



## **River Music School's Teaching Guide & Requirements**

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## **Introduction**

This teaching guide has been written for tutors of River Music School to understand their teaching and safeguarding responsibilities, alongside suggestions and recommendations.

The responsibilities written in this guide are non-negotiable, and it is up to the tutor to uphold their responsibilities at all times. These can be found under the following chapters:

**Essential Requirements (pg. 2)**

**Education Requirements (pg. 8)**

Having a suitable teaching environment is highly recommended for our tutors. You can read more about how this under:

**Recommendations (pg. 5)**

The teaching recommendations help the tutor with a clear direction for teaching and understanding what fundamentals must be covered.

Naturally, all students learn at different paces so the tutor may find some students excel quicker through the material than others.

This guide has been written by musician, educator and director Nicol River, who has been teaching for over a decade and who is enthusiastic about setting a standard in stone for the future generations.

We are always aiming to improve our service, so please feel free to contact us with any questions or suggestions about this guide. Please contact us directly for any advice on educational resources.



## **Essential Requirements**

Prior to your responsibilities as an educator, you must first and foremost be aware of:

- 1) Safety at a student's home, tutor's home or in a school setting**
- 2) Safeguarding policies of River Music School, and/or a school's safeguarding policies**
- 3) Your DBS requirements**
- 4) Your Self Employment responsibilities**
- 5) Your contractual responsibilities**
- 6) River Music School's Policies and Procedures**
- 7) Professional indemnity insurance and public liability insurance**

### **1) Safety at a student's home, tutor's home or in a school setting**

You must ensure that the environment in which you work is safe and suitable.

When teaching at your home, you must provide a space which is shared (eg. a living room or music room) and not a private room (bedroom). You must provide a space which is hospitable, cleanly and which does not pose threat or discomfort (eg. open cables, lack of heating, etc).

When teaching at a student's home, encourage that the lessons are held in a shared space rather than a private room. You must also follow any reasonable home requirements, such as no smoking, no drinking, shoes off to enter, etc. If you feel that your safety is at immediate risk at a student's home, you must retract yourself from the environment, contact any relevant authority and inform River Music School within 24 hours.

When teaching in a school setting (be it primary, secondary, university or any other organisation), you must abide by the safety regulations and policies of the school. This is the responsibility of that school/organisation to give to you, and also your responsibility to ask and know. These are usually found on their website, or can be retrieved upon request.



## **2) Safeguarding policies of River Music School, and/or a school's safeguarding policies**

River Music School holds a strict safeguarding policy. Any incident must be reported to the Director of River Music School. All of our policies relating to safeguarding are accessible at:

<https://www.rivermusicschoollondon.com/our-policies>

All tutors are required to familiarise themselves with our policies.

If working in a school/organisation, you should familiarise yourself with what their safeguarding policies are, and who is best to contact in an urgent situation.

## **3) Your DBS requirements**

You are required to have a DBS check to teach with River Music School.

If you are teaching adults only, a Basic DBS check will suffice. If you are teaching all ages, you must obtain an Enhanced DBS certificate (this is to confirm your eligibility to teach students under 18 years of age).

River Music School requires tutors to have a DBS no older than 1 year. If your DBS is older than a year, you must provide evidence that you are on the Update System, or apply for a new DBS. You may teach with an Enhanced DBS Certificate which has been provided by another organisation, provided it meets the aforementioned requirements.

## **4) Your Self Employment responsibilities**

You are a self-employed individual and shall be responsible for all income tax liabilities and National Insurance or similar contributions in respect of any payments made to you in accordance with your contract.



You will be required to submit your UTR Number to River Music School.

#### **5) Your contractual responsibilities**

Your contractual responsibilities are to be followed and found in your contract with River Music School. In the case of any updates, River Music School will email you and require your approval.

