

2026 KEY Contest Guidelines for Music Selections

Piano Solo:

Choose two *memorized* pieces by different composers, exhibiting a variety of contrasting musical techniques. Only *original* music is permissible. Downloaded sheet music is allowed with proper copyright information. No arrangements, transcriptions, hymns, folk songs or pop tunes are allowed. Students will enter the division represented by level of difficulty: **Early Elementary-Level 1, Elementary-Level 2, Late Elementary-Level 3, Early Intermediate-Level 4, Intermediate-Level 5-6, Late Intermediate-Level 7-8, and Advanced-Level 9-10.** Entry level and advancement is left to the discretion of the teacher. A student who has entered a previous KEY competition and received a Gold medal that year is permitted to remain in that division **or** advance forward. Please choose repertoire accordingly and check your students' records of past leveling decisions, especially if a transfer student is involved. The Chairman will check records for accuracy when entries are submitted. Students are never allowed to regress to a lower division.

The 1st or "Required" solo must be chosen from the 2026 required list or a standard method book at the same level. (There has been no changes from the 2025 Required List). Please refer to the "Required List" in our current 2026 teacher handbook. Or, for the Early Elementary through Intermediate divisions you may choose an original piece from a standard method book, which has the level **plainly listed on the front of the book.** The reference guide used for leveling of classical music on the required list is the book "Piano Literature for Teaching and Performance," 2021 edition by Jane Magrath, published by the Frances Clark Center. This book is available for purchase by anyone interested.

The 2nd or "Choice solo" may or may not be from the required list. It could be an original contemporary sheet music solo, or an original piece from a collection or method book by a modern, contemporary composer. The composer of the choice solo **MUST** be different from the required solo. If your choice piece is also chosen from the required list, make sure it is listed in the same division as your first required piece.

***To insure that both pieces represent the same level of musicianship, the level of the choice piece must be listed on the front cover or inside the book.** In case a collection of music contains more than one level of pieces, it will be up to the KEY Contest chairman to decide if your choice piece qualifies to be on the same level as the required piece. If you have any doubt about the level of the choice piece, please contact the chairman before assigning the piece to the student.

Both pieces must be at least 12 measures in length and be composed by different composers.

Choose only one movement from a multi-movement piece.

Please list Opus numbers for all classical music on the KEY entry form if known.

Students will play both pieces from memory and present the original music to the judge, with measures numbered.

Photocopies are not allowed unless accompanied by written permission from the publisher stating that the selection is out of print. Teachers are cautioned to seek the permission well in advance of contest day. If a student does not have original music or publisher permission for a photocopy, they may receive comments from the judge, but will not be awarded a medal or trophy.

Changes in piece selection are allowed up to two weeks before the contest day and must be submitted to and approved by the chairman. NO changes in music will be allowed on contest day. If a student performs a piece not listed on the rating sheet they will be disqualified from receiving a medal or trophy. Judge's assistants are responsible to check score specifics (i.e. Opus #s, etc.) as the student presents. Report any problems to the chairman in the TAB room immediately.

Piano Duet:

Choose two pieces by different composers/arrangers, exhibiting a variety of musical techniques. Both pieces should be at the same level of difficulty and musicianship.

Students will enter this event by age: Group 1 (10 years & under), Group 2 (Ages 11-13), Group 3 (Ages 14 & up). The group entered is determined by the age of the older student in the duet team.

Memorization is NOT required for duets. Students should perform from one original copy of music and give another original copy to the judge with measures numbered. (Exception: Siblings from the same household will be allowed to play from a photocopy of the music and give the original music to the judge.) Copies should be destroyed after the contest. Downloaded sheet music is allowed with proper copyright information. Original music must be used in the Honors Recital. Unrelated ensemble teams will need *two original copies of the music*. Violations of this rule will prevent the duet team from receiving a medal or trophy.

Listed below are some collections of various classical composers' music where you will find some of the Required Solos:

1. Masterworks Classics by Jane Magrath
 2. Piano Literature Books by Faber & Faber
 3. Exploring Piano Classics- Repertoire by Nancy Bachus
 4. Piano Literature by Jane Bastien
 5. The Festival Collection by Helen Marlais
 6. First Impressions by M'lou Dietzer
 7. Applause! Books 1&2 by Lynn Freeman Olson
 8. Encore! Books 1&2 by Jane Magrath
 9. Essential Keyboard Repertoire by Lynn Freeman Olson
 10. Classics Alive! Books 1&2 by Jane Magrath
 11. In the Joy of Classics by D. Agay
 12. Essential Piano Repertoire books by Keith Snell
 13. Various single composer collections by different publishers.
 14. Various classical sheet solos by single composers.
15. Some Method books contain classical solos, but make sure they are "original" and not simplified arrangements.

Most of the listed pieces can be googled or found on YouTube. There are also some free music downloads available on the internet.