

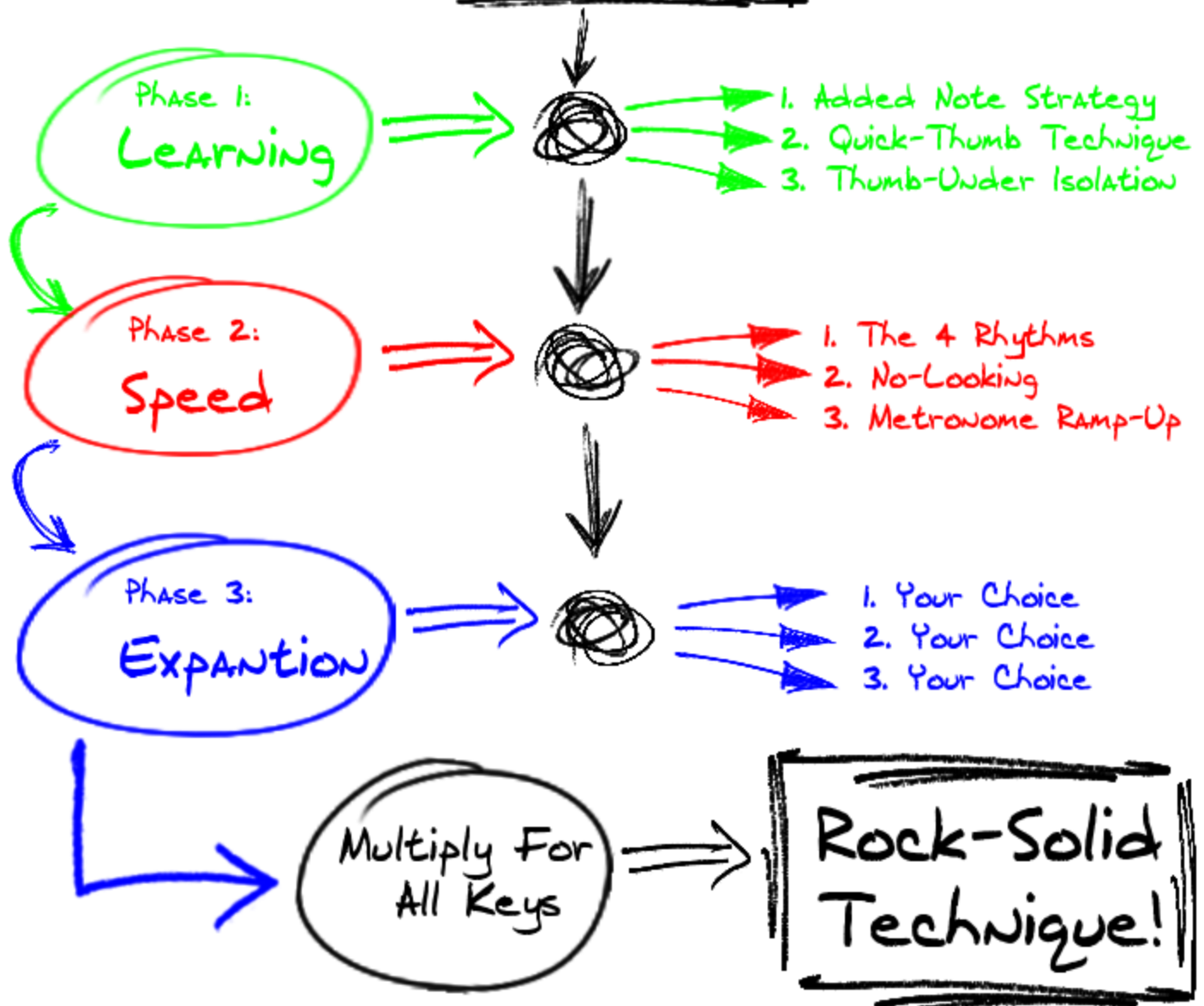
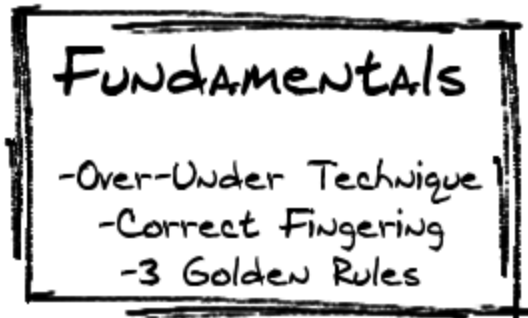
LIGHTNING FAST PIANO SCALES

A Proven
Method
to Get Fast
Piano Scales
in 5 Minutes
a Day

ZACH EVANS



PIANO SCALES Mastery



Lightning Fast Piano Scales

A Proven Method to Get Fast Piano Scales in 5 Minutes a Day

By Zach Evans

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Introduction – How Will This Book Help You?

Do you find scales difficult to learn? Boring to practice? Or maybe you just want to take your technique to the next level?

This book contains proven steps and strategies on how to take your scales to lightning fast speeds. With five minutes a day of practice.

You may be wondering why it takes so long to learn scales. The reason **is you're probably not practicing them right**. A lot of pianists just practice them over and over and over. And you can learn them that way, but it's the slow way to learn them. There's a much faster way. Here's how it works:

At some point in your life you've had to learn a long list of words for a class. The first time you learned them by repeating them over and over. It took you hours and hours to learn them.

Then at some point you probably figured out about some strategies to learn them faster. You started using Flashcards. Or Acronyms. Or Flowcharts. Those same words that took you 4 hours to learn now only take you 20 minutes!

Piano is no different. That's what this book is about, the strategies you can use to learn piano scales faster and more efficiently. There's a proven step-by-step process that gets results, and it's all contained in this book.