#### **6) River Music School's Policies and Procedures**

All of our policies and procedures can be found at:

<https://www.rivermusicschoollondon.com/our-policies>

<https://www.rivermusicschoollondon.com/privacy-policy>

#### **7) Professional indemnity insurance and public liability insurance**

For your own personal and legal safety, we recommend that all tutors acquire both professional indemnity insurance and public liability insurance. This can be acquired through insurance companies or music unions. As you are a freelancer, River Music School will not be held responsible for any incident which happens during your lessons, so it is advised that you insure yourself.



## **Recommendations**

It is always important to ensure reliability and confidence with your students. You can achieve this by considering the following:

- 1) **Keep all electronic devices on silent during the course of the lesson to avoid disrupting yourself and the student(s).**

As you are aware, music requires ears to be learnt! If they are filled with background noise from notifications, videos or calls, this will impede on the student's learning and your ability to teach. Please encourage all devices to be put on silent for the duration of the lesson. If you *need* to make a phone call, please step outside of the facilities.

- 2) **Have books and teaching materials prepared for every lesson.**

Ensure you have appropriate teaching materials for all of your students. We always advise that students have a homework diary dedicated to music lessons, so that they can note down homework you set for them.

- 3) **Use appropriate language and behaviour.**

We do not condone swearing or unruly behaviour, neither in our students nor in our tutors. Please ensure your language and behaviour are professional at all times.

- 4) **Summarise and write homework in the last 5 minutes.**

Use the last 5 minutes of your lesson time to summarise the materials taught and set homework to be completed by the next lesson, so that you can finish on time for your next lesson.



If teaching at a student's home or school/organisation:

**1) Follow any house/school/organisation rules respectfully.**

Some students may ask guests to take their shoes off before stepping into their space. Parents/observers may be asked to sit in a particular area of the room to avoid disrupting the lesson. You may be asked to observe a volume level while teaching to avoid disrupting others. Please kindly abide by the house/school rules.

**2) Do not eat during lesson time.**

**3) Keep any drinks away from instruments and electronics.**

Ensure that any drink you and your students have are placed on a stable surface, away from any instruments or electronic devices, to avoid damage or harm.

If teaching at your home:

**1) Be clear of any requirements you have for your facilities.**

Some tutors may ask students to take their shoes off before stepping into their space. Parents/observers may be asked to sit in a particular area of the room to avoid disrupting the lesson. Please kindly advise your students/guests accordingly.

**2) Provide a space for parents/observers to sit in the lesson.**

It is within a parent's right to sit for the duration of the lesson and observe their child learning. We pride ourselves with making parents feel welcome and comfortable in their child's lessons. Please provide a place for them to sit as you teach.



**3) If possible, offer your students a beverage!**

If you have the facilities to quickly make a drink, then offering tea, coffee or water at the start of each lesson is a nice way to make your students feel welcome and smoothly settle into the lesson.

Do however ensure that all drinks are kept away from any instruments, electronic devices and cables.

**4) Keep your environment clean, tidy and hygienic at all times.**

Having a clean and tidy environment is not only a minimum requirement for students to feel comfortable, it is highly recommended for our tutors. Consider the following: sight, touch and smell. Is your teaching space presentable (sight)? Do you have a comfortable place for your students and observers to sit (touch)? Are your facilities ventilated (smell)?

We mention this, as in the past we've unfortunately had feedback from students commenting on their learning environment. Owning a pet is a good example: we all understand that many pets shed fur, so creating a clean and tidy environment would ensure that where a client may sit is fur-free. Another example may be if you are a smoker. It is not an issue, however we recommend that you air the property prior to the arrival of your students.

## Education Requirements

We pride ourselves that our tutors have autonomy over their own teaching methods and materials. We believe every tutor has their own unique ability to educate their students and encourage individuality.

To further help tutors achieve their highest potential with their students, we have implemented educational requirements that all tutors must adhere to. This helps to ensure that students are on the right track, and provides measurable progress. Furthermore, it protects tutors from being questioned about the level or direction of their teaching.

You are welcome to contact River Music School at any time in regards to the education requirements we have set. We frequently do random checks on our students to make sure that they are receiving a healthy education and homework.

