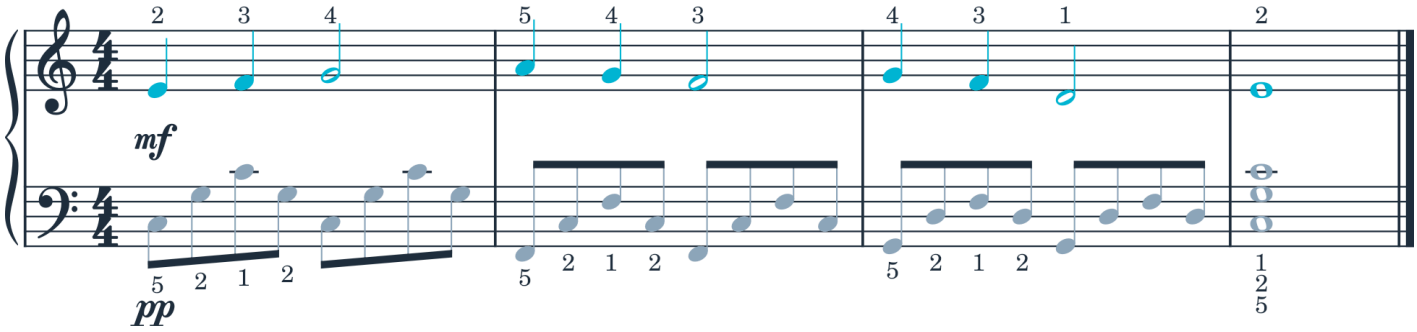
Voicing and Balance

The piano plays many notes at once, but the listener should hear one of them first: the **melody**. **Voicing** means choosing which note sings out. **Balance** means keeping everything else softer underneath it, so the tune floats on top.

TWO HANDS, TWO VOLUMES

Most music is a tune with an accompaniment (homophonic, Handout 356). The hand with the tune plays **mf** while the other plays **pp**: two dynamics at the same time (Handout 63). Sink a little arm weight into each **melody** fingertip and let it go deep into the key. Keep the **accompaniment** fingers close to the keys and play from the surface, as if you were only brushing them. The left hand plays the 1-5-8-5 ballad pattern of Handout 230: let its thumb touch the high note, not hit it.

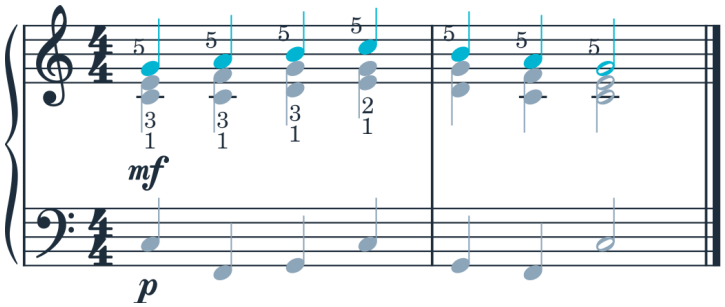


Cyan = melody, **mf**. Gray = accompaniment, **pp**. Same piano, two volumes.

THE TOP VOICE INSIDE A CHORD

Now one hand carries both jobs. In hymns, chorales and ballads the right hand plays **chords with the tune on top**. Play all three notes together, but lean the hand slightly toward the little finger. Keep the **5th finger firm** (no caved-in joint) and let fingers 1, 2 and 3 press only as deep as they must to make a sound.

Editions often show the plan: the **melody** gets its own stems pointing up, the inner notes stems pointing down. Two stem directions on one staff mean two voices (four voices: Handout 385).



The tune G-A-B-C-B-A-G, always on finger 5.

FOUR STEPS TO A SINGING MELODY

1

Melody alone
Play it and sing it. Shape the phrase toward its high point (Handout 221).

2

Accompaniment pp
Alone, as soft as you can while every note still sounds. No missing notes.

3

Together
Listen only to the tune. If a gray note pokes out above a cyan one, stop and fix that spot.

4

Exaggerate
Melody **f**, accompaniment **ppp**. Then relax back to **mf** over **pp**: the gap stays.

The bars show how loud each part is: cyan = melody, gray = accompaniment.

Try it Record yourself playing the chord example. Play the recording back: could a friend sing the melody from it? Then **move the spotlight**: make the **middle** notes sing instead (E-F-G-G, G-F-E) while the top notes go soft. A hidden second tune was there all along, and only your fingers decide which one we hear.

© 2026 Tissimo. All rights reserved.