

How to Interpret Educational Piano-Music Levels—by Carol Matz

from: carolmatzpiano.com

What's the difference between Late Elementary and Early Intermediate? While leveling varies between publishers, there are certain basics that apply to the levels of educational composers' and arrangers' works. This chart shows the main concepts included in each level. However, there is often overlap. None of this should be viewed strictly, but instead used as a *guideline* for choosing materials for your piano students.

Early Elementary

- Uses notes on the staff from Bass C to G-above-Middle C
- Avoids eighth notes
- Sharps and flats written as accidentals (no key signature)

Elementary

- Notes on the staff might extend from Bass G to Treble G
- Introduces simple eighth-note rhythms
- Root position triads might be used, along with intervals up to the 5th
- Sharps and flats largely written as accidentals (might include Key of G)
- Simple “down-up” pedal might be used

Late Elementary

- Introduces ledger-line notes (up to 2 lines) *between* the staves
- Use of single eighth notes and eighth rests, as well as dotted-quarter notes
- No more than one sharp or one flat in the key signature
- Harmonic-interval playing extended to 6ths
- I, IV, and V7 chords may be used (in the keys of C, F, and G)
- Use of pedal changes (“connected” or “legato” pedal)

Early Intermediate

- Notes extend no more than 3 ledger lines above/below the staves
- Triplets and swing rhythm introduced
- Cut time and 6/8 time introduced
- Key signatures usually include no more than two sharps or one flat
- Harmonic-interval playing extended to include the 7th

Intermediate

- Increased use of ledger-line notes
- Introduces sixteenth-note rhythms, including the dotted-eighth
- Features inverted triads and playing octaves
- Key signatures might include up to 3 or 4 sharps or flats

...and those mysterious pop labels ‘Big Note’ and ‘Easy Piano?’

- Big Note = Late Elementary to Early Intermediate
- Easy Piano = Intermediate