

Music-Lab Discovery Lessons

Lesson 1. Play Chords & Melody In 5 Minutes

1. Run the application, hitting the Enter-key for each of the dialog boxes asking about the soundfont to use.
2. Set configuration file (on the F1 pane) to MusicLab-1, hit F2 (Instrument=1-**Bright Yamaha Grand**), and we're ready to go.
3. Play all the keys of the melody keyboard section, going from 'Z' to slash (/) - (the bottom row), to apostrophe (') to 'A' (the Caps-Lock row), to 'Q' to Back-Slash (\) (the Tab-Key row), to Back-Space to back-quote (`) (the top row). It's a zig-zag pattern, so you can always play melody with just one hand – even when passing the end of a keyboard row.
4. Play a flat, and sharp version of the 'W' key, using the Page-Down Key (for flat), and the Page-Up Key (for sharps). You use those keys like a shift-key for typing an upper-case letter.
5. Give it a try. Press and hold the Page-Down Key, then press the W key. Notice the flat-sign to the left of the note.
6. Press and hold the Page-Up Key, then press the W key. Notice the sharp-sign to the left of the note.
7. You almost never have to do this, because you set the key-signature to match the music, and if you play a chord using a note not in the key-signature, it gives you that same shift-up/down automatically, for such notes in the melody section.
8. Hit F5 (Instrument=30-**Distortion Guitar**), and we're ready to improvise.
9. Press the space-bar (as if you did it by accident), and start playing melody notes. Notice it is holding-out every note you play! Hit the space-bar again to stop that from happening, and play some melody notes. Ah – much better! Remember the sound of those held-out, smeared-together notes, and if it happens in a performance accidentally, hit the space bar to make it go away.

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10. Start pressing keys to improvise a melody – skipping around, and holding out some notes to make it interesting. If it sounds good, it is good. You can use the Enter-Key as a wah-wah key on held-out notes.
11. You play chords on the chords section of keyboard, which is the numeric keypad. The MusicLab-1 config file already set it to use modal chords, which are best for making up your own tunes.
12. The keys for selecting chords, are the numeric keypad keys 1 thru 7, which correspond to the 7 notes of the current key-signature's scale. When you select a chord, it doesn't begin to play immediately. You have to press the **numeric keypad 0-key** (called the **Play Key**) to play it.
13. You first select a chord, then play it. You can repeat a chord by pressing the Play Key again. The chord plays for as long as you hold down the Play Key. You can select the next chord while you're playing the current chord. The chord changes when you next press the Play Key.
14. Select a C chord (by pressing the numeric keypad 1-key), then press and hold the Play Key (the 0-key). While holding down the Play Key, press the 4-key, noticing it selected an F chord, but the sound didn't change. Release the Play Key, and press it down again. Notice it's now playing an F chord.
15. Play (and hold) several different chords, each time using one of the keys 1 thru 7. End with a 1-chord (which is a useful chord for ending a piece).
16. While you play (and hold) chords, make up a melody, lingering on notes that sound good with the chord, and passing-over notes that don't sound good with the chord. Change the chord occasionally, so your tune doesn't become boring. If you end your tune on a 1-chord, the ending will seem more natural.

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You can now improvise your own tunes, and play chords along with them!

Remember: If it sounds good, it is good. And the more you do this, the better you get at doing it.