

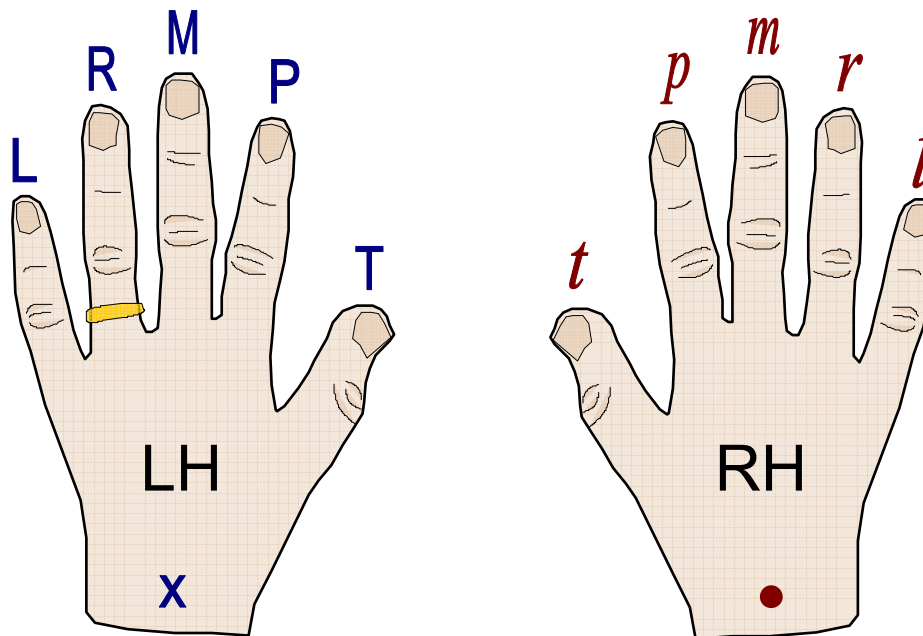
Fingering

This lesson will help you find the fingering that works best for you in any song, particularly those you pick out by ear or convert to Allcanplay. This lesson also includes special fingering symbols and tips that you can use to accelerate your learning.

The goal of fingering is to allow your hands and fingers to comfortably and reliably move from one group of keys to another without breaking the rhythm of the song.

Composers, arrangers, and pianists may disagree on fingering, but since hand sizes and finger lengths differ for each person, there is no one absolutely correct way to finger a song.

Once you've determined what works best for you, it's important to mark your songsheet and practice with the *same* fingering each time, so that you'll develop the "muscle memory" needed to play a song accurately without conscious thought.

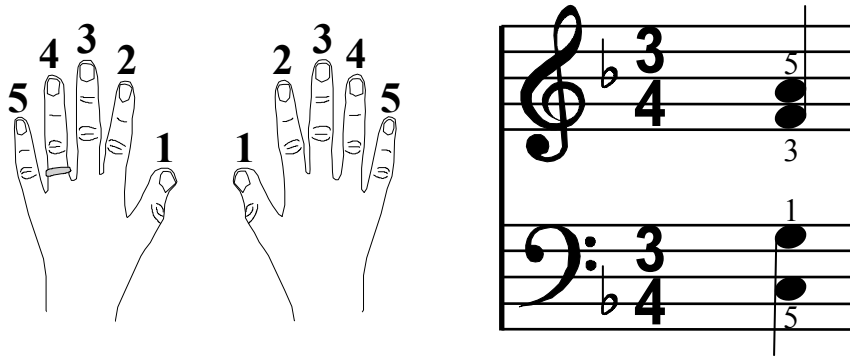


Finger Notations.....	2
Hi/Lo Boundaries.....	3
Anchors, Paths, & Backstops.....	4
Spans & Pinches.....	4
Pivots & Crossings.....	5
Ghosts & Tips.....	5
Happy Birthday To You (Fingering).....	6

Finger Notations

Standard Finger Notation

In standard notation, thumbs are indicated by the number 1, pointers by the number 2, and so on as shown below. The same numbers apply to both hands, which can lead to confusion, as can the use of numbers to indicate timing. Most composers include finger numbers for only some, but typically not all, notes in a song. Some omit finger numbers altogether, and leave it up to you to decide which fingers to use.

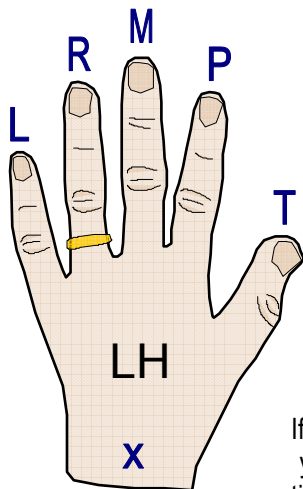


The small numbers near the notes indicate which fingers to use.

