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## Focused Firm Fingertips

The fingertip should remain **firm** at the **nail joint** to support the hand and arm on the keyboard.

This



Firm nail joints

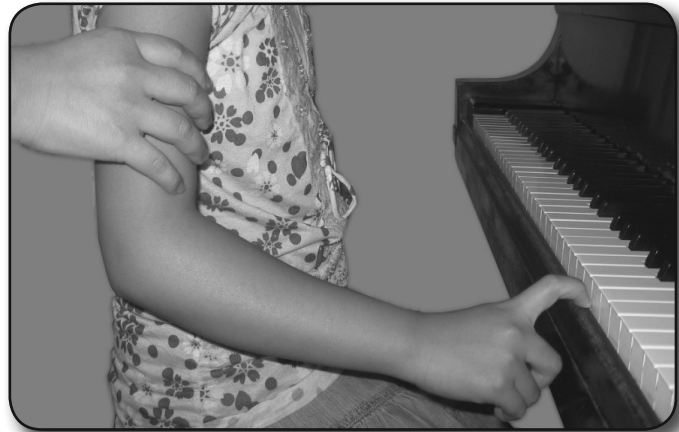
Not This



Broken, collapsed nail joints

### To make nail joints firm:

1. **Knock** fingertips on the keys until nail joints feel heavy.
2. **Hang** onto the edge of the piano with the nail joint of finger 2. (Pretend you are hanging from the edge of a cliff with only this joint.)
3. The muscles of the upper arm must be relaxed. Have someone (or with your other hand) **shake your upper arm**, keeping the nail joint in place.
4. Next, hang on with the nail joint of finger 3, then finger 4, and then finger 5.



Relaxed upper arm muscles with firm nail joint

Use firm nail joints in *Five Finger Exercise*. Place fingers over the new position **before** playing it.

## Five Finger Exercise

new position

1

1

continue upward until...

5

5

new position

1

1

continue downward until...

5

5

## Supported Hand Position

### The arch of the hand:

The muscles in the **palm of the hand** support the fingertips on the keys.

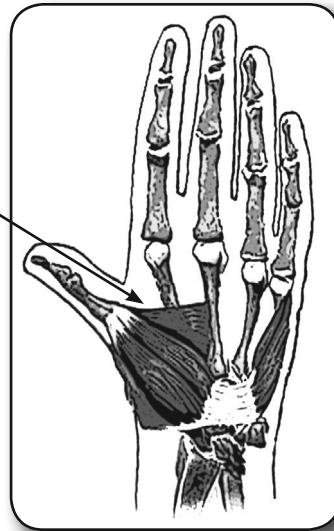
- Place the five firm nail joints on the keyboard (or fallboard).
- Using muscles of fingers 1 and 5, lift the hand from the palm to make an **arch from the knuckle of finger 1 to the knuckle of finger 5**.



### The muscles in the palm of the hand:

A muscle that connects fingers 1 and 3 makes those fingers **a strong support** for the arch.

- Finger 5 has a muscle that connects to the muscle of finger 1.
- The elbow helps support finger 5 on the keyboard.
- Playing with the muscles in the palm allows knuckle and wrist muscles to be relaxed when playing.



Using the **palm muscles**, balance on finger 3 when playing these exercises:

RH

LH

First, play fingers 5, 3, and 4. Next, add finger 1 when playing finger 5, feeling the connection between fingers 1 and 3 to make a strong arch between fingers 1 and 5. (Knuckles and wrist are relaxed.)

RH

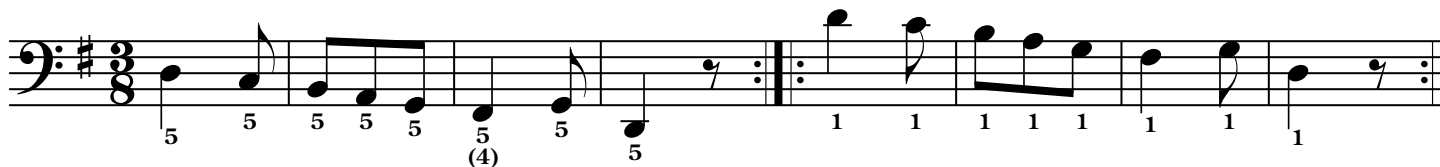
LH

## Octave Preparation

Octave playing has **two** skills that must work together: the **fingertips** and the **wrist action**.

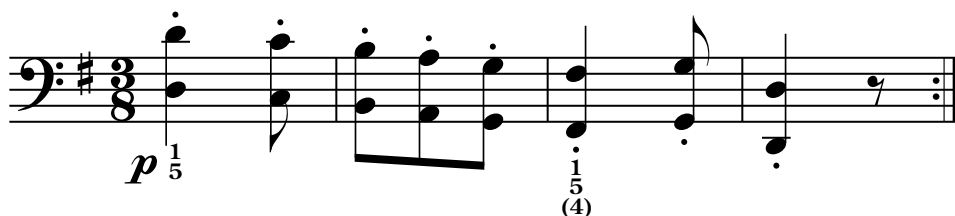
### 1. Practicing the fingertips:

- First, practice finger 5 alone with **no arm weight**. Use finger 4 on black key octaves if the hand can reach it. (Make the octave hand shape while playing finger 5.)
- Then, play finger 1 alone with a **quiet wrist** and octave-shaped hand.