Naturally, all students learn at different rates. It is up to you to determine how quickly you go through the required materials, dependent on the student's abilities.

Please scroll down to read the requirements for your specialisms.



### **Requirements for Strings, Woodwind, Brass and Keyboard Tutors:**

- a) Theory must be taught alongside the practical element of music.
- b) Age determines when theory should be introduced, and how thoroughly.
- c) When a student is able to play C, D, E, F, G, A and B on their instrument, this is when the C Major Scale should be introduced, then followed by all other scales in order of sharps/flats. It would be best introduced as a pure exercise, with the intention of tying theory to scales later on as the student progresses.
- d) Alongside scales, introducing the intervals of tones and semitones is essential to explain what sharps and flats are.
- e) Reading music in the relevant clefs is necessary, and students should be given written pieces/exercises to practise in every lesson.
- f) Proper technique and posture must be encouraged at all times.
- g) Once all major scales have been taught and learnt comfortably, introduce the student to the Natural Minor Scale (Harmonic and Melodic Minors should be taught later on, or according to grade requirements).
- h) Any other scales or exercises which are more relevant to a particular instrument should be taught earlier on (for example the Pentatonic Scale for the guitar).
- i) Avoid using tablature as the primary source of note reading: rather, it is to be used as an additional guide to more complex excerpts.
- j) Incorporate technical exercises when necessary and appropriate (for example a Hanon exercise on the piano).
- k) Depending on the instrument, students should know how to keep their instrument in tune and how to care for it.

### **Requirements for Vocal Tutors:**

- a) Proper vocal technique must be taught.
- b) Explaining vocal anatomy can help students develop their abilities.
- c) Recognise where strain, fatigue or injury may take place, and aim to avoid it.
- d) Teach students about vocal hygiene.
- e) Provide vocal warm-ups in each lesson. Exercises should work on: breathing, scales, diction, interpretation and performance.
- f) Teach the treble and/or bass clef (dependent on the student's vocal range) and musical notation.
- g) Establish the following fundamentals gradually: major scale, natural minor scale, arpeggios.
- h) Offer repertoire selection guidance that suits the student's voice and goals.
- i) Train students in musicality, phrasing, expression and stage presence if applicable.

### **Requirements for Percussion Tutors:**

- a) Help students have solid command of the following core drumming skills: rudiments, time keeping, coordination and groove.
- b) Emphasize the importance of correct posture, grip and ergonomics, and promote practice habits to avoid injury and build endurance.
- c) Introduce the use of a metronome early on, and incorporate dynamic control to encourage playing musically (not just technically).
- d) Balance technical exercises with musical application into grooves, songs and play-alongs.
- e) For drummers, ensure that stick technique and control covers: grip and hand position, stroke types, rebound control and hand independence.
- f) Core rudiments should be covered: single and double strokes, paradiddles, and palms and drags.
- g) Basic note values should be taught (half, quarter, eighth, sixteenth notes, and rests), alongside time signatures.
- h) Work on counting rhythms aloud.
- i) Introduce students to swing feel and straight time.
- j) Students should be taught basic limb independence, and this can be done through providing exercises for playing patterns between snare, kick, hi-hat.
- k) Basic drum/percussion notation is required to be taught, so that students know how to read rhythms and grooves.
- l) Students should learn how to maintain a proper drum and seat setup, alongside understanding tuning basics.

### **Monitoring progress:**

All tutors are required to write interim reports when requested by their students. Interim reports should be detailed and constructive.

Tutors ought to keep a record of their students' progress, for example by using a Progress Table. Please refer to the example provided on page 13.

Recognise how this Progress Table has an active checklist, that is 'conditional formatted' to colour code.

Using Microsoft Excel, Google Sheets, or having a diary which you can use during lessons can help you keep track of your students' progress and give you a reminder of what needs to be covered or accomplished.