What You'll Learn

- The 3 phases of scale development and what phase you're in
- Specific strategies to get through each phase fast
- The fundamental form to get a smooth thumb under transition
- How to develop a "Challenge Attitude" that'll make learning scales exciting
- How learning scales leads to a technique boost that benefits everything else you play
- The optimum daily practice routine, laid out step-by-step
- The 3 Golden Rules to efficient piano practice

So how do you know this'll work? I can prove it to you. Here's a video of me playing all 12 Major Scales in 4 octaves. Fast: <https://youtu.be/Ow6BacGiKwQ>



I'm not showing you this video to brag; I'm showing it to you so you can see what's possible with this system. I used the exact strategies in this book to develop my scales like this.

Fast, solid scales translate to better technique *in everything you play!* Every piece will get a little "boost" from your scale work. You'll develop that "at home" feel on the keyboard. It's

helped me tremendously in every single piece I've played. Here's my YouTube channel if you want to see what I'm capable of: <http://www.youtube.com/keystroke3>

What This Book is Not

This book is not a "Magic Bullet." You won't get better simply by reading it. It still takes consistent practice. This book is simply the shortest path to your goal of playing fast, consistent scales.

To get the most out of this book, **I urge you to put it into practice *right away***. Actually sit down at the piano and try the strategies out for yourself. I promise you you'll be surprised on how fast you can learn them.

So if you're looking for a Magic Bullet, don't get this book, it's not for you. But if you're looking for a proven method to improve your scales in the shortest amount of time, so you *know* the practice you put in will get results, then this is perfect for you.

One last thing. **I'll be there for you every step of the way**. If you have any questions about any of the strategies outlined in this book, you can email me about them, ***I will respond***. Zach@zachevansmusic.com. You can test it right now, shoot me an email and say what's up, I'd love to hear from you.

-Zach

-PS, I've been getting requests for an audio book version, that way if you're busy you can listen to the book while you're driving, doing laundry, or taking a walk. If you're interested in that you can get it for \$2.99 here: <https://gum.co/LATDe>

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Chapter 1: Scale Fundamentals

Ok, so before we start talking about the cool strategies and tactics, we have to cover some scale basics. Some fundamental rules to practicing scales. *These fundamentals are the most important part of this book.* You could use all the cool strategies in the world, but if you aren't playing with the correct fundamentals, they will take you nowhere. On the flip side, always following these fundamentals will multiply your practicing and you will get a TON out of each practice session. So we're going to talk about three things:

- The basic technique to playing scales
- Using the correct fingering
- The 3 Golden Rules for efficient piano practice

The Basic Technique to Playing Scales

It's not just about what notes you play, but it's about *how you play them.*

Having solid technique and form will improve your tone, speed, and help prevent injury.

1. Smooth Tone

Have you ever heard someone play scales, and they just *weren't smooth*? They were playing all the right notes, but the rhythm was shaky, or some notes really stuck out instead of having a nice, even tone?

You want *consistent* scales, meaning you are able to play them with all the notes at a similar volume and at an even rhythm. That's what makes them sound silky smooth! And it's one of the things that separates good pianists from great pianists.

2. Speed

Good form allows you to play fast. It puts the angles of your fingers, wrists, and elbows at optimum positions so there is the most efficient use of motion possible. Without good form, your scales will feel awkward and sloppy, because you'll have to contort your wrist at weird angles to reach the notes.

Once you master this form, you'll notice an immediate improvement in all your playing! Suddenly fast passages will be significantly easier to play, and you'll feel "at home" on the keyboard.

3. Injury Prevention

Piano injuries are more common than most people think. A lot of pianists get injured from repetitive motion (and there's a lot of repetitive motion in scales!).

Tension is what leads to injury. When you're playing tense, the tendons and ligaments in your fingers and wrists are constantly under strain, and eventually they will break down. That's the cause of injury. The key is to stay relaxed and tension free. Having good form will allow you to do that.

How to have good form: The Over Under Technique

Note: I'll do my best to explain this in words, but I've made a video lesson to accompany this chapter if you want to understand this form better, you can find it here:

<https://youtu.be/S682Xb9LLcQ>



The most basic form on piano is the over-under wrist motion. Here's the basic rule:

Whenever you're going away from your body, roll your wrist down and out in a semicircular motion

Whenever you're going towards your body, roll your wrist up and in, in a semicircular motion

So for example, let's say you're playing **C D E** with your right hand or **C B A** with your left hand. Your hand is moving away from your body, so your wrist will be moving down and out. On the contrary, if you're playing **C B A** with your right hand or **C D E** with your left hand, your hand is moving towards your body, so your wrist should be moving up and in.

When playing scales, on the way up your right wrist will be moving down and out, and your left wrist will be moving up and in, and it reverses on the way down.

When you play scales, each time your thumb crosses under, you'll have to do a mini "reset" to prepare the hand for the next motion. When you first start practicing, you want to over exaggerate the motion. Realllly make big semicircles with your wrists, it's easy to tone it down later once you get the hang of it.

A good way to practice this is to use the **Five Finger Drill**. Simply play **C D E F G F E D** with fingers **1 2 3 4 5 4 3 2** and repeat, making sure to use the correct wrist motion. Your wrist should be moving in a complete circle (well, really more of an oval) for this drill. If this is hard to visualize, definitely check out the video lesson, it's easier to explain there.

So whenever you're practicing scales, focus on using this form, you'll get results much faster I promise you, and the form will start seeping into everything you play, making you a much more well-rounded pianist.

Using Correct Fingering

Using correct fingering from the start is HUGE!

Muscle memory is *extremely* important when learning scales. And you drill in muscle memory by repetition.

The problem with using the wrong fingering is you're literally teaching yourself the wrong muscle memory.

Trust me, when I was first starting out, I would just guess at the proper fingering. I'd learn it wrong, and it was a huge pain correcting it, because I had trained my fingers to play the scales wrong, and they naturally wanted to go to the wrong notes!