Allcanplay Finger Notation

Allcanplay uses LARGE uppercase letters for the left hand and *written* lowercase letters for the right hand, as shown below. Each key in a song is marked to ensure that the *same* fingers are used each time. While the recommended fingering will work for most, players are free to change the marked letters to better suit their hand size and finger preferences.

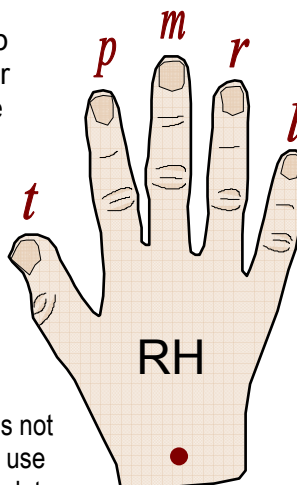
LEFT HAND LARGE LETTERS



Left rhymes with X

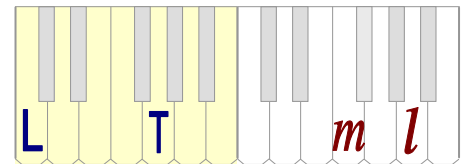
Right Hand *w*Ritten letters

Thumb
Pointer
Middle
Ring
Little



Right ●n!

If fingering is not yet known, use tiny X's and dots as placeholders.



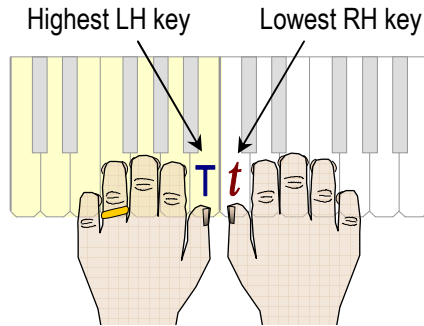
This is Allcanplay for the same notes and fingering shown in the standard music example above.

Hi/Lo Boundaries

Once you find and mark the highest and lowest keys played by either hand in a song, it's easier to fill in the fingering in between.

Hi/Lo Thumbs

One goal of fingering is to move your hands as little as possible. Given the opposite anatomy of each hand, you'll always play the *highest* LH key with **T** and the *lowest* RH key with **t**. It would be inefficient to use any other fingers, as it would involve moving your hands farther than necessary.

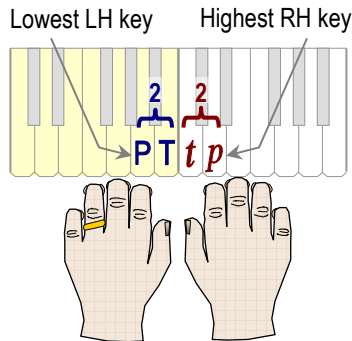


Depending on the song, Hi/Lo Thumbs can fall on *any* keys. This diagram depicts one possibility.

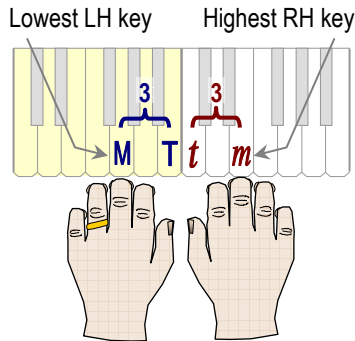
Hi/Lo Fingers

The finger you use for the non-thumb boundary key depends on the Hi/Lo span.

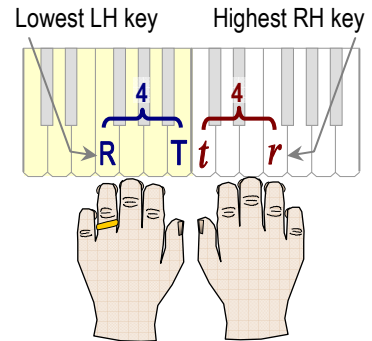
If Hi/Lo Span = 2 (thumb-pointer)



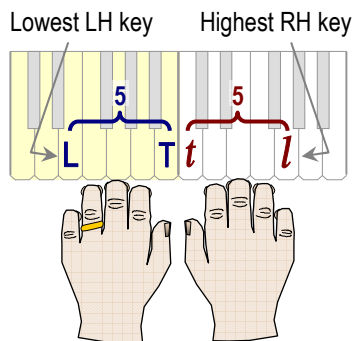
If Hi/Lo Span = 3 (thumb-middle)



