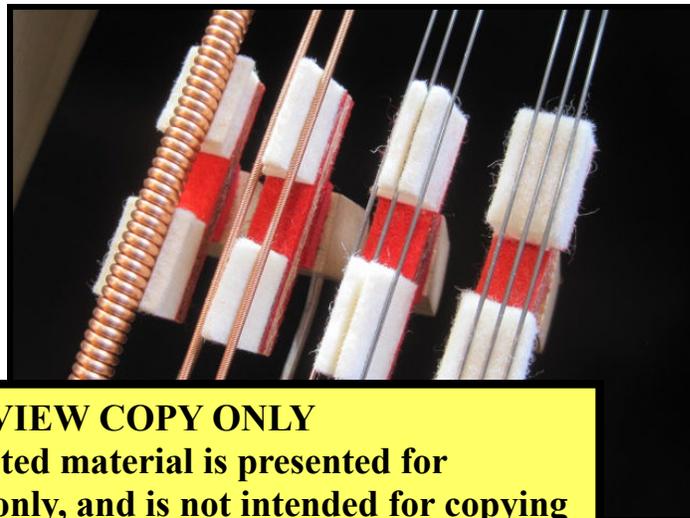
A detailed close-up photograph of the damper mechanism in an upright piano. The image shows a row of dark metal damper flippers, each with a small screw. To the right of the flippers is a thick, red, fibrous damper felt strip. Further right are several parallel, cylindrical copper damper pins. The background is a light-colored, possibly wooden, surface.

Damper Replacement for
the Upright Piano
Promo Set Preview

The Piano Owner's Heads-Up Guide to Important Piano Maintenance

Focus On: Damper Replacement in Upright Piano



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Dampers are to a piano what brakes are to an automobile. While the action, strings and soundboard of the piano are all devoted to the production of sound, the sole purpose of the dampers is the cessation of sound. The fact that a piano can go from a thunderous crescendo one second to nearly complete silence the next is a testament to the genius of the design of the dampers.

Worn-out dampers will be detectable by what's heard when the piano is played. When the sustain pedal is released, the transition from sound to silence won't be immediate, but will be more prolonged than usual—a symptom of old dampers unable to quickly absorb the energy of the strings.

The dampers on your piano have reached the point in which their effectiveness has been compromised by age. Replacement of the old damper felts of your piano with a set of new high-quality dampers would be the best solution.

bright dampers are shown in the photo above. The powerful vibration of the longest of the copper wound bass strings (far left in photo) are quieted by single wedge dampers. For the lighter pairs of wound bass strings found further up on the scale, double wedge dampers are used. Plain steel treble strings are either dampened with trichord dampers or flat dampers.

With a new set of dampers such as shown in the photo below, your piano will give more satisfactory performance without the annoyance of ringing keys.



Heads-Up Preview

About This Preview Packet

The 24 main topics available for your free personalized promo or newsletter set all come in 2 versions—heads-up and full-length, both of which are shown in this preview packet.

Heads-up versions (see example on previous page) are always 1 page in length and as such are very direct and to the point. These shorter versions work especially well for pianos which have a number of repair issues in that a packet of them can be included with an estimate without creating a perceived overload of information for the owner. For my own business, I print multiple copies of heads-up for every topic covered thus far and carry several of each with me in my briefcase on tuning rounds in case I need to put a packet together. I spend a little more on printing expenses to have them produced on heavy-weight card stock, but the extra expense is well worth it, at least in my opinion—the promos have a very substantial 'feel' about them on the heavier-weight paper.

With a written estimate accompanied by relevant heads-up promos, a well-informed decision can be made more easily at the owner's leisure. This is especially helpful when the decision (to repair or not to repair) involves a discussion between joint owners of the piano—a husband and wife for example. The couple can sit down at the kitchen table together and go over the materials in an informed manner. Also, heads-up promos are great for any situation involving committees. If a half dozen repair topics are involved in a proposed restoration of a church piano, for example, the heads-ups can be passed around among committee members for everyone to become involved in the discussion and decision making.

Full-length versions (see example on following pages) go into enough detail that even your most discriminating customer will be satisfied. For my own use, I've printed off a single copy of each full-length version that I have in a binder which I also carry in my briefcase. Occasionally, I get my binder out if the customer wants more information on the spot. More frequently, however, are situations in which I ask my customer if they would like me to send the full-length copies of the topics concerned via email for further reading and consideration. Quite often customers do opt to see the in-depth materials.

Whichever version of the promos are put to use, the fact is that they work! In my own business, since I have begun giving out promos with estimates, the percentage of clients having recommended repairs done has increased steadily. In 2011, over 90% of the estimates which I gave were followed through with. Before promos, those types of numbers were way beyond what I ever saw. Other users of promos (see testimonials) have experienced similar results. Technicians have reported back that because of the promos, their businesses are doing better than ever before.

