

The Piano Owner's Heads-Up Guide to Important Piano Maintenance

Focus On: Leveling Keys



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One important aspect of a properly regulated piano is that the keys are perfectly level from one side of the keyboard to the other. When keys are correctly leveled, the pianist should notice no discernable difference in height as his or her fingers glide back and forth across the keytops. Also, no keys should stand out as visibly higher or lower than the rest when viewed from the side. **The keys on your piano are not level, and need to be adjusted, or leveled.**

Keytops are leveled by the insertion of paper punchings of exacting sizes between the wooden "balance rail" that the keys rock on when they are played, and the felt balance rail punchings that cushion the keys.

Depending on the type of piano being serviced, one of several tools (example in photo above) will be used to bring all keys up to level. Each note will be checked to ascertain how high or low it is compared to the desired height. Punchings will then be added or subtracted to bring it to the proper level.



.002" paper punching being installed

In the above photo, an extremely thin paper punching is being inserted on the balance rail pin of a note that is just a bit too low. After the key is returned, the height will again be checked. The process is repeated until the height of the key is exactly where it's supposed to be.



Sharp keys are leveled as well, as shown in the photo above. The approximate height of the top of the sharps over the top of the naturals is 1/2". Fine paper punchings are again used to make the sharps exactly level.

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