Then when you go back and try to play it correctly, you have to unlearn the wrong muscle memory, and relearn the scale the right way. It's going to take you twice as long to learn the scale properly!

Here's all the Major and Harmonic Minor scales with the correct fingering. These are the two most common types of scales, fingering for natural/melodic minor will be the same as the fingering for harmonic minor.

If these images don't show up well on your reader, or you want to print them off, here is the link to download them: <http://www.bestpianotips.com/scale-sheet-download/>

Scale Fingerings

Major Scales

Note: These are the scale fingerings going UP. To go down, simply start from the right side

Note: For 2+ octaves, repeat the pattern but whenever you see a "5" replace it with a "1" (except at the top and bottom of the scale)

C Major

Note	C	D	E	F	G	A	B	C
RH	1	2	3	1	2	3	4	5
LH	5	4	3	2	1	3	2	1

E \flat Major (D \sharp)

Note	E \flat	F	G	A \flat	B \flat	C	D	E \flat
RH	4	1	2	3	4	1	2	3
LH	3	2	1	4	3	2	1	3

G Major

Note	G	A	B	C	D	E	F \sharp	G
RH	1	2	3	1	2	3	4	5
LH	5	4	3	2	1	3	2	1

E Major

Note	E	F \sharp	G \sharp	A	B	C \sharp	D \sharp	E
RH	1	2	3	1	2	3	4	5
LH	5	4	3	2	1	3	2	1

F Major

Note	F	G	A	B \flat	C	D	E	F
RH	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4
LH	5	4	3	2	1	3	2	1

A \flat Major (G \sharp)

Note	A \flat	B \flat	C	D \flat	E \flat	F	G	A \flat
RH	3	4	1	2	3	1	2	3
LH	3	2	1	4	3	2	1	3

D Major

Note	D	E	F \sharp	G	A	B	C \sharp	D
RH	1	2	3	1	2	3	4	5
LH	5	4	3	2	1	3	2	1

B Major

Note	B	C \sharp	D \sharp	E	F \sharp	G \sharp	A \sharp	B
RH	1	2	3	1	2	3	4	5
LH	4	3	2	1	4	3	2	1

B \flat Major (A \sharp)

Note	B \flat	C	D	E \flat	F	G	A	B \flat
RH	4	1	2	3	1	2	3	4
LH	3	2	1	4	3	2	1	3

F \sharp Major (G \flat)

Note	F \sharp	G \sharp	A \sharp	B	C \sharp	D \sharp	E \sharp	F \sharp
RH	2	3	4	1	2	3	1	2
LH	4	3	2	1	3	2	1	4

A Major

Note	A	B	C \sharp	D	E	F \sharp	G \sharp	A
RH	1	2	3	1	2	3	4	5
LH	5	4	3	2	1	3	2	1

C \sharp Major (D \flat)

Note	C \sharp	D \sharp	E \sharp	F \sharp	G \sharp	A \sharp	B \sharp	C \sharp
RH	3	4	1	2	3	4	1	2
LH	3	2	1	4	3	2	1	3

Scale Fingerings

Harmonic Minor Scales

Note: These are the scale fingerings going UP. To go down, simply start from the right side

Note: For 2+ octaves, repeat the pattern but whenever you see a "5" replace it with a "1" (except at the top and bottom of the scale)

A Minor

Note	A	B	C	D	E	F	G#	A
RH	1	2	3	1	2	3	4	5
LH	5	4	3	2	1	3	2	1

C Minor

Note	C	D	E \flat	F	G	A \flat	B	C
RH	1	2	3	1	2	3	4	5
LH	5	4	3	2	1	3	2	1

E Minor

Note	E	F#	G	A	B	C	D#	E
RH	1	2	3	1	2	3	4	5
LH	5	4	3	2	1	3	2	1

C# Minor (D \flat)

Note	C#	D#	E	F#	G#	A	B#	C#
RH	3	4	1	2	3	1	2	3
LH	3	2	1	4	3	2	1	3

D Minor

Note	D	E	F	G	A	B \flat	C#	D
RH	1	2	3	1	2	3	4	5
LH	5	4	3	2	1	3	2	1

F Minor

Note	F	G	A \flat	B \flat	C	D \flat	E	F
RH	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4
LH	5	4	3	2	1	3	2	1

B Minor

Note	B	C#	D	E	F#	G	A#	B
RH	1	2	3	1	2	3	4	5
LH	4	3	2	1	4	3	2	1

A \flat Minor (G#)

Note	A \flat	B \flat	C \flat	D \flat	E \flat	F \flat	G#	A \flat
RH	3	4	1	2	3	1	2	3
LH	3	2	1	4	3	2	1	3

G Minor

Note	G	A	B \flat	C	D	E \flat	F#	G
RH	1	2	3	1	2	3	4	5
LH	5	4	3	2	1	3	2	1

E \flat Minor (D#)

Note	E \flat	F	G \flat	A \flat	B \flat	C \flat	D	E \flat
RH	3	1	2	3	4	1	2	3
LH	2	1	4	3	2	1	3	2

F# Minor

Note	F#	G#	A	B	C#	D	E#	F#
RH	3	4	1	2	3	1	2	3
LH	4	3	2	1	3	2	1	4

B \flat Minor (A#)

Note	B \flat	C	D \flat	E \flat	F	G \flat	A	B \flat
RH	4	1	2	3	1	2	3	4
LH	2	1	3	2	1	4	3	2

Print it out, and put it in the front of your binder, you'll be using it often! It also has the exact notes listed for each scale. Every time you learn a new scale, the first step is taking out the sheet and looking over the fingerings. Do it right from the first time on and you'll save loads of time in the long run.

The 3 Golden Rules to Efficient Piano Practice

I wrote an entire chapter on this topic in my book [Supercharge Your Piano Practice](#), so I'm just going to touch on each point here. These rules are useful not only for practicing scales, but for practicing anything! So follow them whether you're practicing scales or your pieces.

