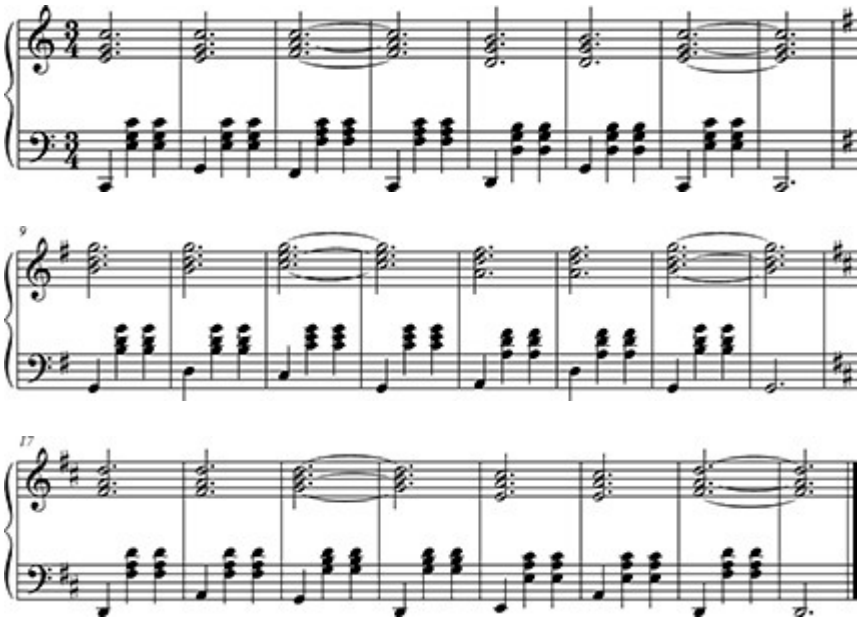
Two of the trickiest techniques to master on the piano are jumps and cross-hand playing, where one hand reaches over the other. In this guide, you learn some excellent piano exercises to strengthen your jump and cross-hand skills.

One Hand Jumps

Pianists often use the left hand for this technique in accompaniments, where there is a low bass note followed by an accompaniment pattern in the middle register. Chopin, in particular, favored writing left-hand parts this way, especially for his waltzes and mazurkas.

There are numerous ways to approach this challenge, depending on what else is going on in the piece. For example, if the right hand has a fast scale run, as often happens in Chopin's music, it might be advisable to memorize the right-hand part before trying to play both hands together. That way, you can concentrate on the left-hand notes.

Knowing what chord you are going to helps you get there faster and more securely. In the following exercise, you use your left hand to play a simple The patterns are written out for the keys of C, G, and D. Once you've learned the pattern in those keys, go ahead and transpose it into . The only difference between the basic cadence and this exercise is that this time, you are playing them in a 3/4 time pattern with a bass note that requires a giant leap.



Force yourself to practice the left hand without looking. This will give you a more tactile sense of where the notes are and how they fit into the hand. You'll also develop a better sense of your peripheral vision.

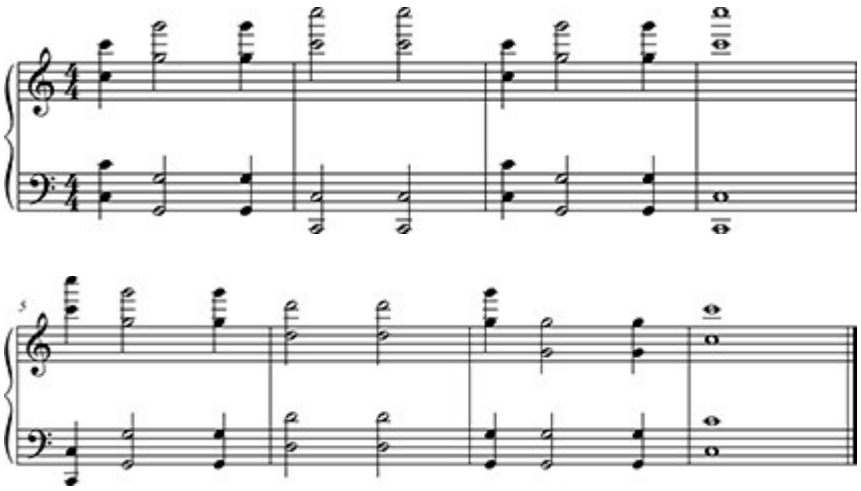
Of course, it's perfectly acceptable to quickly glance down at your fingers when necessary, but you may be

surprised to find out that you don't need to look down at your hands nearly as much as you think you do.

