



2020 Piano Syllabus: What's New

50 years ago in 1970, MMTA published its first piano syllabus. With the syllabus and exam program, MMTA created a comprehensive curriculum for pre-college study, and established a system of adjudication that has nurtured and inspired several generations of piano students.

The strengths of the syllabus have always been its structure and its flexibility. It is structured with carefully sequenced requirements in the areas of keyboard skills, repertoire, and sightplaying. At the same time, each level provides a range of options that enables teachers to implement those requirements with the flexibility to meet the needs of individual students.

It's a privilege to introduce the newest edition of the syllabus and its supporting materials, developed over the past six years by members of the Piano Exam Development Committee.

- First, the syllabus itself contains requirements and repertoire lists for every level.
- Second, the Preparation Book contains reproducible pages, supporting material, skills check off charts for your students, and sample keyboard skills for each level.
- Third, the Resource Book is a cross reference that helps you find syllabus pieces in a wide variety of anthologies and other sources. These three books have all been updated to support the latest edition.
- There's one more resource available with this 2020 edition – the Resource File, available with every purchase of the Resource Book. The Resource File is a spreadsheet containing 8500 entries – many more than could be included in the printed Book. It's searchable and updatable and contains a tab showing Contest pieces and where they may be substituted.

What's the newest content in the 2020 syllabus?

- The Keyboard Skills may have the fewest changes over all – some tweaks were made to streamline the required keys at each level, some tempos were clarified for chord inversions and arpeggios, and there are small changes in terminology. For instance, we use the term pentascale, we ask students to play legato or staccato rather than legato or detached. We reworked the 'script' language on the skills test.
- There are supporting materials available to help your students learn their keyboard skills – the workbooks for Prep-Level 3 and Levels 4-6 lay out every requirement, every key at each level. Keep in mind that there are a few of the 2017 and 2018 editions still available in the MMTA store, which are laid out according to the previous syllabus requirements. So there is now a one page Addendum that will be included with each sale of these books, so that you can prepare your students according to the new requirements. The Addendum will be available to download from the website for those of you who already own these books.
- The most exciting changes are to the repertoire lists – they've been updated with additional pieces and lots of new anthologies and sources for new pieces and old favorites. There are over

600 new pieces included in this edition. We cited several new anthologies as preferred sources in the syllabus listings. As with every new edition, some pieces have been moved from one level to another that the committee deemed more appropriate. We also looked at the past ten years of contest lists and included many favorites. We hope you have fun getting to know and use these great repertoire choices.

- Take note of the repertoire list labels. The previous syllabus used the rubric List A – Baroque. For a variety of reasons, we are discontinuing the practice of using ABCDE except at Prep and Level 1. From Level 2 on up, we simply use the style period names – Baroque, Classical, Romantic, Impressionist, and Contemporary.
- There's a new rule governing using Contest substitutions for repertoire requirements: If a Contest piece is on a Syllabus list, the Syllabus level takes precedence over the level allowed for substitution. Here's an example. King William's March by Jeremiah Clarke shows up on the Junior A Contest list every few years. It's a great choice for that level. Normally we allow Junior A pieces to be used for Syllabus levels 1, 2, 3, or 4. But the piece is also in the Syllabus at Level 2. With this new rule, level two is the highest level at which the piece can be programmed. The Syllabus level takes precedence, and the piece may not be substituted at a higher level.
- In answering Oral Questions, students show their understanding of their own pieces. At most levels, students will be asked only four rather than five questions. Judges will be given specific directions of which questions to ask at each level.
- Levels 10 and 11 have a whole new look. At these levels, repertoire lists have been combined to provide greater flexibility in planning repertoire, and to emphasize the need to plan with both programs in mind.
- Students now have two options at the highest level, Level 11 or Level 11: Capstone.
 - Students now have the option, as at previous levels, to take Level 11 for either the Comprehensive Certificate or the Performance Certificate.
 - Students taking Level 11: Capstone will meet specific requirements outlined in detail in the syllabus, page 151. Capstone is designed to showcase the student's comprehensive musicianship in a recital format.
- The exams and critique forms have been reconfigured so that scoring for all levels is on a 100 point basis.

If you have questions or comments about the 2020 Piano Syllabus materials, please don't hesitate to contact the committee chair or program director.