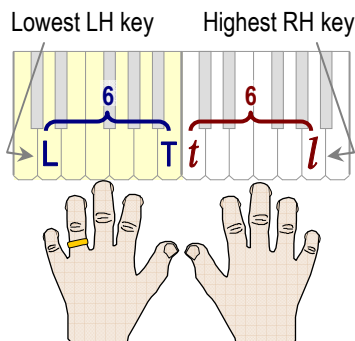
If Hi/Lo Span = 4 (thumb-ring)



If Hi/Lo Span = 5 (thumb-little)



If Hi/Lo Span = 6 (thumb-little)



General Rule
For spans of 5 or more, use your little finger and thumb.

For an example of how to apply the Hi/Lo Boundaries technique, perform the *Happy Birthday* tutorial that follows.

anchors, Paths, & Backstops

Use these and the following special fingering symbols to ease and speed your learning.

anchors ▼ ▼

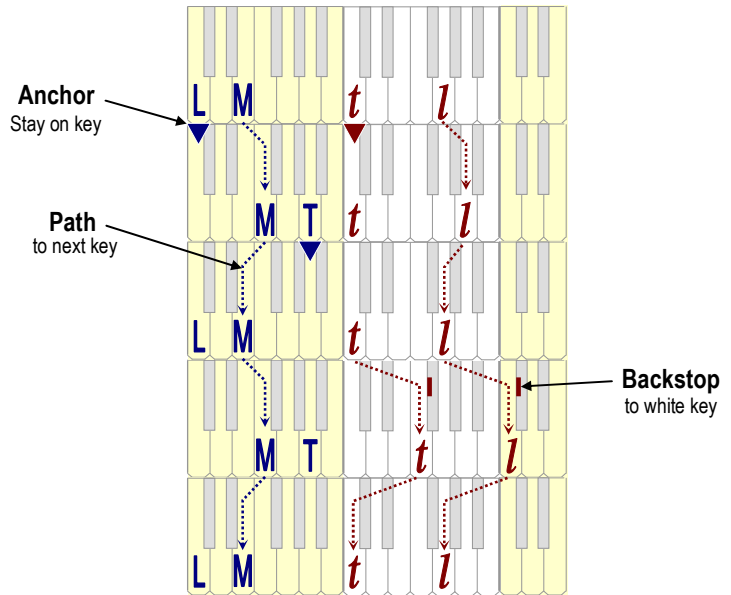
anchors indicate that a finger should stay fixed on a key until moved, which discourages you from prematurely leaving that key. anchors also serve as launching points for reaching and playing intervals *without* looking. (*Sight Reading* lesson).

Paths

Paths visually guide your fingers to new keys and function as an early warning system that mentally prepares you for upcoming finger shifts.

Backstops

Backstops use black keys and the gaps between them as a sort of Braille that allows you to reach for and play adjacent white keys, *without* looking. When aiming your hand into the gaps between Twins and Triplets, your thumb or finger will hit the backstopped black key and fall to play the white key next to it.



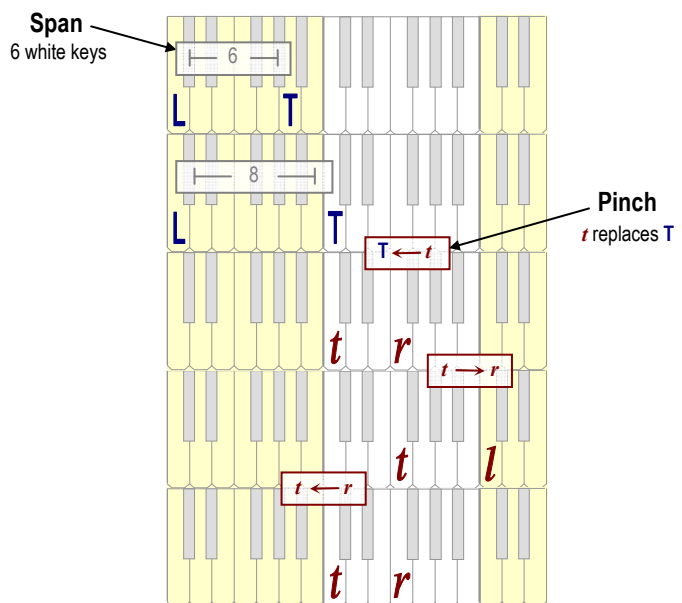
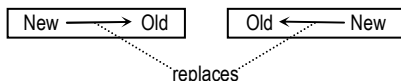
Spans & Pinches

Spans

Spans indicate the number of white keys over which to stretch your hand, ideally *without* looking. Knowing the span width is especially helpful once you've trained yourself to reach intervals by feel (see the *Sight Reading* lesson).