Playing the octaves with finger staccato (plucking motion):

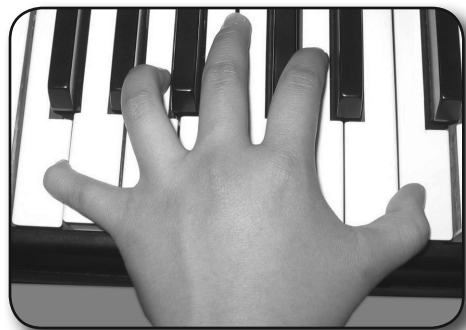
- Fingertips bounce to the next key with no forearm weight.



### 2. Practicing the wrist action:

- Make **knocking** motions on the keys (or fallboard) with a fist, using the above rhythm.
- Rest the fingers on the keys, keeping a **firm arch** between fingers 5 and 1 with a **relaxed wrist**.

This

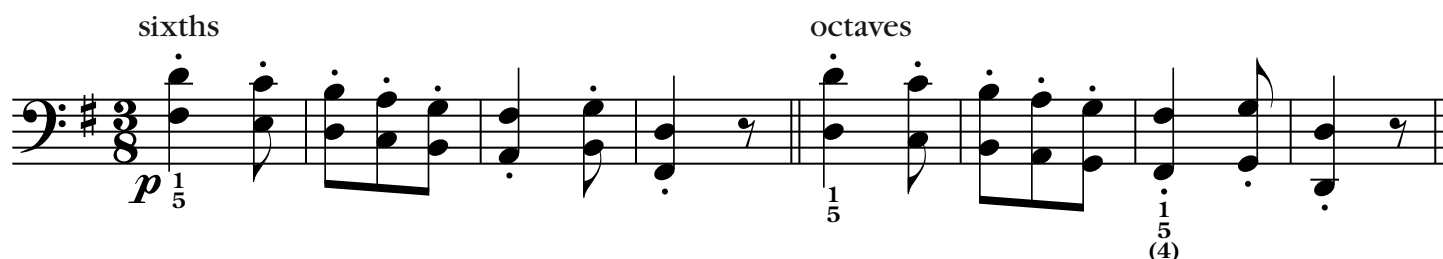


Keep **arched hand**  
when playing octaves

Not This






- Keeping the fingers close to the keys, use a knocking motion (from the wrist) to play sixths and octaves:



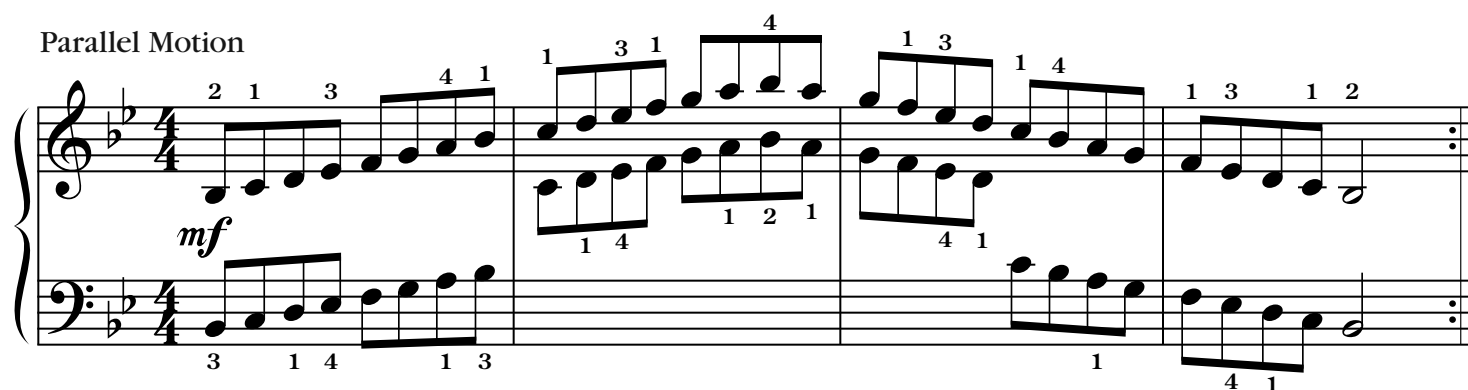
## Warm-Up Patterns in B $\flat$ Major

Using a metronome, play the Parallel Motion and Contrary Motion B $\flat$  Major Scales in Progressive Rhythms with the same rich, full tone at all speeds.

