



# Jolly Old Saint Nicholas

Easy Piano Sheet Music

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Attr. James R. Murray (1874)

Level 1 | Full score, fingering, practice tips

**Door 3 of the Free Piano Advent Calendar**

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# Jolly Old Saint Nicholas

| Key     | Time Signature | Tempo               | Difficulty         | Measures |
|---------|----------------|---------------------|--------------------|----------|
| C major | 4/4            | Allegretto, 112 BPM | Beginner - Level 1 | 16       |

## About This Piece

The tune was first printed in James R. Murray's *School Chimes, A New School Music Book* (Cleveland: S. Brainard's Sons, 1874), as No. 86 on page 43, in A major and 2/4 time. The page names no composer, so the attribution to Murray, who died in 1905, rests on his book. The words are by Emily Huntington Miller (died 1913). They appeared as Lilly's Secret in *The Little Corporal* in December 1865 and are not printed here. For this arrangement the melody moves up a minor third, from A major to C major, and the note values are doubled, so the eighth notes of the 2/4 original become quarter notes in 4/4. The single-note left hand, in whole and half notes, is ours.

## Notes and Hand Positions

### Fingering Guide

Right Hand: G4, A4, B4, C5, D5, E5

Two positions. In measures 1-4 and 9-12 the thumb (1) sits on C5, the index (2) on D5 and the middle finger (3) on E5. In measure 5 the hand moves down: index (2) on A4 and thumb (1) on G4, with the middle finger (3) stretching up to C5. The walk in measure 7 goes B4-C5-D5-E5 on 2-3-4-5, and measure 15 turns D5-C5-D5-E5 on 4-3-4-5.

Left Hand: C3, D3, E3, F3, G3 (single notes, one or two per measure)

C position for the whole piece: pinky (5) on C3, ring (4) on D3, middle (3) on E3, index (2) on F3 and thumb (1) on G3. Every bar holds one whole note or two half notes, and the hand never moves.

## Notes Used in This Piece

### Right Hand

| Note | On the Staff                 | On the Keyboard                  | Finger     |
|------|------------------------------|----------------------------------|------------|
| G4   | Second line of treble staff  | Between black keys, right of F4  | Thumb (1)  |
| A4   | Second space of treble staff | Between black keys, right of G4  | Index (2)  |
| B4   | Middle line of treble staff  | Right of the three black keys    | Index (2)  |
| C5   | Third space of treble staff  | One octave above middle C        | Thumb (1)  |
| D5   | Fourth line of treble staff  | Between two black keys above C5  | Index (2)  |
| E5   | Fourth space of treble staff | Right of two black keys above C5 | Middle (3) |

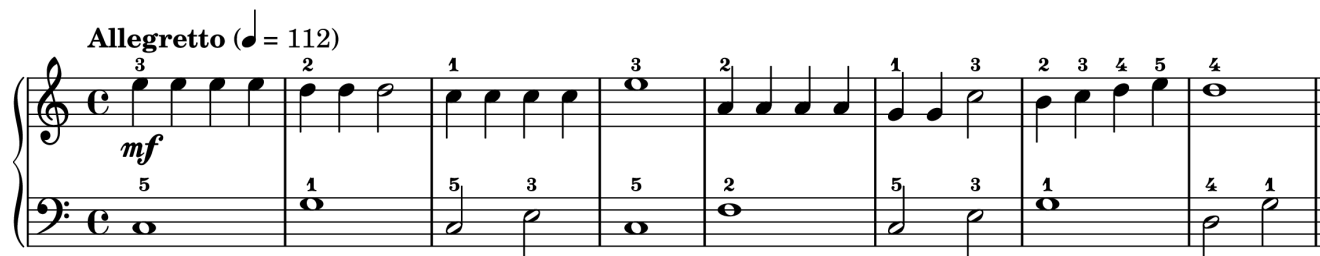
## Left Hand

| Note | On the Staff               | On the Keyboard                   | Finger     |
|------|----------------------------|-----------------------------------|------------|
| C3   | Second space of bass staff | One octave below middle C         | Pinky (5)  |
| D3   | Middle line of bass staff  | Between two black keys below C4   | Ring (4)   |
| E3   | Third space of bass staff  | Right of two black keys below C4  | Middle (3) |
| F3   | Fourth line of bass staff  | Left of three black keys below C4 | Index (2)  |
| G3   | Fourth space of bass staff | Between black keys, right of F3   | Thumb (1)  |

## Section A - The Two Opening Phrases (Measures 1-8)

Two short phrases. The right hand starts on four E5s with finger 3, steps down to D5 and C5, and holds E5 for a full bar. Then the hand moves down for A4 and G4, reaches back up to C5, and walks B4-C5-D5-E5 to a long D5. The left hand holds C3, G3, E3 and F3 in whole and half notes.

