

Online Teaching on a Budget: Using Items You Already Own

When instructors are on a tight budget and do not have the financial resources to purchase the correct phone stands, there are ways to create a set-up with resources from around the house or your school (if you teach at a university). The following methods are only several ideas that may spark your own creativity for creating your own online teaching piano studio.

Set up for 1 view: above the keyboard
Materials: iPhone tripod, lamp stand, phone

For a view above the keyboard, wrap and secure the flexible tripod legs around the lamp. Adjust the height of the lamp and the angle of the legs as needed for the keyboard range you'll be recording.



Set up for 2 views: above the keyboard, Instructor view

Materials: selfie stick, music stand, 2 cameras (phone, laptop or iPad)

1. View above keyboard:

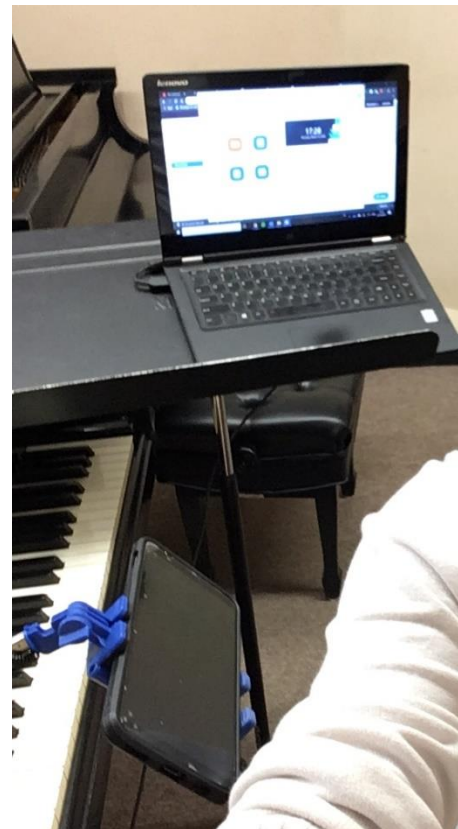
Using the selfie stick, you can prop the stick between the top of the pin block area and under the music rack (Area shown in the picture below). You can also try to prop this using books to hold it down and books around to keep it from moving. The angle of the selfie stick can be adjusted through adjustment of the extendable stick and moveable phone holder.



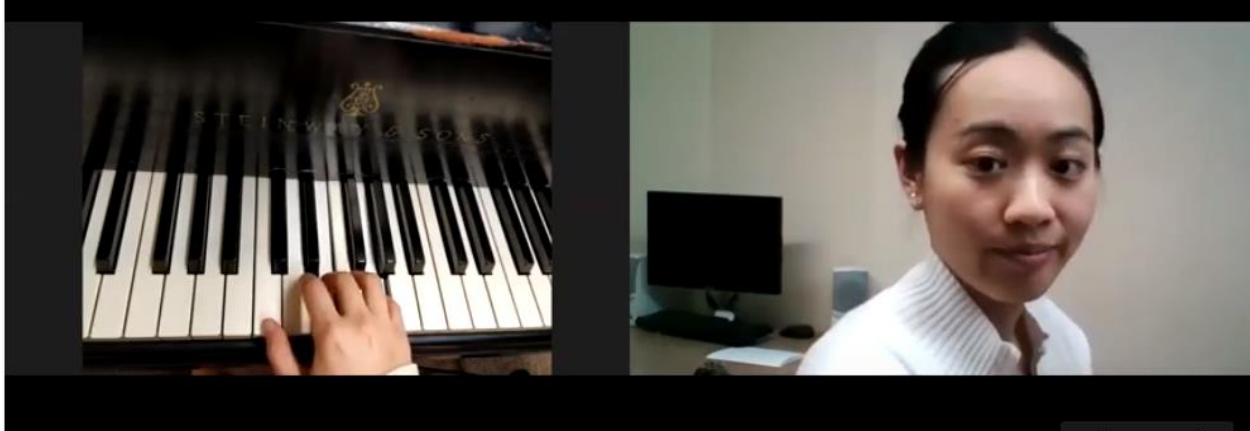
2. Instructor View:

To the right, a music stand was used to prop the laptop. A music stand allows for easier adjustment for height and angle.

