-learning journey in many ways – from better technique and essential theory knowledge to understanding of keys and the geography of the keyboard. The following scales have been selected by your teacher for you to achieve this level.

Bronze Level scales, arpeggios and broken chords requirements
With details of numbers of octaves, articulation and dynamics

Teacher assessment criteria
Accuracy, speed and performance requirements

Teacher assessment comments Date

The level of this assessment is based on your teacher's requirements. It is not an accredited qualification, but a formative (teacher-assessed) level.



The award-winning *PianoTrainer* series: **The Foundation Pianist, The Intermediate Pianist and The Advanced Pianist** books are published by Faber Music. Available from all good retailers and online.

The PianoTrainer Silver Level Challenge

Name:

Date:

Well done on taking up **The PianoTrainer Silver Level Challenge**. Learning your scales, arpeggios and broken chords will help your piano-learning journey in many ways – from better technique and essential theory knowledge to understanding of keys and the geography of the keyboard. The following scales have been selected by your teacher for you to achieve this level.

Silver Level scales, arpeggios and broken chords requirements
With details of numbers of octaves, articulation and dynamics

Teacher assessment criteria
Accuracy, speed and performance requirements

Teacher assessment comments

Date

The level of this assessment is based on your teacher's requirements. It is not an accredited qualification, but a formative (teacher-assessed) level.



The award-winning *PianoTrainer* series: **The Foundation Pianist, The Intermediate Pianist and The Advanced Pianist** books are published by Faber Music. Available from all good retailers and online.

The PianoTrainer Gold Level Challenge

Name:

Date:

Well done on taking up **The PianoTrainer Gold Level Challenge**. Learning all your scales, arpeggios and broken chords will help your piano-learning journey in many ways – from better technique and essential theory knowledge to understanding of keys and the geography of the keyboard. This is the highest level of the challenge and it is a major achievement! The following scales have been selected by your teacher for you to achieve this level.

Gold Level scales, arpeggios and broken chords requirements

With details of numbers of octaves, articulation and dynamics

Teacher assessment criteria

Accuracy, speed and performance requirements

Teacher assessment comments

Date

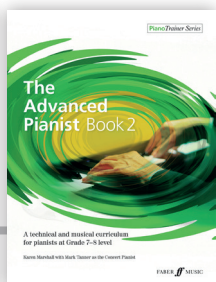
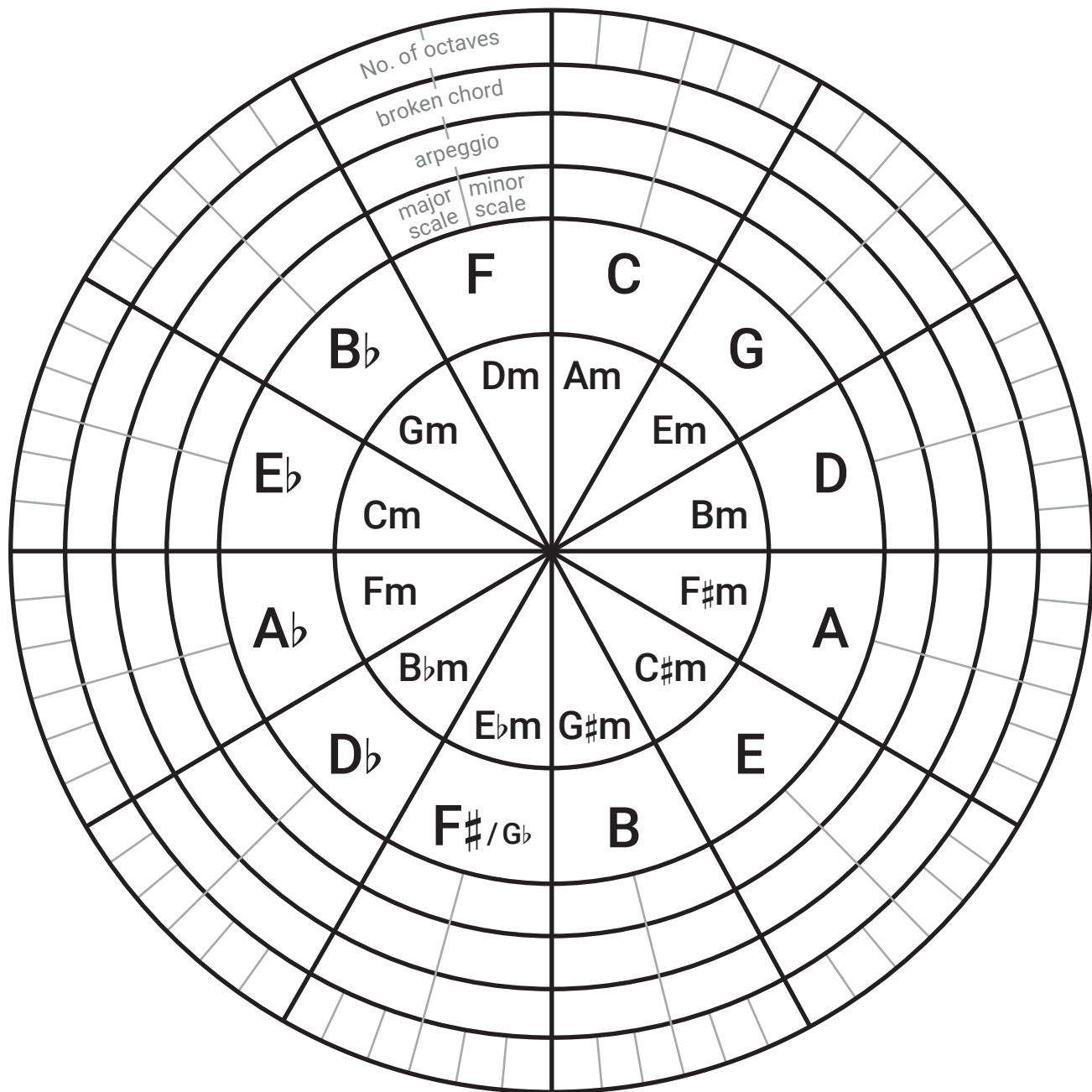
The level of this assessment is based on your teacher's requirements. It is not an accredited qualification, but a formative (teacher-assessed) level.



