

# ORGAN ESSENTIALS: MANUAL TECHNIQUE

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## WHY IT'S IMPORTANT: PIANO VS. ORGAN TONE

**PIANO TONE:** As you know, the piano is a stringed instrument; the sound is produced by a hammer striking a string. The string sounds, and the sound begins to fade (decay) immediately after the attack.

**ORGAN TONE:** The organ is a pipe instrument, which means that sound is produced as air is pushed through pipes. "The volume of the tone is *constant* as long as the key is held down."

**THE RESULT:** Because the organ tone doesn't decay or decrease in sound, "**the timing of the release is just as important as the attack.**" (Don Cook, *OrganTutor*, 2008, Intro 9 Suppl.)

## BASIC MANUAL TECHNIQUE

**HAND POSTURE:** Curve the fingers. Keep the hand and wrist relaxed. There is no need to apply excessive pressure to the keys.

**ATTACK AND RELEASE:** Precise rhythmic attack and release are crucial. The *release* is just as important as the *attack*.

**LEGATO:** Essential to effective hymn playing.

**INDEPENDENCE:** Finger independence and independence of line (i.e. having the listener hear the individual soprano, alto, tenor, and bass parts)

## IMPORTANT LISTENING SKILLS

**PERFECT LEGATO:** One finger should keep a key depressed until the moment a new tone begins. Listen for a perfectly smooth connection.

**PRECISE RELEASES:** Listen for the timing of the release. Practice on a "silent" (no stops pulled) manual, listening for the clicks of the attacks and releases.

**INDEPENDENCE OF LINE:** When playing voices (lines) together, listen for a single line to sound the same as it does when played alone.

(Don Cook, *OrganTutor*, 2008, Intro 10 Suppl.)

## FINGERING TECHNIQUE

The goal of fingering is to provide for the most efficient motion as possible. The following fingering techniques are listed in order of efficiency. (Don Cook, *OrganTutor*, 2008, Manual 44 Suppl.)

- DIRECT FINGERING
- REDISTRIBUTION OF THE INNER PART
- FINGER CROSSING
- FINGER GLISSANDO
- FINGER SUBSTITUTION
- THUMB GLISSANDO

