

The Benefits of the RCM Curriculum

“A student is almost always motivated to practice when he leaves his lessons feeling capable.”

– Frances Clark, Pianist



If you are a music learner, you have probably heard of the “RCM” curriculum. RCM stands for The Royal Conservatory of Music, which is a Canadian-based curriculum that has ‘grades’ of music learning. The Royal Conservatory of Music has levelled curriculum for a variety of instruments, including voice, piano, guitar, and more! A huge benefit of the RCM curriculum is that it also has exams available for each grade of music, and in some cases, it can even count for high school credit. At Crescendo Music Studios we highly recommend taking a music exam every year, or at least every second year! There are so many benefits to music examinations, and we will be talking about them below.

Music Examinations Provide Progress Benchmarks

It is incredibly important for both the students and their parents to see progress when they are learning a new instrument. Exams provide a conquerable goal for the student, and are also a way that a student can “pass” the level and move to the next level. As teachers, we find over and over again the importance of a student feeling accomplished. When students master a

particularly tricky song or scale they are always re-invigorated with passion for their instrument. An exam can be wonderful incentive for students to see their progress, and that they are continuing to grow in their learning!

RCM Exams Count for Credits in School!

The Royal Conservatory of Music is recognized as a private music study that may be eligible for high school credits! If a student has completed a grade 6 RCM exam in piano, they are able to receive 5 music credits in school. This continues with each grade of the Royal Conservatory, with grade 7 and 8 eligible for another 5 respectively, up to a maximum of 15 high school credits! Additionally, if a student chooses to pursue music at the post-secondary level, they are often required to have a certain standing within RCM.

More information can be found on the [RCM Website](#) -- and piano isn't the only eligible instrument! Voice, Guitar, Violin, and a multitude of brass instruments are also eligible for extra credits.

We Believe in Holistic Music Learning!

Reading and playing music is only one part of the music learning journey. At Crescendo, we are dedicated to providing a holistic learning experience. This means we strive to teach our students a variety of skills that help them to become more well-rounded musicians. In a single lesson, a student should be working on their rudiments and technical skills, their repertoire, their sightreading, and their theory! We also teach our students how to practice properly, so that they may get the most out of their at-home learning. Setting goals, memorizing their songs, and performing them is also an important part of learning at Crescendo -- we have a variety of performance opportunities available each year so that any student can be afforded the opportunity to perform, whether it be one-on-one video showcases or large scale concerts!

We highly encourage exams at Crescendo because they contain a portion of all of these skills! When preparing for an exam, students must choose repertoire they love, set goals, practice, and memorize the pieces. All exams contain a musicianship section, so students must work on their ear-training, sight-reading, rhythms, and more with their teacher to be prepared. Technical skills such as scales and triads are also included in exams!

The Royal Conservatory of Music also offers theory exams alongside their practical exams beginning in grade 3. This is a wonderful opportunity for students to be recognized for their hard work in completing their theory books. Music theory is an incredibly important part of any music learning journey because it provides the rules by which music works. Learning music theory will help a student understand the different written elements that make up a piece of music including; note reading, note values, time signatures, chord progressions, articulation, and much more. Holistic musical education should include theory each week because it will help a student to become a better musician!

What if I Don't Learn Out of the RCM Books?

No problem! At Crescendo Music Studios we have designed Crescendo exams that can be taken by any student, any instrument, and any repertoire. Similar to the Royal Conservatory Exams, we test on technical skills/rudiments, repertoire, studies, and musicianship. Your teacher will work with our guidelines to design an exam for your playing level, no matter the repertoire or instrument! This means that we also offer vocal exams where you may perform a variety of songs from multiple genres! Our highly qualified examiners provide grades and feedback around the repertoire you've chosen and the skills you are showing.

The reason we felt the need to provide Crescendo Exams is due to the incredible range of musicians within our school. Some students might play piano at a certain level, but they are primarily working with contemporary music because they are also vocalists. The Crescendo Exam allows them the flexibility to choose repertoire that reflects their passions and interests, as well as the skill-set they may be pursuing, while also still challenging them to know the foundational aspects of music such as technical skills, theory, sight-reading, and more! We believe this encourages students to be well-rounded musicians.



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