**Allegretto** (♩ = 112)



*Jolly Old Saint Nicholas - Section A - The Two Opening Phrases*

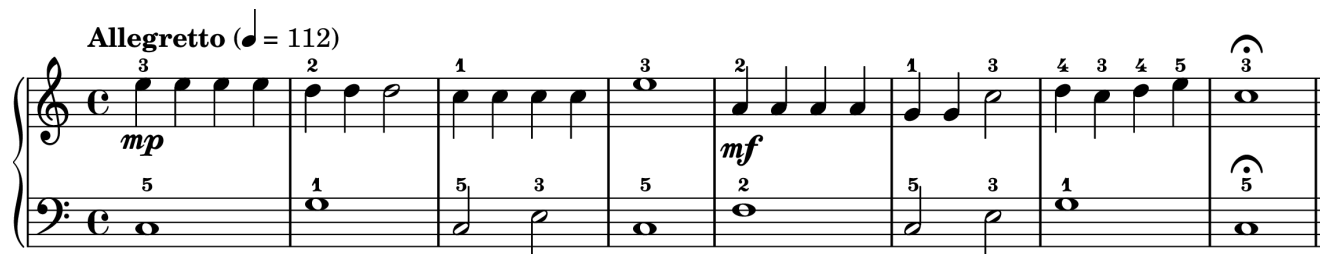
### How to Practice This Section

Before playing, set the hand on the keys and say the finger numbers aloud: 3-2-1 for the first four bars, then 2-1-3 and 2-3-4-5. Practice the move from E5 in measure 4 down to A4 in measure 5 on its own.

## Section B - Back Home to C (Measures 9-16)

The opening comes back, marked *mp*, and returns to *mf* at measure 13. Measure 15 is the only new bar: D5-C5-D5-E5 on fingers 4-3-4-5 replaces the climb from B4. The piece then lands on C5 with finger 3 over a C3 in the left hand, both held under a fermata.

**Allegretto** (♩ = 112)



*Jolly Old Saint Nicholas - Section B - Back Home to C*

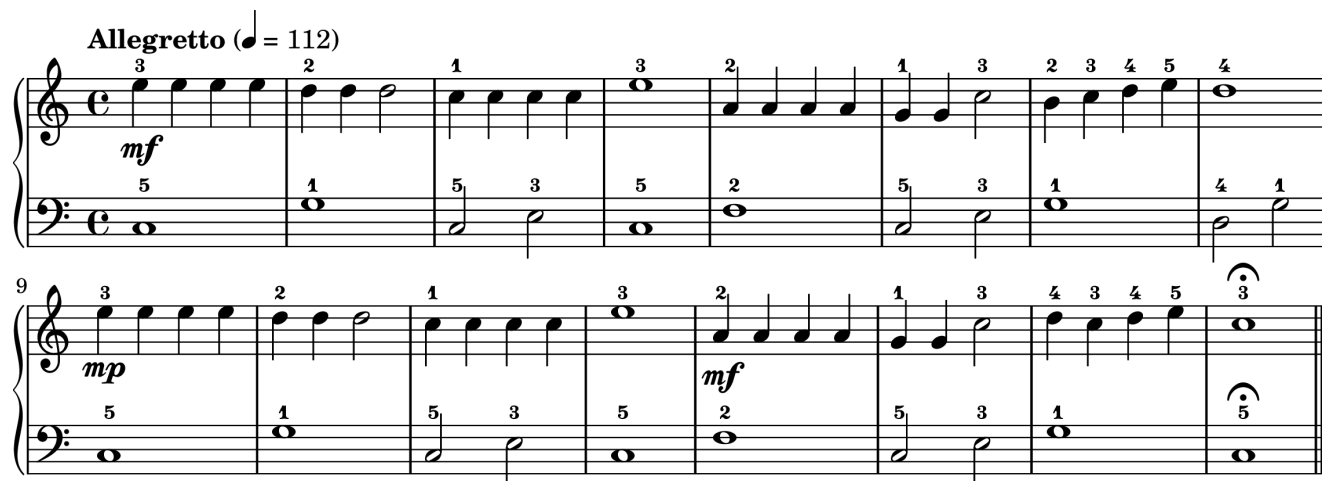
### How to Practice This Section

Loop measures 15 and 16 slowly until the 4-3-4 turn is even. Make the soft start of this section a clear change of sound, then bring the volume back up at measure 13.

## Full Score

Here is the complete piece with all sections combined.

**Allegretto** (♩ = 112)



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## Step-by-Step Practice Guide

### Step 1: Right Hand Alone

1. Measures 1-4: thumb on C5, finger 2 on D5, finger 3 on E5. Play the repeated notes evenly, four to a bar
2. Measure 5: move the hand down so finger 2 takes A4 and the thumb G4, then stretch finger 3 up to C5 in measure 6
3. Measure 7: walk up B4-C5-D5-E5 with 2-3-4-5 and hold D5 with finger 4 for four counts
4. Measure 15: D5-C5-D5-E5 with 4-3-4-5, then end on C5 with finger 3 and hold the fermata

### Step 2: Left Hand Alone

1. Pinky on C3, finger 3 on E3, finger 2 on F3, thumb on G3: the hand stays here for the whole piece
2. Whole notes get four counts and half notes two, so count aloud while you hold them
3. Measure 8 is the only bar with D3, played with finger 4 before the thumb takes G3

### Step 3: Hands Together

1. Start at x0.5 in the player, about 60 to the quarter, with each left hand note sounding together with a right hand note
2. Play measures 1-8 hands together, then measures 9-16, where only measures 15 and 16 are new
3. Play measures 9-12 softer (mp), then return to mf at measure 13
4. Target: Allegretto at 112 to the quarter, with the last C5 and C3 held together under the fermata



*Because true virtuosos deserve nothing less.*

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One carol and one short task a day, December 1 to 24.

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