1. Accuracy Over Speed

Always, always, always play with accuracy over speed. This is probably the number one mistake I see beginners make. It's tempting to want to try to play faster because it sounds cool, but resist the temptation and always play slow enough where you are playing the right notes.

Remember how we were talking about not drilling in bad habits in the "fingering" section? Same thing applies here. If you are drilling in the wrong notes, it will be that much harder to unlearn the wrong ones and learn the correct ones.

2. Practice Hands Separate First

This is another mistake I see often. It's tempting to want to put hands together right away. Here's the thing: *if you can't play both hands correctly separately, you won't be able to play them correctly together.*

Before you go on to hands together, have each hand solid by itself. Not "pretty good." Not "getting there." But rock solid. That way when you put them together, you'll already have the muscle memory built in to play them accurately.

3. Always Play Expressively

Yep. Even scales. Scales can be the driest, most boring exercise. But they don't have to be. Experiment with the dynamics and tone to make your scales beautiful. Try crescendoing up to the top and then decrescendoing back down.

This makes practicing much more enjoyable. But it also helps you learn faster. The more emotional something is, the more your brain retains it (what do you remember better, the

experience your first kiss or what you had for lunch that day?). Playing expressively will give you a little boost to learn scales faster.

So there you have it, the fundamentals of practicing scales. Make a conscious effort to follow these every day. It might be a good idea to reflect after the practice session and really think about whether or not you followed these and how you can improve for next time.

Now on to the next chapter where we'll talk about the [3 Phases of Scale Development](#), and how to learn each.

Chapter 2: The 3 Phases of Scale Development

When you're developing your scales, there are **3 main phases** you will go through: the **Learning Phase**, the **Speed Phase**, and the **Expansion Phase**. Each phase has different goals to reach, and a different set of practice strategies and techniques to reach those goals.

Start thinking of your practice sessions as “**workout plans.**”

If you want to get bigger biceps, there's a proven workout plan to get them. There's a plan you follow (for example, you might do 3 x 10 dumbbell curls, 3 x 5 pull-ups, and 4 x 5 rows). If you follow the plan, you're *guaranteed* to get results. There's a method that has been repeated by tons of people, and everyone who has followed the plan has gotten bigger biceps.

Piano is no different. There are repeatable “workouts” that get results. If you do “A” you get “B.” This book will give you the exact “workout plan” for each phase of learning that's specifically designed to learn that phase in the shortest amount of time possible.

I'll go into the specifics of each workout plan in chapters 4, 5, and 6. But for now let's talk about the goals of each phase and when you know you've completed them.

Phase 1: Learning

This is the phase where you actually learn and memorize the notes of a scale. **It's not about how fast you can play them; it's simply learning the notes.** The strategies will focus on rapid memorization of the notes and overcoming the tough “thumb under” pass.

You've completed this phase when you can play the scale consistently and accurately without looking at the notes. By consistently, I mean 3 or 4 times in a row without

mistakes. I also mean at a steady tempo. It doesn't matter if it's a slow tempo, as long as it's steady. If you have to pause a lot to think of the next note, you're not ready to move on yet.

Phase 2: *Speed*

So once you've learned the scale at a slow tempo, it's time to ramp up the speed. The drills and techniques in this phase focus on **solidifying muscle memory** and gradually **ramping up speed without frustration**.

You've completed this phase when you can play the scale at 90bpm (did you get your metronome yet? If not, get one!), sixteenth notes. Note that this is a phase you can repeat after phase 3 and set a higher "goal tempo" to hit. It simply depends how ambitious you are and how fast you want your scales to be!

Phase 3: *Expansion*

In this phase, you'll expand your scales from **1 octave to 2, then 3, then 4 octaves**. You'll have completed this phase once you can play 4 octaves at 90bpm.

Once you've achieved phase 3, you're done-if you want to be. Your technique will be solid by this point, and you can choose to simply maintain your scales where they're at (maintaining scales is *very* easy btw), OR you can choose to keep pushing to better and better things.

You can set a higher tempo to hit, and use the strategies you learned to try to hit that new tempo, or you can test your coordination further by practicing scales in 3rds, 6ths, and 10ths

Creating Your Goal Sheet

Time to create an exact overview of your journey. Write down the scales you want to learn going down on a piece of paper, one on each line. When you complete Phase 1 for the scale, put a big X next to it. When you complete Phase 2, put a second big X next to it. And when you finish Phase 3, put a third big X next to it. Your goal is to get three X's by each scale. Once you do that, your technique will be solid!

Think of it as a meter that measures your technique level. Each X you mark indicates a slight improvement in your total technique. By the time you complete the X's, you'll know your technique is *solid*.

Put the goal sheet somewhere by your piano where you'll see it every day. Use it to motivate you. Use it as a constant reminder to continue to improve your technique.

Alright, onto the next chapter, where we'll go over the exact daily routine you're going to want to follow to get the fastest results!

Chapter 3: The Daily Routine That Gets Results

Before I go into the specifics of the daily routine, I want to talk a little bit about attitude.

The Challenge Attitude

Like a lot of pianists, I started out with the mental attitude of just practicing because “*that’s what I’m supposed to do.*” I’d mindlessly repeat the notes over and over, and eventually I’d learn the piece, but it wasn’t fast or efficient.

Then one day it clicked for me. *I started viewing practice sessions as a challenge.* I’d think to myself, “*How much music can I learn in 30 minutes.*” I’d set my stopwatch, hit start, and practice the piece with determination, to try and see how much I could learn in a short amount of time.

This is when I started seeing crazy results.

Songs that would take me a month to learn I’d learn in a week. I was learning scale after scale each week and my technique was hitting a new level. After six months of this, people really noticed a *huge* difference in my playing.

