

Facetime, Skype and Zoom online lessons:

Dear everyone,

Earlier today I decided to move all my in-person lessons to online lessons. Here is the email I sent to the families, if it would be useful to you you are welcome to use it as a template. I had offered optional in-person lessons two weeks ago and nobody took me up on it, so I was concerned about the response. So far, all responses have been positive and some have been thankful. It helps that all the school in my area shut down a few hours later!

Dear piano families,

First, I hope that all of you are safe and well! Could each of you send me a quick RSVP to let me know that you got this note?

I am going to temporarily replace all in-person lessons with distance lessons (lessons taught via videochat), beginning Monday March 16.

Like many of you, I have been carefully following the CDC and other health authorities regarding COVID-19, and I have also been keeping an eye on the precedent set by other music schools in the area. With the escalation of COVID-19 to a pandemic, many of the local music community music schools as well as the New England Conservatory, NEC Preparatory, and Longy School of Music canceled all in-person lessons and moved all their instruction online yesterday.

Lessons will continue to be on the same day and time as your current lessons. I will be offering pre-lesson technology tryouts this weekend for anyone that would like to try the set up in advance. Contact me if you would like to schedule one (I recommend this!)

I will be using Zoom or Skype (whichever you prefer) for online lessons. Here is how to join a Zoom meeting, once you receive an invitation from me:

https://www.youtube.com/embed/vFhAEoCF7jg?rel=0&autoplay=1&cc_load_policy=1

If you prefer Skype, please send me your Skype name and address.

You will need:

- a tablet or computer that has an internet connection, camera, and microphone. The camera and microphone on your device are good enough for a lesson.
- The ideal position for your device is a little higher than the keyboard and off to one side, so that I can see both you and the keyboard. Make sure that you are not backlit.

Do parents need to attend the lessons, if they are in your home?

- If you normally come to lessons, yes please! For younger students I think it might be pretty helpful to keep the flow of the lesson going. We can adjust as needed after we have gotten the hang of it.
- If you normally do not come to lessons, please do attend the first one to help with any technical difficulties.

What to expect/how will this be different?

- There is usually a sound delay of about a half second, which can lead to people talking over each other. So we will need to learn to take turns talking and create some sort of visual signal to show that you are about to speak, which can reduce the confusion and interruptions.
- In advance of the lesson, it is helpful to put measure numbers in your music. You can write the number of the measure at the beginning of each line, instead of the number on each measure. If you don't have time, I can do this with the student in the lesson as well.
- If I don't already have a copy of your music, we will ask you to scan it and send it to us. Maybe the easiest way to do this is to use an [app for your phone](#) that takes a picture and converts that to a .pdf file.

Please do let me know if you have concerns. We are all doing our best to figure out best practices and the best way forward.

Thank you!

Barbara Lieurance

Zoom is a good alternative to Skype. NEC prep is asking all their teachers to download it to use for remote teaching:

<https://zoom.us/>

Tips on Using Skype for Piano Teaching Deborah Yardley Beers

1. Be sure to have a copy of lesson notes from the last lesson on hand. If you don't, have the student send you a photo of them in advance.
2. Be sure you have copies of the scores of music the student is going to play, and be sure the bars are numbered (the same) in your copy and in the student's.
3. Be sure the student has a metronome on hand, because they can't use yours and play on Skype at the same time.
4. Do duets by recording the teacher part, uploading it on Google Drive, and giving the student the link.
5. Be aware that sound quality is not great on Skype. This is a great time to work extra on theory, keyboard harmony, and rhythm. It's also a great time to work on how to practice. With regard to interpretation, it's a great chance to focus on timing.
6. Consider offering to take time apart from the lesson to connect on Skype before the first lesson and just see that the connection works ok.

7. If you anticipate more than one Skype lesson in a row with a student, be sure someone is taking notes at the lesson, and that both you and the student have copies of the notes afterwards. It may be best for the teacher to take the notes and send a photo of them afterwards.

One thing that can be done as a supplement is ask students to send a good sound recording, then you can talk about it in real time with them during their Skype lesson. Or you can give written comments. They can upload their recording to Google Drive and share the link with you.

Facetime using Apple products works very well for online lessons. Try mounting a tri-pod to your iPad for FaceTime.