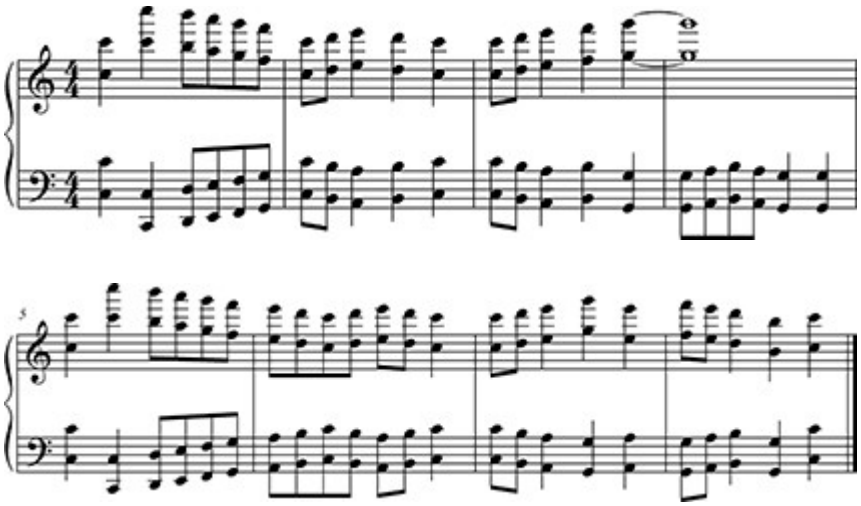
Two-Handed Jumps

Jumping two hands at a time is even trickier, especially if they are moving in different directions or in different intervals.

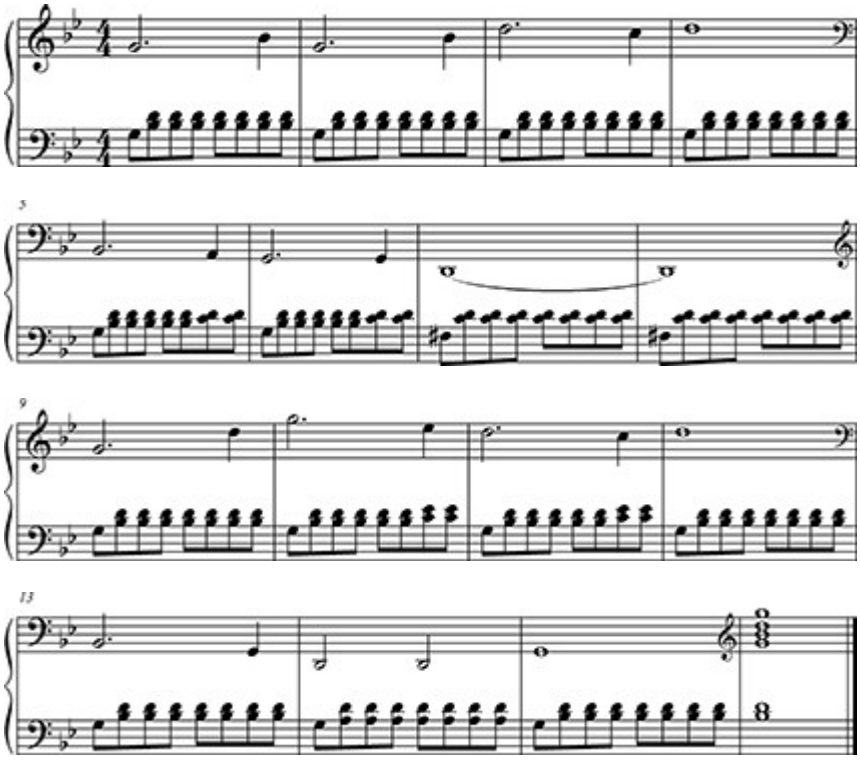
Try the following octave jumps. You should be thinking ahead to the next note when you start playing the note before it. You may need to practice each jump separately. You may also want to practice each hand separately before trying to play both hands together.



The next exercise is a little more difficult, involving jumps in both hands and some eight-note octave passages. For now, play the passage slowly.



Cross-Hand Playing

Cross-hand playing is required when one hand has an ongoing pattern in the middle of the keyboard, and the music calls for a bass voice to alternate with a treble voice. Believe it or not, it's actually easier to cross the hands over each other than to interrupt the flow of the middle voice and move both hands to a new position.

Most pianists choose to play with crossed hands because of energy flow, and because they can better control the dynamics of the various parts by having the right hand play the call and response, and the left hand play a continuous accompaniment. Not to mention the fact that it looks really impressive!