But enough about my own experiences and those of other technicians. Try a promo set out for yourself! Pick out a topic for your free promo set, and let us help you start building upon your own success story! Best wishes to your future!

Full-Length Preview

The Owner's Guide to Piano Repair



Focus On: Damper Replacement for the Upright Piano

Information provided courtesy of:

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Dampers are to a piano what brakes are to an automobile. While the action, strings and soundboard of the piano are all devoted to the production of sound, the sole purpose of the dampers is the cessation of sound. The fact that a piano can go from a thunderous crescendo one second to nearly complete silence the next is a testament to the genius of the design of the dampers. **The dampers on your piano, however, have reached the point in which their effectiveness has been compromised by wear and tear. Replacement of the old, hardened damper felts of your piano with a set of new high-quality dampers would be the best solution.**



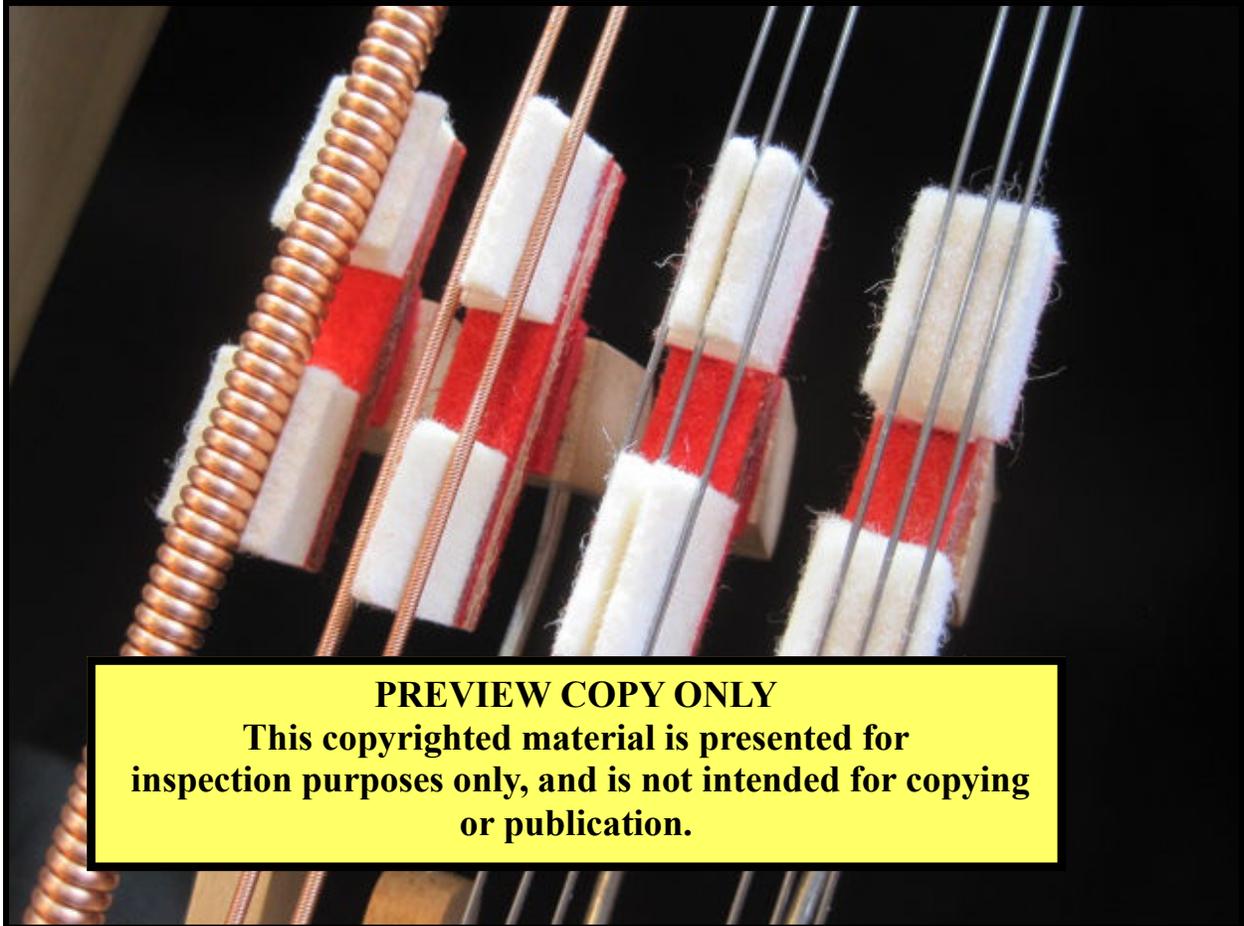
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The following commonly asked questions have been answered to give you the information you need in order to decide whether or not to have the dampers on your upright piano replaced.