Pinches

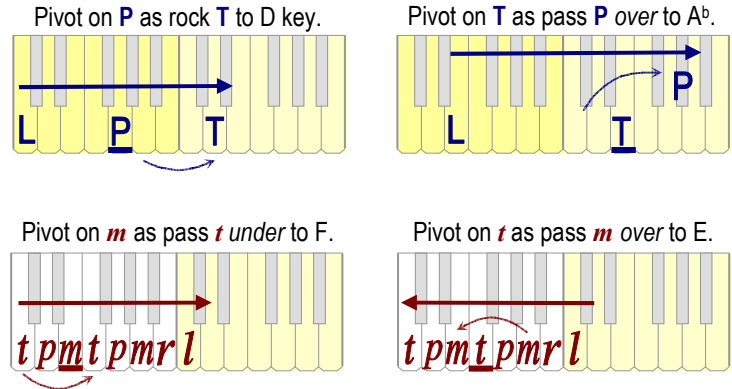
Pinches guide one finger to replace another, *without* looking. The old finger acts as a placeholder until it's pinched (touched) by the new finger. Pinching can occur in either direction and between hands. The arrow points from New to Old. New replaces Old. Think Arrow = Arr → old.



Pivots & Crossings

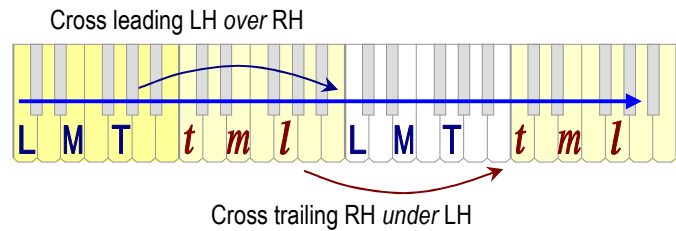
Pivots - -

For arpeggios that exceed your hand span or number of fingers, hold one finger down as a *pivot* point around which to rock your hand to the next key, or pass another finger over or under the pivot finger to the next key.



Crossings

For music that spans several octaves, it often helps to cross hands over and under one other. Typically, the *leading* hand, which starts the movement, crosses OVER the *trailing* hand, which follows and crosses UNDER the leading hand. (See the *Arpeggios & Climbs* lesson.)



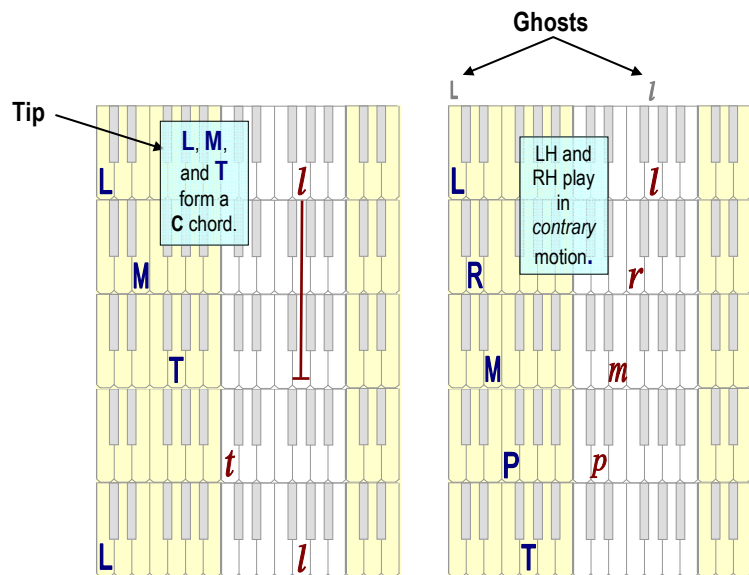
Ghosts & Tips

Ghosts LRMPT tpmrl

Ghosts are small or grayed-out finger letters appearing at the top of a column that indicate the fingering carried over from the bottom of the previous column. Ghosts ensure that your fingers remain in position when changing columns and visually prepare you to switch to upcoming keys.

Tips

It's helpful to include playing tips which you've discovered while working on a song. For better visibility, draw a rectangle around your tips to set them apart, then lightly shade or crosshatch them with a pencil.



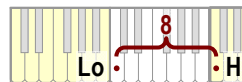
Happy Birthday To You (Fingering)

Continuing with the keys marked with dots and x's in the *Playing By Ear* lesson (duplicated below), follow the numbered instructions to find and mark the right-hand (RH) fingering.

