

Proper Piano Maintenance

THE FINEST CARE

The Steinway piano is the finest piano manufactured. Steinway recommends that pianos should be tuned at least 4 times a year. If this care is given to your piano it will always be tuned to A-440 concert pitch. The only excuse for disregarding this advice is one of economics. If you can afford this care, it is the best way to ensure good health and longevity of your piano.

ADEQUATE CARE

Having your piano tuned 3 times a year is adequate in most cases. In 4 months the fineness of the last tuning is gone and there is some variation in pitch from A 440. A fine tuning can still be done because the amount of pitch change is not enough to effect the new tuning.

MINIMUM CARE

Having your piano tuned every 6 months is the least amount of care it needs to ensure good health. In this time the pitch has changed enough to effect the new tuning being done. The extent of this problem varies depending on the piano and the climate in the home. It is important to note that at this point the piano could sound fine to you. This is because at 6 months the pitch has varied fairly evenly across the keyboard. Correcting the pitch must be addressed so the tuner must do the best job possible correcting the pitch and tune simultaneously. I can't stress it enough all pianos need to be tuned at the very least every 6 months.

THE PIANO USED PROFESSIONALLY

Pianos that played 3-6 hours a day will need to be tuned every 1-3 months. For instance a piano in a college practice room will need tuning at least once a month. For the professional player tuning frequency will depend on the amount of hours and the style of play.

A-440 CONCERT PITCH

When a piano is tuned to A-440 concert pitch the A above middle C is vibrating at 440 cycles a second. This is the internationally recognized frequency for that note. All the other notes on the piano are tuned in reference to that note. Your piano should always be tuned to A-440 concert pitch. Beware; unfortunately there are tuners who will not warn you that your piano has dropped in pitch. They will just tune the piano at the pitch it is at; this done repeatedly will render your piano drastically out of pitch. It is not the tuners place to make the determination of how your piano is cared for. You should be informed about the pianos needs and you alone should make the decision if you want the piano cared for properly.

PITCH CORRECTION

When a piano is left un-tuned for a long period of time, its pitch relative to A-440 will be so great that a pitch correction (ruff tuning) will be needed before a fine tuning to concert pitch can be done. The number of ruff tunings needed to restore the piano to A-440 concert pitch varies with how much the piano has dropped from concert pitch. It is important to note that a piano drops in pitch even if the piano is not played at all. Changes in the humidity in the air are the major cause of the piano going out of tune or pitch.

FINE TUNING

After the piano has been restored to proper pitch and has been left to equalize for a week, it can be finely tuned. For a full understanding of fine tuning I have to discuss pitch again. The space between each adjacent key is a 'hundred cents'. This is the unit of measure piano tuners use in discussing pitch. This may not make sense to you, however, if you think of it as a 100% between each key, it makes it easier to discuss a percentage of a half-tone, sharp or flat from proper pitch. On the concert stage a piano needs to be 5-7% in tune across the entire keyboard to get the best results. In a home 10% of a half-tone, sharp or flat is acceptable. Therefore, what makes a tuning a fine tuning is how close the piano is to A-440 proper pitch.

PIANO LIFE SAVER SYSTEMS BY DAMP CHASER

The best way to protect your piano from humidity changes is to have a climate control system installed. These systems keep the humidity in and around the piano at a constant 45%. This improves the stability of the piano. Pianos with these systems in them only require tuning twice a year. This will save you a fortune in piano maintenance and will also increase the life expectancy of your instrument.

THE CARE OF NEW PIANOS

New pianos should be tuned 4-6 times each year for the first two years. The combined tension of all the strings on the sound board is approximately 18 tons. Pianos when new are very unstable. The strings have to settle in under the tonnage of tension. Also the wood used to make pianos today is kiln dried not air seasoned like long ago. The wood of the soundboard actually seasons in its new home. Due to this new pianos are known to drop drastically in pitch.

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Registered Piano Craftman



"perfecting each not one key at a time"

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