What are the symptoms of dampers which have excessive wear and tear?

Just as worn-out brakes on your car announce their condition with unwanted sounds that are characteristic of the problem (high-pitched squealing or scraping noise upon braking), so worn-out dampers will be detectable by what's heard when the piano is played. Specifically, when the sustain pedal is released, the transition from sound to silence won't be immediate, but will be more prolonged than usual—a symptom of ineffective dampers unable to quickly absorb the energy of the strings. Also, when individual notes are played, a "zinging" sound might be heard as the fingers lift from the keys as the strings buzz for an instant against the harder than normal surface of the old felts, or worse, notes will continue to ring after the keys are released altogether.



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How do effective dampers work in an upright piano?

The basic functioning of upright dampers is simple—when a note is depressed, the spring-loaded damper for that note is lifted, allowing the strings (or string, for the low bass) for that note to vibrate. Once the note is released, the damper again makes contact with the strings, stopping all vibration. A damper has the ability to absorb the energy of a string hundreds of times as massive as itself and to quell its vibration in a split-second. For this to happen, the damper material must be firm enough to hold its shape, but soft enough to quickly muffle the sound of the strings.

The four most commonly used upright dampers are shown in the photo above. The powerful vibration of the longest of the copper wound bass strings (far left in photo) are quieted by single wedge dampers. For the lighter pairs of wound bass strings found further up on the scale, double wedge dampers are used. Plain steel treble strings are either dampened with trichord dampers or flat dampers.

Complicating matters is the fact that when the sustain pedal is used, all dampers need to work in unison, so that the entire set lifts from the strings and returns to the strings as a single unit. The various profiles that the different dampers have makes proper adjustment critical.

What's the typical procedure for this job? Is this a repair that must be done in the workshop?

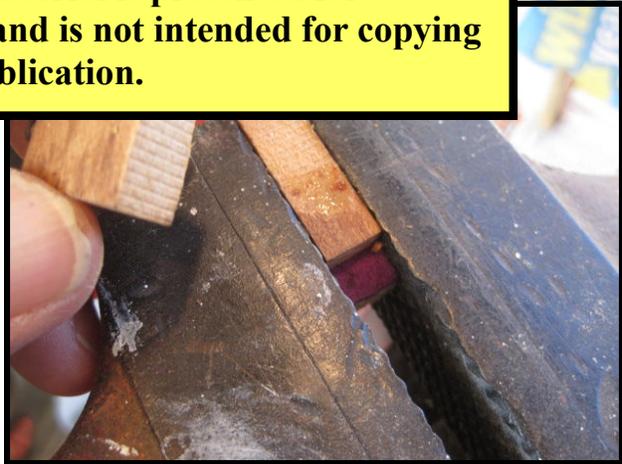
Unless the piano is in the workshop for an extensive restoration work, there is no reason to transport the entire instrument to the shop. However, it may make sense to take the action to the shop for at least part of the work to be done.



To remove the old dampers, each damper is removed individually from the action along with a part known as the "damper block." Most times the damper block will be reused, with only the damper felt (and possibly its wood backing) replaced. Here, an individual damper assembly is placed in a vise so that the damper

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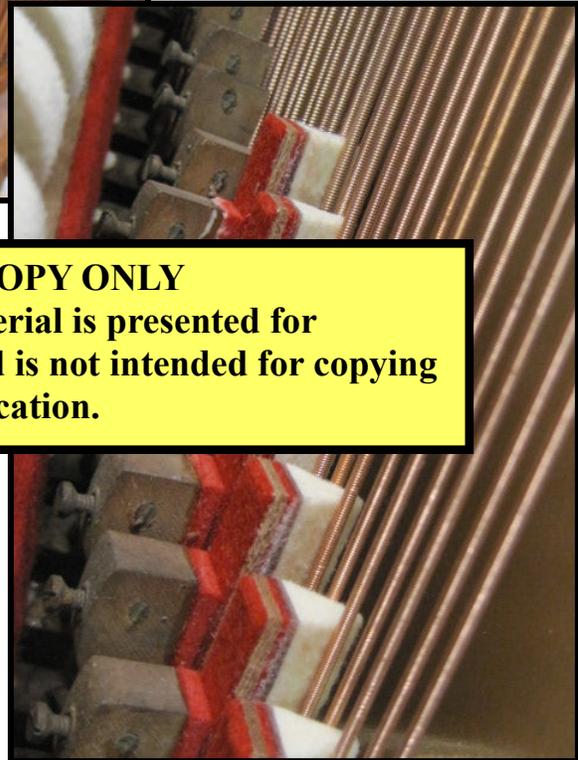
The
come off with a tap of a mallet. If the wooden backing is also to be reused, the felt will need to be scraped with a chisel from the wood. Either way, a clean new surface is required before the new damper may be glued on.



