

This sheet is an easy way to create a piece of music in a contemporary or pop style using harmony as the starting point. There are only 3 chords in the progression making it achievable for even the least confident pupil. Depending on the level of your pupil they can develop the ideas further and create their own chord progressions.

1. Introduce your pupil to the chords that are in the key of C major. In the examples, both common chord symbols are given. You may like to use these progressions to develop your pupil's theory knowledge. Encourage your pupil to try their own chord progression but starting on C major to give a secure sense of key. Ask your pupil to listen to how the character changes depending on whether the chords are major or minor and the direction their chords take.
2. Once they have chosen a chord progression ask your pupil to use a five finger C position to start creating a melody. The given example is very simple, making a short motif. I find it is best to start as simple as possible and within clear parameters to make sure that the pupil can play confidently and very importantly listen to the sounds they are creating. It is also very helpful to demonstrate, asking your pupil to listen carefully and say what they like the sound of!
3. Once they have the essential ingredients of harmony and melody they can move onto developing the material. Again, simple examples are given but encourage your pupil to try out a variety of different styles; broken chord shapes and rhythms, depending on their level.
4. Once they have a secure 4 bar phrase, they can begin to expand this into a longer section, then a whole piece of music. Using an overall A B A structure is a good approach, with each section lasting 8 bars. This is an achievable goal and will result in a piece of a reasonable length.

As they develop their composition, it's useful to have a piece of music to refer to, either as a model for their composition or just to give a few ideas on how to develop material. There are many popular pieces by Einaudi, Yiruma or Tiersen that use short, repeated phrases and chord progressions. Similarly, those in the book 'Fantasy Piano' by Hans-Günter Heumann provide an excellent starting point for those pupils at approximately Grade 2 to 3 level.