

# Piano Perspectives



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## When Should a Piano Be Tuned?

Deciding when to tune a piano can be influenced by many factors, ranging from the approach of a special musical event to the anguished cry of a pianist who can't stand the discord any longer. There are a number of legitimate ways to come to an ongoing tuning strategy, several of which I will outline here.



If a piano is being used throughout the year, it is advisable to tune it at least twice – once when the snow has settled in and the furnace has been turned on for the

winter, and once after the snow is gone and summer is approaching. The issue here is the swing in indoor relative humidity – the main culprit that drives pianos out of tune. The sharp drop in humidity with the onset of winter drives a piano flat, and the rise in the spring drives it sharp. Some pianos are influenced more than others but no piano is immune. The installation of a humidity control system in the piano greatly helps tuning stability.

If a piano is used primarily in the winter, and the decision has been made to tune it only once a year, it is unwise to tune it in the high humidity of summer, as much of the benefit of the tuning will be lost with the coming of the winter dryness.

On the other hand, if a piano is about to enter into significant use with the onset of fall, and it is noticeably out of tune, it is probably wise to tune it, even if the humidity has not settled all the way down to its winter levels.

If the piano has not been tuned for several years and has fallen below standard pitch, it can be tuned just about anytime, since a second tuning will be needed anyway within a couple of months in order for the pitch to become stable.

When a piano is being used on a regular basis, it makes sense to tune it frequently enough that it never

begins to sound out of tune. This way, the pleasurable sound it can give continues without interruption.

Obviously, there are times when a piano will be tuned simply because it needs to be at its best for a special occasion. There will be times as well, if you live some distance from the closest tuner, that your decision as to when to tune will depend on when there is a tuner visiting your area.

In any case, keeping your piano in tune will greatly increase your pleasure in playing it, as well as the enjoyment of those who are listening to the music you are making. Floyd Gadd, piano technician, is eager to provide the service you need to make this possible.

## Does Location Matter?

It has often been said that a piano should not be placed against an outside wall. Is this true? With modern insulation practices, locating a piano on an outside wall is acceptable, as long as there is an inch or two of space behind the piano for air to circulate. In houses that are not insulated to modern standards, the old advice still stands. Proximity to doors and windows that are frequently opened can also be a problem.

What is equally critical is the placement of the piano with regard to heat registers. Hot air circulating around or under a piano can not only send it out of tune quickly; hot air can seriously damage a piano by over drying the wood, which leads to cracking. If the only place a piano can be placed is over or beside a heat register, block off the register so that the piano is protected.

It is also wise to avoid placing your piano where it will receive direct sunlight during a part of the day. Not only might the finish deteriorate, the daily rise and fall in temperature will create problems with the tuning.

*For more information on caring for your piano, contact Floyd using the phone numbers at the top of this page, or visit <http://tuning.floydgadd.com>*

