

Your First Steps on the Organ

A short guide for absolute beginners

Starting the organ can feel like learning two or three instruments at once — manuals, pedals, and registration all at the same time. It isn't as overwhelming as it looks. These five starting points will help your first week feel structured rather than chaotic.

Five Things to Try This Week

1. Start with hands alone — pedals come later.

There is no rule that says you must play manuals and pedals together from day one. Spend your first sessions on manual technique alone; the pedal board is far easier to add once your hands are comfortable.

2. Sit so your feet can find the pedals without looking down.

Organ bench height and position matter more than most beginners expect. Adjust the bench so your feet rest naturally on the pedal board — you should never need to lean forward or look down to find a pedal.

3. Practice smooth finger substitution.

Because the organ has no sustain pedal to blur gaps, legato playing depends on swapping fingers on a held note. Practice holding one note and quietly changing fingers on it without any audible break in the sound.

4. Pick one simple registration and stay with it.

It's tempting to explore every stop on day one. For your first pieces, choose one clear, moderate registration and stay with it — you'll learn faster by focusing on technique than by chasing new sounds.

5. Practice pedal scales separately, slowly.

When you do start the pedals, practice a simple scale alone, heel-and-toe, at a tempo where every note is deliberate. Speed comes naturally once the pattern is secure.

Every organist you admire once sat exactly where you are now, working out manuals and pedals one step at a time. If you'd like a guided first session on a real or digital organ, a trial lesson is a relaxed way to begin.

Warm regards,

Mirco Lieber, MMag.

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Ready to try it with guidance?

Book a free trial lesson with Mirco — live, 1:1, over Zoom.

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