- Play the Parallel Motion scale first  one octave, then  two octaves, then  three octaves.

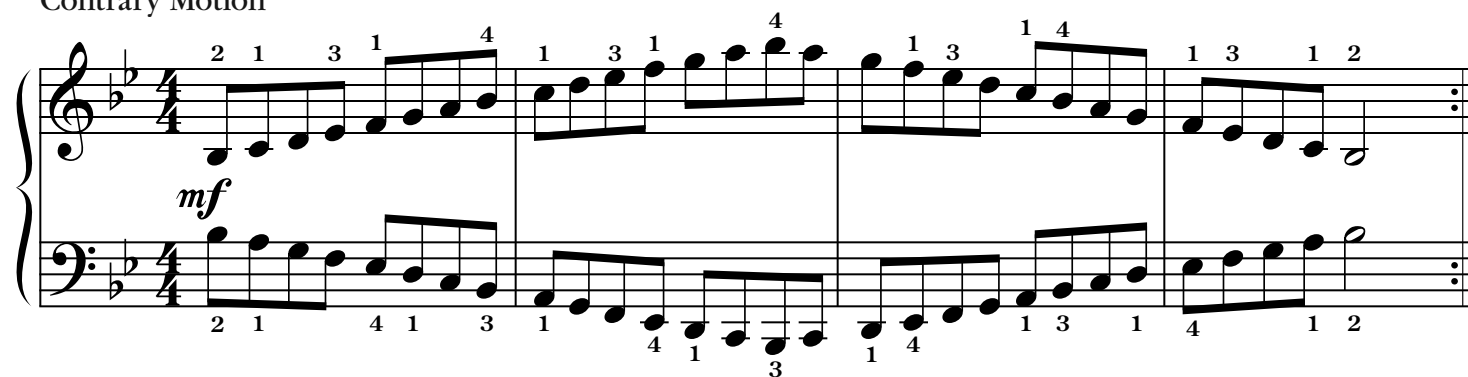
### B $\flat$ Major Scales in Progressive Rhythms

#### Parallel Motion



- Play the Contrary Motion scale first  one octave, then  two octaves.

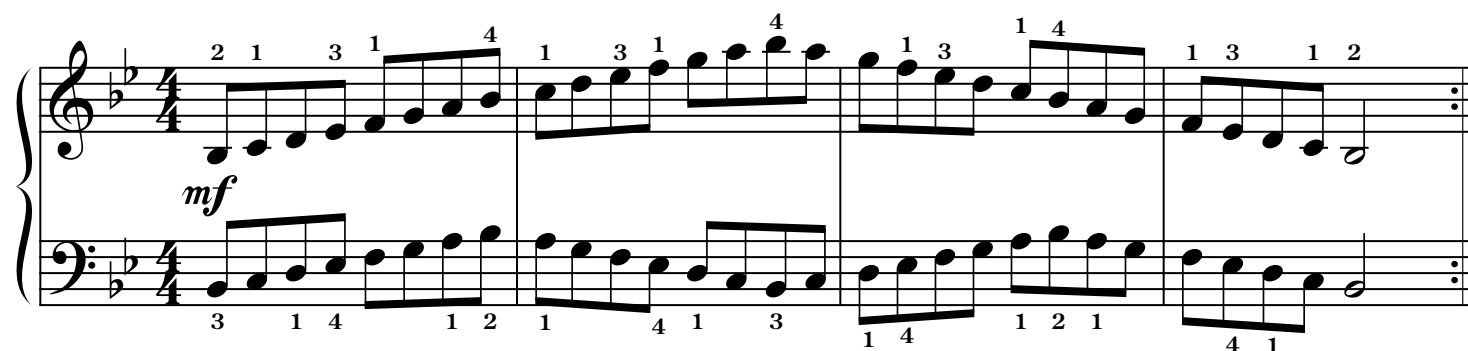
#### Contrary Motion



- Play the Combined Parallel and Contrary Motion scale as written.

- Double the tempo on the repeat.

#### Combined Parallel and Contrary Motion



## The Trill

Trills in the Baroque era usually begin on the **upper note** (the one above the main note). Practice *Trill Exercise* with different finger combinations (RH 3131; 4242; etc.; LH 1313, 2424, etc.) and with the LH two octaves lower.

- On the **tips** of the fingers, with **no arm weight**, feel a balanced connection between the trilling fingers.
- To help increase speed, slightly **shake** the hand from the upper arm.

### Trill Exercise

William Mason  
(1829-1908)

#### Short (four-note) trill:

- First, play each note with precise finger action.
- Gradually increase speed.
- Then, play it in one quick shaking motion.

written:

played:

Combined **appoggiatura** and short trill:  
(The appoggiatura delays the beginning of the trill.)

## Repeated Notes

- With finger action only, use a little more **energy on the first note** of each group, keeping a relaxed forearm and wrist.
- Play near the edge of the key, feeling it come back up.