To get the maximum results from this method, stop thinking about practicing as just “can I learn this,” and replace those thoughts with “*how fast can I learn this.*” The faster you learn each step of piano, the faster your improvement will be.

Think about it like this. If you learn a scale in half the time, you can spend that extra time learning another scale. Or practicing a new piece. Or learning a new technique or style. If you multiply that out to a whole year of practicing, you’ll skyrocket your improvement as a pianist!

Just by implementing this simple attitude shift, you could get twice as good at piano in the same amount of time.

This doesn't just apply to scales, but all of your practicing. So start applying the mental attitude shift right now in your practicing. Start challenging yourself to see how much material you can learn in a short amount of time. I promise you'll surprise yourself with how fast you can improve.

The Daily Routine Step-By-Step

Alright, here's how it works. You're going to pick one scale a week. Don't try to learn a bunch at a time, it's better to focus on one and really drill it in well. **There are three phases of learning**, so if you complete one phase before the week is over, move on to the next phase. If you complete the 3rd phase, then you can move on to another scale for the rest of the week.

To get the maximum results, **use this routine every single day you practice**. Every day! Not twice a week. Not "if you feel like it." Every day, like brushing your teeth. Make it a habit. Do it so consistently that it would feel strange not to do it. *That's* how you get results.

Step 1: **Technique Comes First**

Scales should be the first thing you practice each day. Don't even think about what pieces you're going to work on until your scales are done. There are a couple of reasons for this.

First, **scales are the ultimate warm-up**. 5 minutes of scales and your fingers will be limber and ready to play your pieces.

Second, **it gets you in a routine**. Every day is the same. You sit down at the piano and you do your daily scales. After a month of this you won't even think about it, it'll be automatic. This is what keeps you consistent week after week.

Third, **technique is the most important aspect of your piano ability**, so it should come first. This is just my opinion, some people would disagree and say playing expressively is more important. But I really think if you have good technique, everything else will follow. It's hard to play expressively without good technique, you'll know what you want it to sound like in your mind, but you won't have the tools to translate that emotion to sound. So make technique a priority and practice it right at the beginning of your practice sessions.

Step 2: **Time Yourself**

This is an important step, **don't skip it**.

Get a stopwatch or a kitchen timer (don't use your phone, it'll be too distracting) and **time your scales practice sessions**. Practice *at least* 5 minutes. Make the commitment to work on your scale at least this long.

Use a count-up timer. Sometimes you'll be working on a scale and you'll get "**in the zone.**" You'll be in this flow state where you're crazy focused and motivated and absorbing a ton. When you're in one of these flow states, you can learn a ridiculous amount in a short time.

You don't want to break these states. You can't really control when you get in these flow states, some days they happen, some days they don't, so when they happen you want to *ride them out as long as you can* to get the maximum benefit.

I've had days where I was zoned in on practicing scales, and suddenly I would look at my stopwatch and realize I'd been practicing scales for 45 minutes! But those are the days I'd get the craziest results!

If you use a count-down timer, you're going to be interrupted when the five minutes are up. So instead, use a count up timer. It gives you flexibility to stop at the time limit or to go over it when you're really feeling it.

Step 3: Follow the Plan

In the next 3 chapters, I'm going to give you a "workout plan" for each phase. Step by step instructions on *exactly how to practice*. When you're starting this training, *follow the plan exactly*. Do the precise steps outlined in the chapter, don't "*improvise*" your practicing.

Eventually you'll get to the point where you can start mixing it up. You'll learn which strategies work really well for you and when to use them. I talk a lot more about that in Chapter 6. But starting out, you want to stay disciplined and trust the plan.

Step 4: Cool down (Optional)

The cool down is an optional extra 5 minutes of scales at the very end of your practice session. It's not for everyone. Some people get to the end of the practice session and are so mentally tired they just want to go do something else.

Other people find it relaxing though. After a long practice session of focusing hard on a complicated piece, it can be nice to go back to a simple scale and practice without all the mental stress.

There's a couple benefits to the cool down. First, your scales can make a *significant* improvement from the beginning of the practice session.

Whenever you practice something hard, it takes a while to "soak into your brain." So you do the 5 minutes of scales at the beginning, and the whole time you're working on your piece your scales are "soaking in." When you practice them at the end of the session, they'll feel significantly easier. Try it out for yourself.

Here's another benefit: studies show we remember the first and the last thing we do in a given period of time the best. Think to when you'd have to memorize flashcards for a class. The cards at the beginning and the end of the stack were easier to memorize, where the ones in the middle were more difficult. By bookending your practice session with scales, you can make tremendous improvement on them in a shorter amount of time.

Remember, **this step is optional**. If you're super tired after a long practice session, give yourself a break! But if you feel like getting a little extra improvement in, throw in the cool down.

Alright, onto the fun stuff. In the next chapter we'll talk all about Phase 1 and the fastest way to learn and memorize the notes of a scale.

Chapter 4 - Phase 1: Learning

Phase 1! This phase is all about learning and memorizing the notes of the scale. If you already know the notes, you can skip ahead to Phase 2: Speed, it's the next chapter.

There are a lot of “shortcuts” out there like using “the second to last flat” or counting whole and half steps. These things can be good to know, but they're slow, and if you only know scales that way you'll never be able to speed them up.

Bottom line, you're going to have to memorize every scale.

Don't freak out, you only have to memorize one scale a week! It's really not very difficult. By the time you get through all the scales you'll have them down pat.

Remember: Use Your Scale Sheet

Remember what we talked about in the “**Fundamentals of Scales**” chapter. Take out your scale sheet and *make sure you're using the right fingering as you practice!*

Alright, start your stopwatch and let's get started! Complete the following strategies for your scale. If your five minutes is up before you finish them, don't worry about it, they'll go faster the next day. If you complete all the strategies before the five minutes are up, you can go back and repeat a strategy to drill in your scale even further.