1. Scan each column of keyboards to find the lowest RH key, which is C⁴.

2. Scan each column to find the highest RH key which is C⁵.

3. Combine the Hi/Lo keys on a blank keyboard to find that the RH white-key span is 8 (octave).



4. Mark the Lo key [C⁴] with *t* as this is the lowest your RH has to reach. Similarly, mark each C⁴ key in the melody. You'll find 8 in all.

C ³	Middle C ⁴	C ⁵	LYRIC CHORD	Section
x	x	x	F	1
x	x	x	C7	2
x	x	x	F	

				3
x	x	x	B ^b	
				4
x	x	x	C7	
x	x	x	F	

5. Mark the Hi key [C⁵] with *l* as this is the highest your RH has to reach.

6. Experiment on your piano to find and mark the best RH fingering to use in between the Hi/Lo keys. Maintain 5-finger position when possible, as it makes mistakes less likely. Avoid awkward positions and movements.

7. Add anchors, paths, spans, ghosts, pinches, crossings, and boxed instructions as needed or desired. Compare your markings to those on the following page.

Suggested Right Hand Fingering

Compare the following to the fingering you chose and marked on the previous page. Make changes as desired. Note the special fingering symbols and tips. When you're satisfied with the RH fingering, trace over your pencil marks with red ink (right hand) for visibility if desired.

Middle		LYRIC		Section
C ³	C ⁴	C ⁵	CHORD	
x x x		HAP- F		1
x x x		-PY		
x x x		BIRTH-		
x x x		-DAY		
x x x		TO		
x x x		YOU. C ⁷		
x x x		HAP- F		2
x x x		-PY		
x x x		BIRTH-		
x x x		-DAY		
x x x		TO		
x x x		YOU. F		
x x x		HAP- F		3
x x x		-PY		
x x x		BIRTH-		
x x x		-DAY		
x x x		DEAR		
x x x		NA- B ^b		
x x x		-ME.		
x x x		HAP- F		4
x x x		-PY		
x x x		BIRTH- F		
x x x		-DAY		
x x x		TO C ⁷		
x x x		YOU. F		

Diagram illustrating suggested right hand fingering for piano accompaniment. The diagram shows a piano keyboard with notes highlighted in yellow. Fingering symbols (t, p, r, m, l) are placed on the notes. A red '5' is shown above the C⁴ note in the first section. A red '3' is shown above the C⁵ note in the third section. A red '2' is shown above the C⁴ note in the second section. A red '4' is shown above the C⁵ note in the fourth section. Annotations include: 'Stretch l to octave.', 'Move t up to 5-finger position.', and 'Feel for the top triplet without looking.'

Mark Left Hand Chording

On your songsheet, pencil in any left-hand chord arrangement that pleases you, then compare it to the one on the following page. You'll want to choose how often to play or hold (tie) each chord, and whether to play chords blocked, broken, or arpeggiated (see the *Major Chords* lesson). There are dozens of possible arrangements, but no right or wrong one. It's a matter of personal preference.

Simple Chord Arrangement

For maximum ease of play, especially if you plan to sing along, the following arrangement keeps the left hand in 5-finger position (until the last chord) by omitting selected chord keys.

The diagram is divided into two main sections, labeled 1 and 2 on the left, and 3 and 4 on the right. It shows a sequence of chords and lyrics with corresponding piano techniques.

Section 1 (Left): Chords C³, C⁴, C⁵. Lyrics: HAP- F, -PY, BIRTH- p, -DAY t, TO r, YOU. C⁷ m. Fingerings: M, T, R, P.

Section 2 (Right): Chords M, T, r. Lyrics: HAP- 3, -PY, BIRTH- Stretch l to octave, -DAY Move r up to 5-finger position, DEAR m, NA- B^b p, -ME. t, HAP- 4, -PY l, BIRTH- F l, -DAY r, TO p, YOU. F m, YOU. F 6 p. Fingerings: L, M, T. Dynamics: p, m, f. Articulation: t, l.

Arranging Songs

Arranging is your chance to take charge and make a song uniquely your own. For example, in this song, you may prefer to play full chords, especially keeping the B^b key in the C⁷ chord which gives it that distinctive 7th chord sound. You can trace over your final chording with blue ink if desired.

If this arrangement is too high or too low for your or your audience's voice range, you can learn to easily transpose it to a different key in the *Practical Music Theory* lesson.

For more ideas on arranging, including a variety of alternate chord patterns and melody enhancements, see the *Improvisation Techniques* lesson.