As the damper felts are removed, the damper blocks are returned to the same position they came from in the action.



Once all the dampers have been removed, and the damper blocks have been reinstalled, it is time to return the action to the piano.



Ord
to glue the
action in t
serve as th
This way, alignment of the felt to the
strings is sure to be precise. In the photo,
new bass dampers are being installed.
Slight correctional movements may be
made while the glue is still wet to ensure
a perfect match between dampers and
strings.

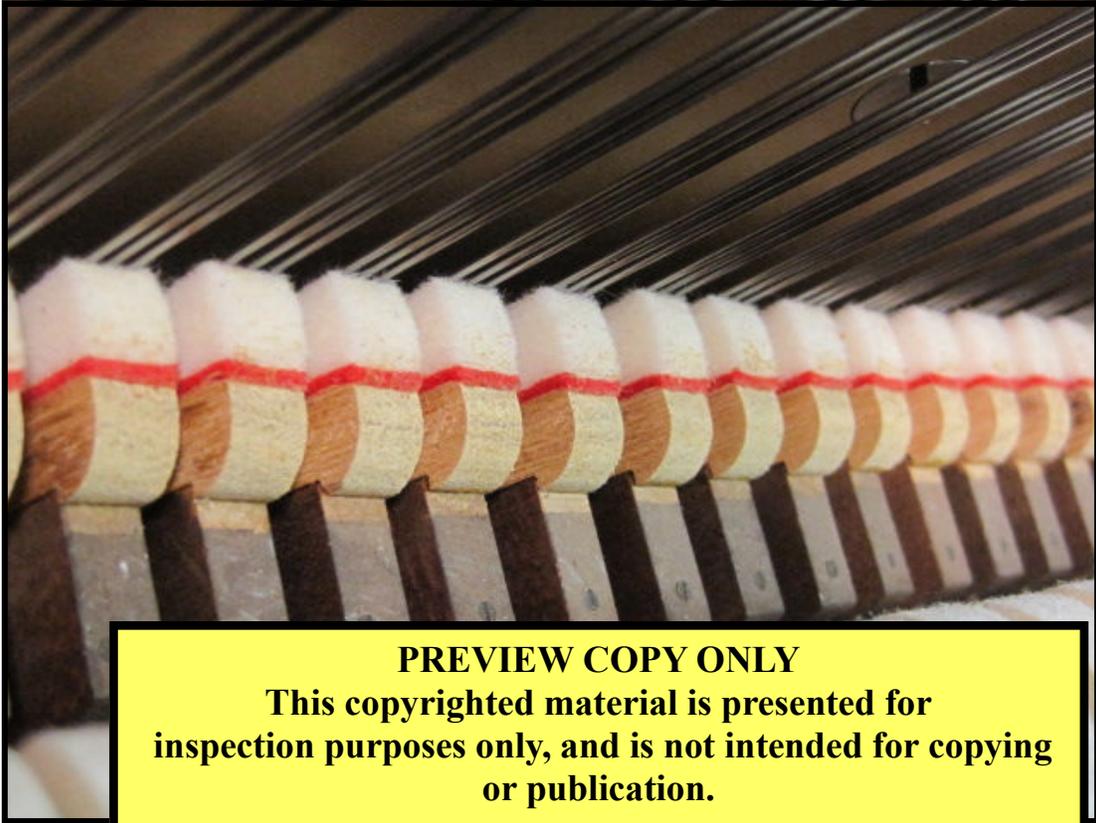
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Do other repairs go hand-in-hand with the installation of a set of dampers?

Yes. If the piano is in need of repinning and restringing, now would be the time to do it in that the jobs compliment each other. Since the dampers conform to the strings (especially the wound bass strings shown in the photo above), it makes sense to have new strings and new dampers installed at the same time.

If the piano action is temporarily out of the piano and in the shop while the preparatory work to the dampers is being done, it would also be the ideal time to do such jobs as shaping the hammers and / or replacing the bridle straps.

Finally, a job of regulating the action to make sure all parts are working together effectively might be considered. Regulation will bring the performance of your piano back closer to what it was when it was a new instrument.



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A new set of treble dampers installed and ready quiet things down when needed.

"In business to bring your piano to its full potential."

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