Strategy 1: The Added Notes Strategy

Here's what 90% of people do when they practice their scales. They try to play the entire thing at once, and they end up learning nothing. It's easier if you break it up into small steps. Here's the right way to learn them.

- **Step 1:** Play only the first 2 notes of the scale. Repeat 4-8 times.
- **Step 2:** Play only the first 3 notes of the scale. Repeat 4-8 times.

- **Step 3:** Play only the first 4 notes of the scale. Repeat 4-8 times.
- **Step...:** You get the idea, do the first 5 notes, then the first 6, and so on until you've played all 8 notes from the bottom to the top of the scale.

Once you've gone up the scale, now it's time to come down. Use the same process and practice going down.

So for example, let's say I was practicing a **C Major scale**. Remember, hands separate first, so I would take my right hand alone and play **C D** four times. Then **C D E** four times. Then **C D E F** four times. And so on until I got up to the next **C**.

Then coming down, I would play **C B** four times. Then **C B A** four times. Then **C B A G** four times. And so on until I got to the bottom **C** of the scale.

After that I'd repeat the same process with my left hand. Once both hands are solid hands separate (this may take a few days), then you can use the added note strategy with both hands at the same time.

Remember, **accuracy over speed**. When you put your hands together, it's going to be tougher because your brain has to coordinate two things at once, so you have to play a lot slower in order to hit all the notes accurately.

Make sure you're using the right fingering for this entire strategy! The first day you learn a scale, you'll constantly be checking your fingering sheet. The second day you'll need to check it every so often. By the 4th or 5th day you'll hardly even need to check it at all.

Strategy 2: The Quick Thumb Strategy

The hardest part of the scale is the "**thumb under**" part. It's the part where everyone freaks out leads to pauses in the scale. And it's the biggest thing that makes beginner's scales choppy and uneven. The key to overcoming this is the Quick Thumb Strategy.

Step 1: Start at the Note Your Thumb Plays Before the Crossover

So basically, find where the thumb crosses under, and go back to *the last note the thumb plays*. This is your starting note for this drill. (Note: if this is confusing, there's an example at the end that might explain it better).

So for example, in a C major scale right hand, that's the first C. For the left hand, it would be the top C, because the thumb doesn't cross over until the way down.

Step 2: Play the First Two Notes With Correct Thumb Technique

Now play the first two notes, but here's the key. Move your thumb under *at the same time you play the note with your second finger*. There should be a simultaneous motion as you play the second note and move your thumb under your second finger. This way the thumb

is already close to its next note, and there will be a smooth transition when you put your thumb under.

Repeat this four times, concentrating on getting your thumb under as fast as possible.

Step 3: Repeat With the Following Notes

Now, just like the **Added Notes Strategy**, do the same thing except play the first 3 notes, still making sure to put your thumb under right away, and repeat 4 times. Keep adding notes until you cross your thumb under and play the next note. You don't need to go all the way up the scale, for this part we're just working on the "thumb under" section.

You'll spend most of your time drilling this in hands separate, but you can practice hands together as well. When you play hands together, play with the normal scale fingering, so only one thumb will be crossing under. So for example, if I was playing **C D E F** with my right hand, I should be playing **C D E F** with my left hand (not **C B A G**).

So all this may be kind of confusing, here is an example. Let's say your working on a **C Major Scale**. Start with your right hand. Play **C D** and focus on moving your thumb under *at the same time* you press the note **D** with your second finger. Repeat 4 times. Then play **C D E** focusing on the same thing. Repeat 4 times. Then play **C D E F**. Repeat 4 times. You can stop here, because your thumb crossed under to play the **F**. Since this practice technique is focused on improving the thumb under transition, you don't have to practice the rest of the scale for it.

Now take your left hand, and repeat the process with the notes **C B A G** going *down*. We're going down with the left hand because the downward section is when the thumb crosses under.

Strategy 3: Thumb Under Isolation

The **Quick Thumb Strategy** might be enough for you to drill the thumb under passage, but sometimes you might still need some extra work to get this transition solid. This is where the **Thumb Under Isolation strategy** comes into play.

Step 1: Find the Thumb Cross

Find the 2 notes where the thumb crosses under. For example, in a **C Major scale** right hand, it would be the notes **E** to **F**. Play those notes 4 times with the correct fingering (so in other words just alternate **E F E F E F E F**, with your 3rd finger playing the **E** and your thumb playing the **F**).

Step 2: Add a Note to the Bottom

Now you're going to add one note underneath. So you'll be playing **D E F E D E F E** with fingers **2 3 1 3 2 3 1 3**. You get the idea. Repeat that four times.

Step 3: Add a Note to the Top

Same thing as step 2, but now we're adding a note to the top. So you'll be playing **D E F G F E D** with fingers **2 3 1 2 1 3 2**. Try this on an actual piano, it'll make a lot more sense. Repeat that four times.

Step 4: Keep Expanding Until You're Playing the Whole Scale.

Keep adding notes to the bottom and top until you're playing the entire scale. Then when you get each hand *separate solid*, you can move on to hands together. You can see how this technique really zeros in on the thumb-under section of the scale.

When to Move on to Phase 2

When you can play the scale consistently and smoothly without mistakes, move onto phase 2. It doesn't matter how fast you can play it, but *your scale needs to be even and smooth*. When you speed it up, any unevenness will be amplified, and it'll seem *really* jerky, so make sure you have the scale smooth before you move on.

And I'm going to say it again, *pay attention to the fundamentals!* Are you using the right fingering? Are you using correct form? Are you playing accurately? I know I sound like a broken record right now, and I hate to go on and on about it, but it's *really* important, and I want to make sure you guys are practicing right.

Alright, onto Phase 2 where we'll be talking about how to ramp up your speed!

Chapter 5 - Phase 2: Speed

This is easily my favorite phase. It's the fun phase, where you really get to see your improvement. We're going to turn your scales from slow to lightning fast in the most efficient way possible.