After installing Zoom (or any other conference App) in your two devices (laptop, phone, tablet), you may connect all of them into the same meeting.



Final result:



In this case, I used the right screen's angle to talk to my group piano students for a more personal connection, but this can be adjusted to view the side of the piano while also including the view of the instructor.

Tip: Turn off the microphones of all your devices except for one (e.g., laptop). That way there will be no sound interference between electronic devices.

Set up for 3 views: keyboard + instructor, above the keyboard, and side-view of the keyboard

Materials: several books, a weight, a spatula, a desk, three cameras (e.g., a camera from a laptop, a camera from a cellphone/iPhone, and a camera from a tablet/iPad).

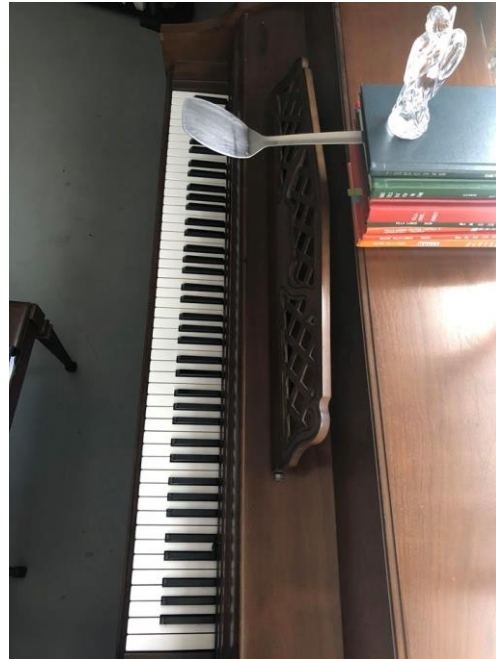
1. Keyboard + Instructor view:

Position your laptop on a desk so the camera faces the side of the piano. From a distance, the camera should be able to capture both the instructor and the piano. A view from above is recommended so it is easier to see the hands of the instructor on the keyboard.



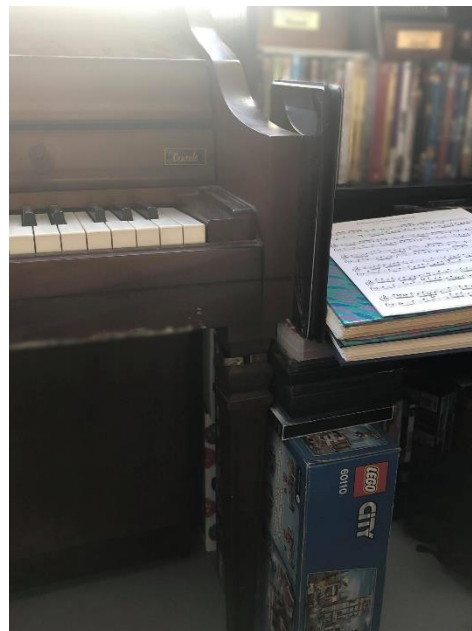
2. Above the keys view:

Pile books on the piano (use a music stand in case you have a digital piano). Place a spatula between the top books and add a weight on top of the last book. Place your phone on the spatula, enabling the camera's phone to capture the piano keys from above



