

## The Basic Rules of Piano Care

- ❑ **Keep your piano in tune.** It was structurally designed to be tuned to the international pitch standard of A-440 cycles per second. If you wait until it sounds particularly bad to have it tuned, you have waited too long. That is akin to waiting until your car is “running bad” to have the oil changed! Maintenance is the key. Everything that holds a piano at pitch is made of wood, and seasonal changes in relative humidity are what cause a piano to lose a portion of its tension and go out of tune whether it is being played regularly or not. If a piano has a lapse in service, a pitch raise [at an additional cost] will most likely be necessary prior to fine tuning with and an additional tuning or two thereafter before the piano can be considered relatively stable. Further, pianos that are found significantly below pitch run the risk of piano strings failing during the process of restoring the instrument’s lost tension. This can get expensive for the piano owner – another reason to keep your piano maintained at proper pitch!
- ❑ **For the new piano more frequent tunings are a must as the piano is “broken in.”** Tunings help the new piano overcome dramatic losses in tension as the music wire stretches and settles into the instrument. A new instrument must be tuned every 3-4 months the first year or two, depending on the piano. If a regiment of frequent tunings is not kept, a pitch raise [at additional cost] will be necessary. Most piano manufacturers strongly recommend that the new piano be tuned three to four times in its first year. Once the piano has reached a point of relative stability a regular schedule of biannual tuning should suffice depending upon the needs of the pianist.
- ❑ **Try to maintain a fairly consistent temperature and humidity in the room where your piano is placed.** It’s important to keep your piano away from heating - air conditioning or air return vents, a fireplace, frequently opened window, outside door, or any direct sunlight. These factors will cause dramatic swings in relative humidity and temperature. Changes in your piano’s environment impact the instrument’s ability to be stable and hold its tune. In some cases where climates of desert dryness or coastal humidity exist, a humidity control system, made especially for the piano called a *Damp-Chaser* is a wise investment. These systems help your piano resist the extremes in relative humidity and ensure that your instrument will maintain its musical value through the years.
- ❑ **Play your piano regularly.** The axis of a piano’s action consists of felt bushings that can become sluggish if they remain idle. Regular play can keep rodents and insects from taking up residence in your instrument too. They dislike the vibrations! Another disadvantage to idle pianos, assuming they also suffer a service lapse, is that a detrimental condition or environment can’t be identified, and an escalating problem can result in damage that might not have occurred with regular service.
- ❑ **Keep your piano closed when it is not in use.** Keep the keys covered and piano tops down when the instrument is not being played to help prevent dust from accumulating.
- ❑ **Keep all drinks and standing liquid containers off the piano.** Should spilled water or drink reach the action, notify your piano technician immediately. In any case, once liquids are spilled, the damage is irreversible which is why prevention is the safest rule to follow.
- ❑ **Do not perform repairs or adjustments yourself.** Though a problem may appear easy to solve (such as replacing a loose ivory), your piano technician will have the proper tools and parts to make repairs quickly and correctly. It’s important to remember that unsuccessful amateur repairs are usually much more expensive to fix than the initial problem and may decrease the value of your instrument. The maintenance and adjustments of the inner working of the piano should be left to a qualified piano technician. Resist dusting the inside of your piano, oiling the moving parts or using moth or insect repellents. Your piano technician will take care of all internal problems.
- ❑ **Use only a professional piano mover to move or store your piano.** You will avoid injury to yourself and damage to your instrument and home. Never store your piano in a garage or other storage space where the instrument is exposed to extreme changes in temperature and humidity.
- ❑ **Friends don’t let friends buy a piano without having it examined by a qualified Piano Technician first.** Purchasing a piano can be a “hap-hazard” experience, much like buying a used car. The cost of a purchase consultation and appraisal is modest and can save a future piano owner many a musical disappointment.

## “What should I use to polish my piano?”

### High Gloss Finishes

The mirror like quality of the high gloss finish is achieved by the use of polyester in the finishing process. The high gloss finish is one that needs special care to maintain that “head turning” gleam. We recommend Cory’s “*Super High Gloss Piano Polish*.” It not only safely cleans the finish, but it also prevents streaking and reduces static.

### Satin Finishes

The satin finish is actually a lacquer that is rubbed after its final coat to give it the “grain” look. This process can make it difficult to keep clean. A product called “*Satin Sheen*” can greatly help keep this finish looking new by safely removing dust and smudges.

## “What should I use to clean my piano keys?”

Until most recently, there was never a logical answer to this age-old question. Many technicians and dealers (some still do) suggest using a damp cloth or a window cleaner. Most piano keytops are plastic in one form or another. Keytops of ivory are no longer manufactured. Using a window cleaner or other substance that contains ammonia will actually pit the keytops because ammonia melts plastic. Cleaning the keys with a damp cloth will not effectively remove finger oils, crayon or even peanut butter. “*Key-Brite*,” manufactured by Cory Keyboard Products, is a revolutionary new product for safely cleaning keys. “*Key-Brite*” is water based and can be used on plastic, wood or ivory and can be sprayed directly on the keys. Allegro Piano Service is a distributor of “*Key-Brite*” and the other piano care products mentioned below.