The award-winning *PianoTrainer* series: **The Foundation Pianist**, **The Intermediate Pianist** and **The Advanced Pianist** books are published by Faber Music. Available from all good retailers and online.

PianoTrainer

The circle of fifths



The award-winning *PianoTrainer* series: **The Foundation Pianist, The Intermediate Pianist and The Advanced Pianist** books are published by Faber Music. Available from all good retailers and online.



The PianoTrainer Scale Challenge Crystal Level Certificate



This certificate has been awarded to:

On _____ by _____
Date Teacher's signature

*Congratulations on achieving this level in the PianoTrainer Challenge!
This is a major achievement that you are highly commended for.
Bravo and good luck in all your piano playing!*



Karen Marshall (Faber Music author)

Adaptations to note:

The level of this assessment is based on your teacher's requirements. It is not an accredited qualification, but a formative (teacher-assessed) level.



The award-winning *PianoTrainer* series: **The Foundation Pianist, The Intermediate Pianist and The Advanced Pianist** books are published by Faber Music. Available from all good retailers and online.



The PianoTrainer Scale Challenge Bronze Level Certificate



This certificate has been awarded to:

On _____
Date

by _____
Teacher's signature

*Congratulations on achieving this level in the PianoTrainer Challenge!
This is a major achievement that you are highly commended for.
Bravo and good luck in all your piano playing!*



Karen Marshall (Faber Music author)

Adaptations to note:

The level of this assessment is based on your teacher's requirements. It is not an accredited qualification, but a formative (teacher-assessed) level.



The award-winning *PianoTrainer* series: **The Foundation Pianist, The Intermediate Pianist and The Advanced Pianist** books are published by Faber Music. Available from all good retailers and online.



The PianoTrainer Scale Challenge Silver Level Certificate



This certificate has been awarded to:

On _____
Date

by _____
Teacher's signature

*Congratulations on achieving this level in the PianoTrainer Challenge!
This is a major achievement that you are highly commended for.
Bravo and good luck in all your piano playing!*



Karen Marshall (Faber Music author)

Adaptations to note:

The level of this assessment is based on your teacher's requirements. It is not an accredited qualification, but a formative (teacher-assessed) level.



The award-winning *PianoTrainer* series: **The Foundation Pianist, The Intermediate Pianist and The Advanced Pianist** books are published by Faber Music. Available from all good retailers and online.



The PianoTrainer Scale Challenge Gold Level Certificate



This certificate has been awarded to:

On _____
Date

by _____
Teacher's signature

*Congratulations on achieving this level in the PianoTrainer Challenge!
This is a major achievement that you are highly commended for.
Bravo and good luck in all your piano playing!*



Karen Marshall (Faber Music author)

Adaptations to note:

The level of this assessment is based on your teacher's requirements. It is not an accredited qualification, but a formative (teacher-assessed) level.



The award-winning *PianoTrainer* series:
The Foundation Pianist, The Intermediate Pianist
and **The Advanced Pianist** books are published
by Faber Music.
Available from all good retailers and online.



