

Using a Keyboard 101 Frère Jacques: the first bit

Learn the basics of using your fingers on a keyboard comfortably and effectively, how to play the first bit of Frère Jacques and how keyboard players number their fingers

You need a keyboard – ideally a real one.

1. You must have worked through Musithink 102 before you tackle this, and Musiknowledge102 would be worth a look.

2. You are going to use three adjacent white notes to play the first bit of the tune: *Frè-re Jac-ques, Frè-re Jac-ques*. With so many to choose from, you need to find the correct ones.

Find a pair of black notes around the middle of the keyboard. You are going to use the three white notes that are in the same area – the one immediately to the left, the one in the middle and the one immediately to the right. If you know letter names on the keyboard, they are C, D and E.

Press the lowest of these – the one immediately to the left. Do you like the sound of it? If you feel you'd rather work with lower or higher notes, move down or up an octave.

3. Now you've found the notes, spend a bit of time getting set up for success.

- Your keyboard needs to be at about waist level – that may take a bit of sorting out.
- Have a space between your tummy and the keyboard so you aren't hunched
- Rest both your hands on the keys – it doesn't matter exactly where, and lift your wrists so they are a little higher than your fingers
- Try lifting each finger up then pressing it down on a key – make sure your fingers aren't stiff – press don't prod!
- Unless your nails are very long they shouldn't be touching the keys – your fingers meet the keys at about 45°

For this activity you are just going to use your right hand, so your left hand can rest in your lap.

You're going to use the thumb, index finger and middle finger of your right hand. Play around for a bit with those three digits. Find three adjacent notes anywhere on the keyboard and practise being able to press then down one after the other. You'll find you have to use your thumb a bit on the side rather than flat. Remember to keep your wrist hovering.

4. Go back to step 2 to find the three adjacent notes you need for “Frè-re Jac-ques”. Put your thumb on the first one and press then play the notes with the index finger and then the one with your middle finger. Practise playing those three notes until you can do them smoothly and steadily.

5. You've been playing the notes for “*Frè-re Jac*”.

Which of the three notes do you need to press again to play “*ques*”?

Now you can do the first quarter of the tune.

6. Keyboard players use numbers to remind them which fingers to use.

Thumb is 1, and the other fingers are 2, 3, 4 and 5.

So far you've used 1 2 3.

For this activity your finger numbers are the same as the pitch numbers – which is handy!