

# Melodies to Play By Ear and Harmonize

## Familiar melodies to play by ear:

What to tell the student:

1. **Where to begin.** Example: “Start with finger 3 on Middle C.”
2. **The first interval.** Example: “The first interval is a fourth.”
3. **Which keys they will use to play the melody.** Example: “You will be using the notes A, B, and C” or “You will be playing in the key of F major.”
4. **Which chords they will use to harmonize the melody.** Example: “You will be using the chords I and V7” or “C and G7.”

Songs that can be played entirely on the black keys:

- Hot Cross Buns (start on Bb)
- Old MacDonald Had a Farm (F#)
- Mary Had a Little Lamb (Bb)
- The Farmer in the Dell (C#)
- Amazing Grace (C#)

Songs that stay within the five-finger position:

- When the Saints Go Marching In
- Ode to Joy
- Jingle Bells (chorus)

Songs that extend out of the five-finger position:

- Twinkle, Twinkle Little Star
- Are You Sleeping
- For He’s a Jolly Good Fellow

Songs that utilize the entire scale:

- Away in a Manger
- Joy to the World
- Deck the Halls
- We Wish You a Merry Christmas
- Take Me Out to the Ball Game

## Familiar melodies to harmonize:

What to tell the student:

1. **Which key they will be playing in.** Example: “You will be playing in the key of F major.”
2. **Which chords they will use to harmonize the melody.** Example: “You will be using the chords I and V7” or “C and G7.”
3. **Which accompaniment style they will use in the LH.** Examples: roots of chords only, blocked chords, broken chords, waltz bass, or Alberti bass.

Songs using tonic and dominant:

- Clementine
- London Bridge
- Long, Long Ago
- Shoo Fly, Don’t Bother Me
- Skip to My Lou
- Itsy Bitsy Spider
- Merrily We Roll Along
- The Farmer in the Dell

Songs using tonic, dominant, and subdominant:

- Amazing Grace
- Camptown Races
- Oh! Suzanna
- Bingo
- When the Saints Go Marching In

Songs using tonic, dominant, subdominant, and secondary dominant:

- Home on the Range
- Jingle Bells
- Muffin Man
- My Bonnie

Sources:

Azzara, Christopher D. 1999. An Aural Approach to Improvisation. *Music Educators Journal* 86 no. 3 [November]: 21-25.  
Jacobson, Jeanine M. 2006. *Professional Piano Teaching*. Ed. E.L. Lancaster. Los Angeles: Alfred Publishing.