



◆ MOORE PIANO SERVICES ◆

Greenwood, South Carolina · Certified Piano Technician

The Established *Owner's Guide*

For the piano you've had for years — diagnosing problems,
knowing what's worth fixing, and planning its next chapter.

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Your piano has a story. Let's read it.

A piano that's been in your family — or your church, or your living room — for years tells you things a new instrument can't. This guide picks up where our New Owner's Guide leaves off: how to read what your piano is telling you, what's actually worth fixing, and how to think clearly about its next chapter.

I. Reading the Warning Signs

Pianos rarely fail all at once. They tell you something is wrong well before it becomes serious — if you know what to listen and look for.

A buzzing or rattling sound

Often a loose screw, a rattling object inside the cabinet, or a string touching another part. Usually a quick, inexpensive fix — but ignored long enough, vibration can loosen other hardware too.

Notes that don't sound when played softly

A sign the action needs regulation — the felt and leather parts have compressed or worn unevenly over years of play, and the hammer is no longer reaching the string reliably at low velocity.

A “thunk” or double-strike on certain keys

Usually a let-off or repetition spring issue — a regulation problem, not a sign the piano is failing structurally.

Tuning that doesn't hold for more than a few weeks

If this happens repeatedly even after correct tuning, it often points to loose tuning pins or a pinblock losing its grip — worth a professional evaluation before it gets worse.

A musty smell from inside the piano

A common early sign of excess humidity or the beginning of mold growth on felts. Address this before it spreads — see Section II.

II. What Years of Humidity Exposure Actually Does

If your piano has gone years without a Dampp-Chaser system, here is what's likely happening even if it still sounds fine today — South Carolina's humidity swings work slowly and quietly.

COMPONENT	WHAT HAPPENS OVER TIME
Soundboard	Develops fine cracks over years; tone gradually loses warmth and sustain.
Tuning pins / pinblock	Wood shrinks and swells repeatedly, eventually loosening pins — the #1 cause of a piano that won't hold tune.
Bridges	Hairline cracks form where strings cross the bridge, causing buzzing or dead notes.
Metal parts	Strings, tuning pins, and the plate can develop surface rust in humid spells, affecting tone and tuning stability.

III. Repair or Replace? A Clear Way to Decide

The most common question we hear from long-time owners: “is it worth fixing, or should I just get a new one?” Here's the framework we actually use.

The 50% Rule

If the estimated repair cost is less than 50% of what a comparable instrument would cost to replace — and the piano has sentimental, structural, or tonal qualities worth preserving — repair is almost always the better value. Above that threshold, it's worth a serious conversation about restoration scope versus replacement.

IV. What Regulation & Voicing Actually Fix

These are the two most misunderstood services we offer. Owners often assume their piano just “feels old” or “sounds tired” — when in fact, both are very fixable.

Regulation

Fixes how the piano FEELS

Over years of play, felt compresses, leather wears, and wood swells and shrinks. The result: keys that feel uneven, sluggish repetition, notes that don't speak when played softly, or a 'mushy' touch. Regulation re-aligns the mechanical action — sometimes in your home, sometimes requiring the action to be removed to the shop for precision work.

Voicing

Fixes how the piano SOUNDS

Hammer felt hardens and develops grooves from repeated string contact over years, making tone increasingly bright, harsh, or uneven between notes. Voicing reshapes and adjusts the felt density to restore a warmer, more even tone across the keyboard — the difference between a piano that sounds 'tired' and one that sounds rich again.

“My piano feels old” usually means regulation. “My piano sounds tired” usually means voicing.

V. Understanding Restoration Scope

Not all restoration is the same project. Here's how the scope typically breaks down, from smallest to largest commitment.

Touch-Up

Minor felt and hardware replacement, cleaning, and a thorough regulation. Brings a tired piano back to reliable daily use.

Action Rebuild

Replacing worn hammers, dampers, whippens, and related felts — restores touch and tone without opening the case structurally.

Full Restoration

Soundboard repair or replacement, restringing, refinishing the case, and a complete action rebuild. Effectively returns the piano to like-new condition. Reserved for instruments with real sentimental or tonal value worth the investment.

VI. When It's Time to Retire a Piano

Sometimes the most honest answer is that a piano's working life in your home has come to a natural end — and that's alright. Consider retirement when:

- Repair costs would exceed roughly half the value of a comparable replacement instrument.
- The soundboard has cracked extensively or separated from the ribs.
- The piano sat through years of extreme neglect, water exposure, or pest damage.
- Nobody in the household plays it, and it's primarily taking up space.

If any of this sounds familiar, our Retired Piano Program gives the instrument a second life with someone who will play it — at no cost to you, with pickup included.

VII. Getting a Neglected Piano Back on Track

If it's been years since your piano was serviced, don't worry — most instruments can be brought back. Here's what that process typically looks like.

1. Free evaluation

We assess overall condition, check the soundboard, bridges, and pinblock, and give you an honest picture of what's needed.

2. Pitch raise (if needed)

If the piano has drifted significantly flat or sharp, we bring it back toward standard pitch first — a full fine-tuning follows once the strings settle.

3. Fine-tuning, 1–2 weeks later

A second visit locks in a stable, accurate tuning now that the piano has had time to adjust.

4. Regulation & voicing as needed

Once in tune, any remaining touch or tone issues are addressed so the piano performs the way it should.

Sound familiar? Our New Owner's Package bundles all of this into one visit, often saving up to \$500 versus booking each service separately.

◆ READY TO BRING IT BACK? ◆

Every piano has a story worth continuing.

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