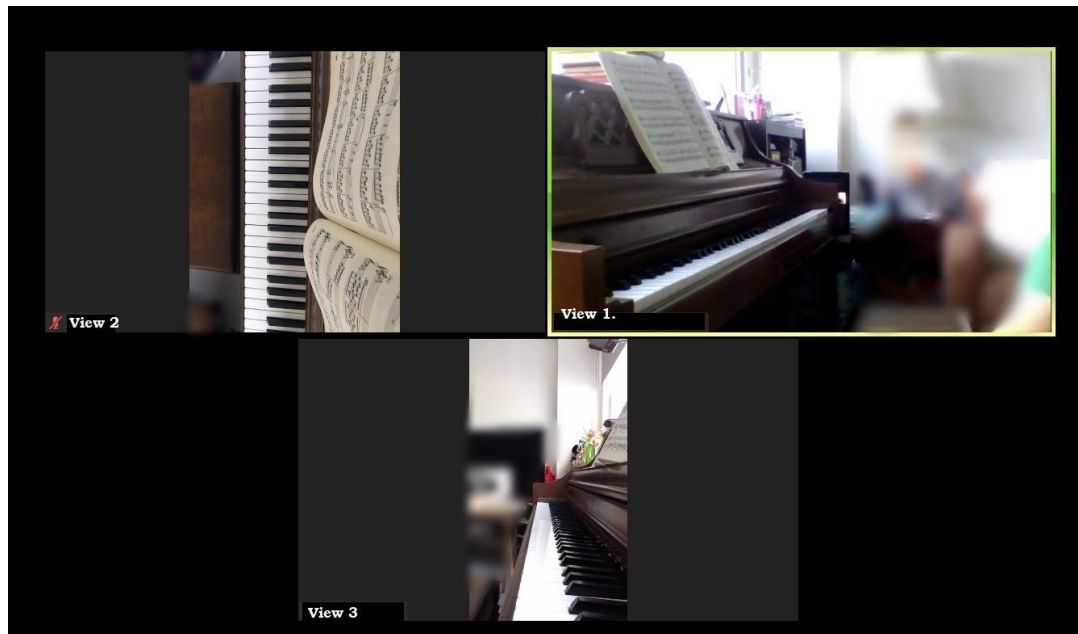
3. Side-view of the keyboard view:

Pile books next to the piano (you may also use a music stand or a desk) and place your tablet's camera facing the piano keyboard from the side. In this example, the iPad is on top of a LEGO box and DVDs boxes, stabilized by books (from the back), so it will not fall.



Final result:

After installing Zoom (or any other conference App) in your three devices (laptop, phone, tablet), you may connect all of them into the same meeting. This will enable your student to have 3 views of the instructor's piano and hand positions, enhancing the quality of your lesson.

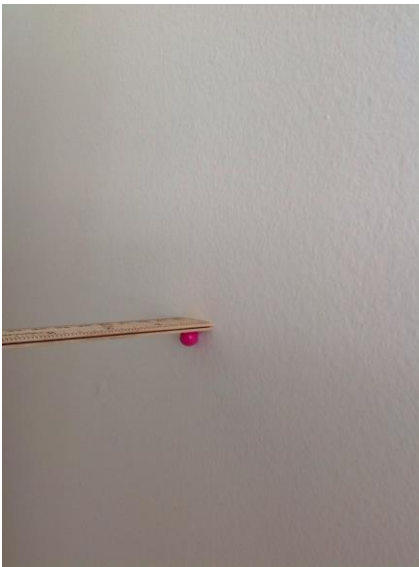


Tip: Turn off the microphones of all your devices except for one (e.g., laptop). That way there will be no sound interference between electronic devices.

Set up for bird view on a digital piano: If you have a digital piano, it will most likely be next to a wall. This simple idea will provide you with a bird view.

Materials: any type of string, ruler with a hole, two push pins

1. Attach a string through one of the ruler's hole. The second end of the string will be attached to the wall using a regular push pin. For this example, I used a shoe's lace.
2. Create a triangle design using the string, the ruler, and the wall. Underneath the ruler, by the wall, insert a push pin to create more stability and security to the ruler balance.



3. Place your phone on the edge of the ruler. It will provide a bird view your keyboard.



Written and created by Christiana Shelenberger, Christina Lai, and Ricardo Pozenatto, class piano teaching assistants at Florida State University (2020-21).