

## Should I buy a Keyboard or Piano?

I want to take Piano Lessons and I don't have a piano. What should I do?

If you are going to take piano or keyboard lessons, you will need some type of piano or keyboard. This is an absolute MUST if you want to progress! You will need something...anything is better than nothing..."but what", you may ask. "What do I do"? Well, read on because you have a couple of options.

What you end up purchasing may have a lot to do with your instructor. Almost all instructors would prefer you to have a keyboard with certain functions, abilities and standards. We'll get into this later.

What you use will also have a lot to do with your age, size, musical goals and ambitions.

Buying a keyboard will also most likely be determined by your budget.

Regardless of your instructor, age, and/or wallet, you will need something that works...anything with keys and sound. Using an old beat-up 1980's Casio electronic keyboard with tiny keys may not be your best choice if you really want to learn how to play the piano (using it to record and play retro sounds with your friends and/or computer is a whole different story)...but, like I've already mentioned, having an old keyboard...even a small one is still better than nothing. You need something to get your hands on. You need to physically connect with an instrument...see it, touch it....play it!

Use what you have at first. If you have nothing, try borrowing a keyboard from a friend or relative. It's also really ok to find something at a garage or rummage sale....goodwill even. You can spend under \$50 easily on an electronic keyboard with 61 keys (as opposed to the standard 88 keys found on almost all real pianos) to get you started.

However, you will probably not want to have years (or even months) of lessons on such a keyboard...there are so many limitations...so many missing necessities to achieving a well rounded experience with piano lessons and playing!

Here is what you want:

**88 Keys** (76 keys will do at first....but trust me, you'll want all 88 if you get serious about playing)

**Touch-dynamic** (velocity/touch-sensitive) **weighted hammer-action keys** (This is really important if you care at all about the touch and feel of the keys....you'll

really want this...it's the best thing closest to a real piano...in some instances even better).

At least **32-note polyphony** (this basically means you can have up to 32 notes sounding at once).

**Speakers** that are external or built-in (this is very nice to have...a lot of higher end keyboards and workstations do not have built speakers in which case you'll need an additional amp or a nice set of headphones). I have never seen a keyboard that does not have a headphone jack. Headphone jacks are pretty standard...but speakers are not. However, most common hobby keyboards and higher end digital pianos have built-in speakers. Your ears will want a break from headphones so get something with speakers.

A jack for pedals, notably a **sustain pedal** (you'll want this for sure....they're pretty standard).

Here is a list of different types of electronic keyboards and pianos:

- **Electronic Keyboards** (often smaller, portable with 76, 61 or less keys with lots of sounds and rhythms and velocity sensitivity keys)
- **Arranger Keyboards** (loaded with sounds and rhythms and sequencing abilities, these keyboards are a great introduction to music recording and production...and live performance...'one man band' type thing, often medium sized yet portable usually with 76 and 61 velocity sensitivity keys)
- **Work Stations** (for the serious music maker, these keyboards are basically personal computers with keys...these keys are not cheap)
- **Synthesizers** (for those who want to shape and tweak electronic sounds...although you can buy 88 key synthesizers, these keyboards are often smaller....sometimes just 25 keys...these keyboards are loaded with knobs and buttons really not recommended for learning piano)
- **Controllers** (often without any internal 'punch', these keyboards are for those who use external sound modules as well as their computers ...not the best choice)
- **Digital Pianos** (mostly with 88 keys, these keyboards are a great choice for those taking lessons...and the price can range from \$300 to \$3000...the low end models are a great investment for the beginner)
- **Pianos** (uprights, spinets, and all grands...new or used, the variety and quality of pianos is large...heavy, permanent...NOT portable!...but nice if

you've got a relatively new one with firm action....avoid the old...it would be better to make a small investment in a digital piano)

- **Organs** (for those desiring the sound of the vintage organs...these are for you...but only for you)

All of the options listed above can be found in many different sizes, weights, features, prices and quality. As a beginner you may not want to spend a ton of money on an instrument, especially if you are not sure about being committed to your lessons. You may like the option of renting with option of buying. Most piano and keyboard stores offer this option. However, if you can afford to invest, you might consider buying your own...up front...for around \$500.

At \$400, I suggest the **Casio CDP-100 88-Note Weighted Hammer Action Digital Piano**. The Casio is nothing to drool over, but will give you everything you need as a beginner who is learning how to play the piano.