	3	Action	Homework	Grade Scales (if applicable)	Grade Level	Pieces	Major Scales	Natural Minor Scales	Triads & Inversions	7th Chords	Intervals	Harmonic Minor Scales	Arpeggios	Pentatonics	Hanon Exercises	Sight Reading	Theory	Short Exercise Pieces	Method Min
4	Elena (Franc)	Natural sharps and flats	All sharp and flat major scales for theory		Grade 5 theory aiming	Jester's jig, Scherzo Minuet	All 2nd HT	All 1st HT	Major minor, dim, aug	To do: dominant once all white note triads have been accomplished	To do	Review which ones she knows for Grade 5	To do			Grade 5	To check	X	X
5	Adam	All 3 major shapes alongside grade materials	G and f major HS A and d minor HS both 2nd		1 completed	Rolling in The Deep	All 1st	C D E A 1st		N/A	To do		To do			N/A			
6	Max	Grade 2 scales	All 3 pieces	Working through them	2 aiming	Tanztella Forget-me-not waltz Railroad Blues	All 2nd HS	All 1st HT		N/A	Basic		To do						
7			Three Little Birds, lull pieces F G B min natural 2nd HS																
			All major keys 1st HT																
			Choose a new piece for next time :)																
	George	New piece now, aiming for grade now			3 aiming	Three Little Birds	All 2nd	C D E A F G 2nd HS	All major chords	N/A	To do	All 2nd	All majors 1st HS			To do	Inversions	SEP 5.0	X
8	Sylvia	2nd majors	The Staircase then just left hand of Dancing Bear		Pre-1	JT Book 2	All 1st HT	All 1st HS	All major chords	N/A	To do	C D A	To do			N/A			
9	Lovella	Marriage duet minor after Grade 3 pieces	Twilight, play quicker		3 aiming	Vivace Spanish Guitar Study	All 1st 2nd HT	All 2nd HS start HT	All 4 triads completed	Major, dim, min	Completed	?	C D E F G 2nd HT			Grade 3			
10			Practice all pieces for review next time		4 aiming	Billie's Song Peranonic Tune	Bb Eb Ab Db Gb 2nd HT	All 2nd HS, start HT	All 4 triads completed	To do	Completed	?	To do			Grade 3	Intervals	X	X
11	Jauch				Pre-1	Winter	All 2nd HS	All 1st HT	All major and minors inversions done	N/A	Basic done, to do complete at grade 1		To do						
12	Rokhya			All Grade 1	1 aiming	The Wind Melody in F	All 2nd HS	All 2nd HS											
13		1) First complete Waltz in Am. 2) Work through Grade 4 theory 3) Then pick up Grade 5 pieces. 4) Then go through all scales in preparation for Grade 5 theory. 5) Then after final is complete, start Grade 5 theory.																	
	Pearl Grace	Grade 5 theory			5 aiming		All 2nd tag	C D E F 2nd tag	All 4 triads completed	Major, dim, min	Completed	All 2nd tag, needs tag	2nd Sep			Grade 4			
14	Kalina	Some majors 2nd hands tag?			Pre-1	Book 2	Bb Eb Ab tag	All 2nd HS	All major & minor chords	N/A	To do		X			N/A			
15	Grace	Minor triads			2 aiming	Mr Dawland Highland Spirit The Trout	All 1st	All 1st	Major, to do minors	N/A	To do		X			N/A			
16	Hudson	Flat minors			4 aiming	Flood Time Sunset of Savannah	All sharp and flat major scales, 2nd HT Start 3rd soon	All 2nd hands tag	All 4 triads completed	Completed	Completed	C D E F G 2nd HS & HT	To do			Grade 3			
17	Ariana				Pre-1		All 1st HS	To do	To do		To do								
				D A mel 2nd HT E G min HT 2nd															

## **Final Notes**

This guide is always being reviewed and updated, so we appreciate your suggestions and questions.

Please feel free to reach out to us at:

[info@rmslondon.co.uk](mailto:info@rmslondon.co.uk)

and we'll be happy to help further.

*This guide was written by*

**Nicol River**

**Director**

*River Music School London*

*River Music School UK*

*Nicol River Ltd*

