

What Kind of Instrument Do I Need for Piano Lessons?

Do I need a 'real' piano?

No, you do not need a 'real' piano, or an acoustic piano, to take piano lessons. If you are in the market for a piano, check Facebook Marketplace, local community groups on Facebook or Nextdoor, as people often sell them for very low prices. That being said, it can be worth having a piano technician check out the instrument for you, to make sure it is in working order. You would not want to move a huge, heavy instrument, only to get it home and find out it needs costly repairs. A piano technician can both tune a piano AND make repairs/replace/rebuild elements of the instrument to get it into tip top shape.

Do you have a favorite piano?

Just like some people have their favorite brand of car to drive or smart phone, people have preferences on instruments. I have always loved the sound, feel and stamina of Baldwin pianos. Ask another musician and they'll give you a different answer.

Size/Number of Keys

A piano, or full sized keyboard/digital piano has 88 keys. You can get smaller ones that have 76 or 61 keys, and they cost a little less. If you just want to get basic piano down, learn your chords, how to read music, play some scales and tunes for enjoyment, you should be OK with either the 76 or 61 keys, but the 76 keys will give you more room to grow. You may find as you progress on the 61 key, you run out of keys to play lower or higher notes (above/below the staff.)

Weighted Keys

If the keyboard happens to have a weighted keys, which makes it feel more like a piano, that is a nice bonus. You usually only find that in 76 or 88 key keyboard.

'Bells and Whistles'

A lot of keyboards nowadays come with all sorts of extras, like the ability to make fancy sounds, or they have a small screen that shows the music staff or other information, but you really don't need those extras for basic piano lessons.

Other Essentials:

- Make sure that any keyboard you buy comes with a power source, like an AC adapter to plug into the wall! Keyboards will say they can run on batteries, but there's often six huge batteries required and the keyboard eats up their power in no time, so it can get expensive to run it on batteries.
- **Buy a pedal.** They are usually sold separately from the keyboard. Trust me, you'll want one, it really improves the sound, and it gives you practice with pedaling skills. You can find them for about \$25 - just make sure to ask if the one that you are buying is compatible with your keyboard. For example, some of the accompanists I hire for my studio tell me that Yamaha brand keyboards in particular tend to only work with Yamaha pedals.

Optional:

A keyboard stand or case. These items can help protect your investment. If you do not have a clear workspace, like an empty table top, where you plan to keep your keyboard, a stand can be very useful. They are also adjustable, so you can change the height to fit your personal preferences. If you think you will be traveling with your keyboard, such as if you plan to take it on vacation or back-and-forth between your home and a relative's house, having a case can make transport much easier, along with protecting your instrument.

What's going to be most important is the comfort of the instrument in your hands.

You can't just order it off the Internet and know it's the instrument for you. Go to Guitar Center near Monroeville Mall or Pianos Nstuff on Freeport Road and actually put your hands on the keys and see **what feels and sounds good to you.**

Both places also sell used gear, and you can sometimes get a nicer instrument at a very good price. In 2019, I bought a used 88 key Yamaha keyboard in excellent condition for probably half of its retail value from NStuff. Much like people who want to have the newest iPhone or computer, when a musician's favorite brand brings out a new instrument, they often update even when their current instrument is in good shape.

If you're going to buy a used instrument, I would buy it from one of these two stores, as they take the time to check it out and make any repairs before reselling it.

NOTE: *These are two stores where I have purchased equipment in the past and found the staff to be friendly, knowledgeable, and helpful. I make no money from referring to them.* I am partial to Pianos NStuff, as they are locally owned, and their staff have been doing this for years and really want to help you pick the right product out. They also run a huge sale over the month of March every year.

<https://www.guitarcenter.com>

<https://www.nstuffmusic.com>