The PianoTrainer Scale Challenge Commendation Certificate for learning 10 new shapes



This certificate has been awarded to:

On _____
Date

by _____
Teacher's signature

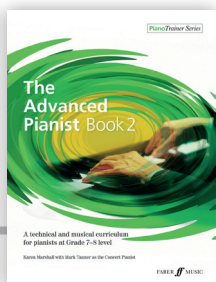
*This is a major achievement that you are highly commended for.
Bravo and good luck in all your piano playing!*



Karen Marshall (Faber Music author)

Adaptations to note:

The level of this assessment is based on your teacher's requirements. It is not an accredited qualification, but a formative (teacher-assessed) level.



The award-winning *PianoTrainer* series: **The Foundation Pianist, The Intermediate Pianist and The Advanced Pianist** books are published by Faber Music. Available from all good retailers and online.

PianoTrainer

FAQs

How do these levels fit with the grade exam system?

Because the teacher chooses the keys at each level, they don't coincide exactly with specific grades. But this is a rough guide:

Crystal Level: Elementary / Grade 1 plus

Bronze Level: Late Elementary / Grade 2 plus

Silver Level: Early Intermediate / Grade 3-4

Gold Level: Late Intermediate / Grade 5

How do I know how many keys and which scales to do at each level?

You need *The PianoTrainer Scales Workbook* – the requirements for each level are listed on pages 4-5 and the scales, arpeggios and broken chords are given for all keys so you can clearly indicate which need to be learnt.

Should you start Crystal Level before or after Grade 1?

I suggest you start Crystal Level when your student is ready (in your professional opinion) and able to learn and understand different keys. You can of course use the Crystal Challenge to help learn the Grade 1 scales very successfully – or start it after the exam to encourage continued playing of scales and learning new keys.

How do you use the Circle of fifths page?

I find this extremely useful and popular, especially with younger players. When a student learns a key, they simply colour in that 'segment'. This gives a colourful visual representation of their progress. Obviously, it's also an extremely useful diagram to be aware of and gradually absorb.

Can you do this challenge at the same time as you are working towards an exam?

Yes, absolutely – this programme is deliberately flexible so you can include the keys required for exams as required. But this is also your opportunity to fill in any gaps in your students' learning – whether it is a missed grade or simply that one of their pieces is in a key that isn't covered by the exam syllabus.

How do I decide which scales to do at which level?

There are a number of considerations here, which vary according to the level. Firstly, I check the keys of the pieces being learnt, and make sure they are covered. Then I look at the number of sharps and flats and make sure they are gradually increasing – obviously, being aware of introducing new groups of keys by finger patterns can be helpful, too. As your student progresses you can start to include related keys to the keys of their pieces to encourage greater awareness of this. Finally, at the higher levels you need to plan out how you will cover all keys by Gold Level, making sure there aren't any gaps!



The award-winning *PianoTrainer* series: **The Foundation Pianist, The Intermediate Pianist and The Advanced Pianist** books are published by Faber Music. Available from all good retailers and online.

FAQs continued

How often do you recommend setting a level for a student?

Generally I find one or two terms is long enough for a student to work on a group of keys. Set the work at the start of term and give an indication of when you expect to hold the assessment, according to speed of learning and the number of new keys to be learnt. Move straight on to the next level after the assessment.

How long would you give between setting the scales and having an assessment?

A deadline is a good thing. Perhaps give a maximum of two terms unless there are specific reasons not to. You know your students the best! Do also consider a staggered deadline: so many scales per week or a third of the list completed in a month, for example.

How do you assess the scales – all in one go, at a lesson or in exam conditions?

You can decide this according to what is most appropriate for your student(s). Generally, I like to have a relatively formal setting so there is something specific to work towards and a sense of achievement afterwards. But if you have nervous students or older players who prefer a less formal approach, it works just as well to be more relaxed!

What do you recommend doing after Gold Level?

Once all the keys have been learnt there are lots of different options to pursue. Many are outlined in *The PianoTrainer Scale Workbook* – extending the number of octaves and exploring more advanced shapes are the most obvious. Students will be ideally placed to tackle higher grade exams and more challenging repertoire, as long as they keep their technical work going as well.

Do these challenges work for adults and older teenagers too?

Yes, these levels work extremely well for older learners generally, especially as they often prefer to avoid grade exams but still require motivation and structured progress.

What are the commendation certificates for?

Use this certificate whenever ten more shapes have been learnt. These can be any shapes at all – an arpeggio in root, 1st and 2nd inversions of one key gives three shapes immediately.

Where can I ask additional questions about The Piano Trainer Scale Challenge?

Contact Faber Music on information@fabermusic.com for more information.



The award-winning *PianoTrainer* series: **The Foundation Pianist, The Intermediate Pianist and The Advanced Pianist** books are published by Faber Music. Available from all good retailers and online.