There are 3 new strategies that are designed to increase speed. So start your stopwatch and let's get started!

Strategy 1: The Rhythms Strategy

The rhythms strategy is **my favorite strategy of all time**. It is extremely powerful, and I use it not only in learning scales, but also in almost every single piece of music I play.

Step 1: Long, Short Long, Short

The first step is to practice your scale using the rhythm “**long, short long, short long...**” In notation, it looks like this:



Practice your scale 4 times with this rhythm

Step 2: Short Long, Short Long

Next practice your scale using the rhythm “**short long, short long, short long...**” In notation, it looks like this:



Practice your scale 4 times with this rhythm

Step 3: Long, Short Short Short Long, Short Short Short

Next practice your scale using the rhythm “long, short short short long, short short short...” In notation, it looks like this:



Practice your scale 4 times in this rhythm.

Step 4: Short Short Short Long, Short Short Short Long

Finally, practice your scale using the rhythm “short short short long, short short short long...” In notation it looks like this:



Repeat your scale 4 times using this rhythm.

Step 5: Back to Normal

Practice your scale normally 4 times.

Try this. Just try it. I was seriously amazed at the results the first time I tried it. Each variation of the rhythm helps your brain learn the scale from a slightly different angle, and when you go back to normal, **you’ll have a tremendously better handle** on it.

Just like every other strategy, practice hands separate first. You should be able to move on to hands together pretty quickly though since you already know the scale from Phase 1.

Strategy 2: No Looking

If you’re going to **play scales fast**, there’s no way you have time to actually look at every single note you play. They’ll go by way too fast. You have to learn to “feel” the scale, and trust your muscle memory to find the keys. The best way to train this skill is to **play without looking**.

Playing without looking is *really tough* at first, so we make it easier by slowly getting into it.

Step 1: Look at Your Right Hand Only

Everyone has a hand they tend to look at. Some people tend to watch their left hand, and some people tend to watch their right hand. So for this part, play your scale hands together and *only look at your right hand*. Do this 4 times.

I'm telling you, it will be very tempting to look at your left hand. But don't do it! Play slowly and feel your way around the keyboard. You want to develop "*keyboard topography*," which is your ability to know where you are on the keyboard based on feel. This is great for scales, but also *essential* for sight-reading, where you want to keep your eyes on the page.

Step 2: Look at Your Left Hand Only

Ok, now repeat the process but *only look at your left hand*, and repeat 4 times. Again, resist the temptation to look at your right hand.

Step 3: Close Your Eyes

Ok now for the hard part. You're going to attempt to *play the scale without looking at your hands* at all. *Play slowly*. Really try to get the feel for the scale. Play through 4 times without looking. You can either close your eyes or just look up, as long as you're not looking at your hands.

Step 4: Back to Normal

Play through your scale 4 times normal, looking at your hands. It's amazing what a relief it'll be looking at your hands again, and it'll feel that much easier after you tried to do it without looking.

This is a strategy that takes a while to take hold. Don't get discouraged if it's still not easy after a couple of days. It might take the entire week to solidify.

Strategy 4: Metronome Ramp Up

If you still don't have a metronome, get one! It is the one thing I *use every single day I practice*. Not just for scales, but for ramping up the speed of the piece I'm working on at the moment. Here's how you use it to get results:

Step 1: Find a SLOW Tempo

Put your metronome at a slow setting. And by slow I mean ridiculously slow. Slow enough so you can play the section *easily* with no mistakes. It's definitely better to start even

slower than you need to, so set it a little slower than you think you should. Play through the scale 4 times.

At the slow tempo, make sure you *really* focus on each individual note. One of the main benefits to practicing it slowly like this first is that you can drill in perfect muscle memory by really zeroing in and focusing on each note.

Step 2: Ramp Up the Speed

Turn your metronome up anywhere from 6 to 14 bpm (I usually use three “clicks” if you’re using the same metronome as me). You should barely be able to even notice that it’s faster. Play through the section 4 times.

Then turn it up another 6 to 14 bpm and play through 2-4 more times. Keep ramping up the tempo like this until you hit a speed where you start to make some mistakes. This is your “Max Tempo,” or the maximum speed you can play the scale at.

Step 3: Solidify your Max Tempo

Once you’ve **hit your Max Tempo**, really concentrate and practice it 3 or 4 times. Really try to play the scale without mistakes. You will probably still make some, but really push yourself to play perfectly at that tempo.

Write down your Max Tempo so tomorrow you can try to beat it! It’s important to keep track of where you are so you know if you’re making progress on your scale.

Step 4: Back to a Slow Tempo

Now go back to a slow tempo and play through it 3 to 4 times perfectly. **Don’t skip this step!** Your brain remembers the last time you practice something best, and you want to make sure the mistakes from the Max Tempo don’t get drilled in. By playing it through slowly last, you will ensure **your brain will learn the notes accurately**.

The nice part about ramping up your scale this way is it eliminates the mental stress. If you try to immediately play your scale fast, your brain will freak out there will be a lot of mistakes. By slowly ramping it up like this, at each new tempo you will *barely even notice the tempo change*. It can be a powerful way of getting your scales up to speed.

I want you to know that these strategies are great for scales, but they’re *also* great in learning your pieces, so use them for that too!

As always, make sure to always keep the fundamentals in mind! If you do that and use these strategies, you’ll have your scales up to 90bpm in no time! Once they’re there, it’s time to move on to Step 3: Expansion.

Chapter 6 - Phase 3: Expansion

So by now your scale is fast over one octave. Time to expand it out to four.

How to Systematically Expand Your Scale To Four Octaves

When you expand to four octaves, you want to **do it gradually**. You'll notice that's one of the big themes for learning. In Phase 1 we gradually added notes with the Added Note Strategy. In Phase 2 we gradually added speed with the **Metronome Ramp Up Strategy**.

