

## **The Full-Service Approach to Piano Maintenance**

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- I. Introduction: The Philosophy. “Efficiency-driven” piano service.
- II. Diagnostics
  - A. Tools of Diagnosis
    1. Human Tools
    2. “Real” Tools
    3. Checklists
  - B. Diagnostic Routines
    1. Both on phone and in home, LISTEN for clues from client. Prompt as needed with questions like: Are you happy with the way the way the piano sounds? Are you happy with the way it plays?
    2. Play the piano yourself. What jumps out at you?
    3. Ask yourself “the question.” Confirm your observations with client if possible.
    4. Find out the cause of the problem.
    5. Fix what’s wrong.
    6. Go back to #2.
- III. Tuning Decisions: The importance of thorough analysis before tuning. Take the time to analyze and understand the existing tuning fully before proceeding.
  - A. Fork or Float?
    1. Floating pitch when appropriate results in more stable tuning.
    2. Often, floating allows tuning to be “touched-up,” saving time for other important service items.
    3. Discuss when floating might be preferred to forking.
  - B. Full tuning or touch-up?
    1. Depends to some extent on how much time is available.
    2. Depends on how bad the existing tuning is.
    3. After doing other more critical service, you may have only 20-40 minutes left for tuning. Of course, you’ve analyzed the whole piano beforehand and knew how much time you’d be left with. Sometimes, a complete tuning done in 40 minutes is preferable to a 40-minute touch-up (as when pitch is all over the place and piano hasn’t been tuned in some time), in other cases, a 40-minute touch-up may be preferred (concert). If you only have 20 minutes, a touch-up is probably your best option. Or, if the tuning is quite bad, you may be able to say, “We’ve got the piano playing better now, but we’re out of time. I suggest a thorough tuning another day.”
- IV. Tool organization
  - A. Carry what you need for 75% of your calls in your main kit.
  - B. Carry what you need for 75% of the rest of your calls in your trunk.
  - C. Clean your toolkit regularly and ask “When did I last use this?” for each tool.
  - D. Carry a good supply of parts
    1. Music wire

- 2. Action parts
- E. Cleaning supplies
- F. Luggage cart
- V. Common problem areas (use diagnostic chart)
  - A. Pedals: Noise & function
  - B. Action: Lack of ease or control in playing
  - C. Damper problems
  - D. Sound problems
- VI. Cleaning up
- VII. Methods of Charging
  - A. Flat rate
  - B. Hourly
  - C. Should I service grands, verticals, or both?
  - D. What is a tuner's time worth?
    - 1. Have service people come to your home from time to time, or go into service businesses to see what other service professionals are getting:
      - a. Appliance repair
      - b. Plumbers
      - c. Computer and copier repair
      - d. Pest control
      - e. Hair stylists
      - f. Massage therapists
      - g. Carpet cleaning
      - h. Pool & spa service
      - i. Rain gutter cleaning
    - 2. Have your car serviced at the dealership and see what the hourly rate is.
    - 3. How long did these people train?
    - 4. How long did you train?