

Virtual lessons (Zoom, FaceTime, iPhone, and MacBook)
Personal Experience on Piano Lessons

Kyu Butler, NCTM

*Pros

1. Convenient – students and teachers don't need travel. Saves time and no snow days or weather-related cancellation of lessons
2. Great way to improve musicianship and self-sufficiency – back and forth playing between teacher and student. Students have to listen and do it by themselves
3. Students seemed to be more interested in the new way of teaching – no resistance from the students in moving to online teaching.
4. You get to see the student's practice environment - piano, bench height, room, and piano tuning condition etc.

*Cons

1. Difficult to check music theory homework – it has to be sent to me before the lessons. Extra work and time needed.
2. Technical issues - delay, buffering, echo depending on the technology used. (headphone/earphone/airpods recommended)
3. Students can be distracted by siblings or family members
4. One-way communication - cannot play alongside with students, especially for rubato. I had to yell if I wanted to say something while the students were playing. Cannot do piano duet with students
5. Low sound quality - Dynamic changes, pedaling is also not so clear. I recommend use headphones. – Zoom support “Original Sound” which cancels the auto-enhancer. Auto-Enhancer fits best for talking not music, because it cuts off loud sound and amplifies soft sound, which means no dynamic changes possible.
6. Both have to own the same book - a student borrowed my book and it was very difficult to have lessons without it. Digital version of music is very helpful for Zoom users, since you can share screen and annotate on music. Students with visual-centered can understand easily.
7. Need an assistant (typically the parents), especially for younger or beginner students. Huge difference when one parent attended

*Suggestions for more serious virtual lessons with fancy equipment

1. You need a good quality internet connection (high speed) and decent devices for both student and teacher. (Old version phone cannot support good video quality. Old laptop made a constant wind noise)
2. Sufficient lighting
3. Stand/desk/chair around you
4. Forscore(App), IMSLP, Apple pen – send after the lesson for homework and reminder of things worked during lessons
5. Microphone - Blue Yeti is popular. Around \$100-\$150 in Amazon
6. Cameras for side view for face and overhead view for hands
7. Laptop (Mac works better than PC)