When you expand your scales, you'll want to do it one octave at a time. So start with learning your scales at two octaves, then three octaves, than four octaves.

You'll notice going from one to two octaves will be challenging. This is because there is a different thumb cross-under that you haven't practiced before. Once you get two octaves down though, expanding to three and four octaves will be fast and easy.

For the fingering, your fingers should line up with the same notes as one octave. So for example, in a **C Major Scale**, an **E** *always* is played with your third finger, no matter what octave on the scale you are.

The only exception is your fifth finger, which is only used at the top of scales in your right hand and the bottom of some scales in your left hand. To find the fingering, simply replace your fifth finger with your thumb on the scale charts.

What Strategies Do I Use?

Now is the time for you to you to decide. The six strategies I've already given you are the same six strategies you want to use for this phase. After learning your scales in **Phase 1** and **Phase 2**, you'll start to know which strategies work best for you in which situations.

For example, you maybe you're having trouble with the new thumb-under cross in the two octave scales. No problem, you have tools for learning that (**Quick Thumb Strategy** and the **Thumb Under Isolation Strategy**).

Or maybe you can play 4 octaves, but it's really slow. No problem, you can use the **metronome ramp up strategy**.

Also, you'll realize some strategies work really well for *you*. For me, Rhythms is by far my favorite strategy. The way I'm wired, I get massive results from using that strategy, so I use it much more than a lot of the other strategies in this book.

For you it might be rhythms, or it might be another strategy. But figure out what that is for you. Figure out your *go to move*.

Learning when to use different strategies is a huge asset, not only for learning scales, but for learning pieces as well! Next time you're in the middle of a difficult section of a piece, stop and think *what strategy could help me learn this faster*.

That's basically what I talk about in my book **Supercharge Your Piano Practice**. It's very similar to this book, but includes many more strategies so there's a fast way to learn any section of your piece efficiently. If you're interested in learning pieces in half the time, you can find out more information here: <http://www.bestpianotips.com/supercharge-piano>

On to the next chapter, where we'll talk about your next steps.

Conclusion: Your Journey

Thank for reading this book!

I hope this book was able to help you to really **take your technique to the next level**. Before I let you go, I want to talk a little about your piano journey.

First, don't get discouraged when you get frustrated with a scale. *Everyone* goes through that. Mozart used to be terrible at scales before he practiced them. So did Beethoven. So did every other pianist before they got good! That first phase of learning can be the toughest because everything is so new, but once you get through it you'll be happy you did.

If your first week or two goes by and you don't cross off a scale, it's no big deal. What I realized is when you go on and practice the other scales, you'll come back to earlier scales and they'll be ridiculously easy! Because as you push through tougher and tougher scales, your overall technique improves, so all your scales will get a little boost!

The key is getting that first week when you complete an entire phase. Why? Then you *know* you can complete the next scale in a week. Every scale is simply a different set of muscle memory you have to learn, so if you can learn one in a week, you could learn any other one in a week!

This is a huge motivator. Once you cross off more and more scales from your goal sheet, it'll get easier and easier to motivate yourself to practice, and you'll get better and better.

The next step is to go practice! Best of luck and feel free to let me know how it's goin'!

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Instagram: @zachevansmusic

Finally, if you enjoyed this book, then I'd like to ask you for a favor, would you be kind enough to leave a review for this book on Amazon? I'd *really* appreciate it.

[Click here to leave a review for this book on Amazon!](#)

Thank you and happy practicing!

Supercharge Your Piano Practice

If you liked the practice strategies in this book, you'll love my other book, "[Supercharge Your Piano Practice](http://www.bestpianotips.com/supercharge-piano)." It includes a *ton* of practice strategies for *learning entire pieces* in half the time. Here's some of the stuff it includes:

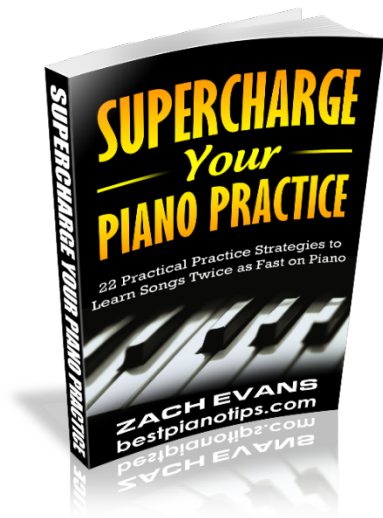
-Do you ever practice for hours but feel like you didn't really make any progress? I'll teach you my 6 step goal setting method to make sure you're making gains each practice session and staying motivated.

-Are you ever practicing and there's this one tricky section you can't seem to learn no matter how much you practice? I have an entire chapter breaking down how to learn fast arpeggio sections, rapid octave passages, and those tricky large leaps step-by-step.

-What if you could amaze your teacher with the amount of music you can learn? These practice strategies will help you come to every lesson super prepared and surprise your teacher without having to practice any more than you do now.

-I've included 2 Bonus Chapters, 5 Top Tips to Playing By Ear and 5 Top Tips to Sight-Reading. I sell these on their own for \$3 each, but I figure I'd throw them in for free with the book.

Get it here: <http://www.bestpianotips.com/supercharge-piano>



nnew

-Machine Gun Octaves: How to play fast alternating octaves for a machine gun effect.

-Advanced Trills Tremolos: Get smooth, relaxed trills and tremolos.

-Making A Song Captivating: Start-to-finish training on how to take an ordinary song and make it awesome using the “Lego Block Method”

And it also comes with the bonus courses “Beginners Technique Booster” and “Advanced Technique Booster.” Those’ll give you the critical exercises and drills to develop rock solid overall technique and that “at home” feeling on the keys.

If you’re interested, you can find out more here:

<http://www.bestpianoclass.com/project-captivate>