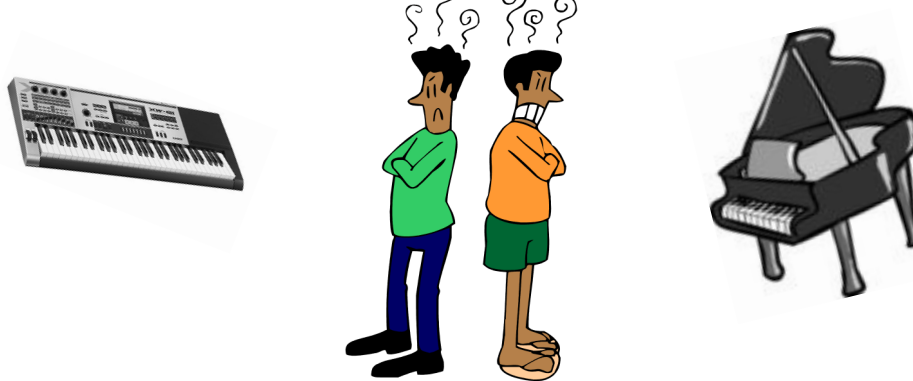


First time buyer's guide

The first big hurdle when starting piano or keyboard lessons is picking an instrument! The good news is, you don't have to spend a lot of money, or sacrifice a lot of space, to get an instrument that is suitable for your child's needs as a beginning student! Follow these simple tips to find an inexpensive keyboard which can help make learning fun!



- 1. Piano or keyboard?** The acoustic piano is still the king of keyboard instruments, no question about it. The problem with pianos is they are big, heavy, and need regular tuning and maintenance. Also, a good piano can be very expensive, which puts a lot of pressure on a beginning student. Another problem with pianos, as far as beginners are concerned, is they're LOUD. There is no headphone jack on a piano! This can make a beginner self-conscious, as the whole family can hear their mistakes. Also, it takes quite a bit of force to push the piano keys, which can make it frustrating for very young students. *If you have a piano, great!* Get it tuned and start using it in your iPianoLab practice. If you're looking for a new instrument for your new student, however, we recommend an inexpensive digital keyboard.
- 2. Full sized keys.** Make sure your keyboard has full sized keys. The best way to ensure you get a board with the right size is to make sure you buy a keyboard with at least **61 keys**. Almost all 61 key keyboards come with full sized keys, and 61 keys is enough to play almost all beginner and early intermediate songs. (All of Mozart's music was written for the 61 key keyboard, for instance!)
- 3. Avoid bells and whistles!** Lots of keyboards have tons of features that are distracting and confusing to new students. One of the worst is the "lighted keys" feature. Try to avoid "lighted keys" and get a more basic instrument which makes it easier to concentrate on learning how to play the keyboard.
- 4. Reputable brand.** The two most reputable makers of beginner's digital keyboards are Yamaha and Casio. They both make very good affordable keyboards. Yamaha makes a PSR line, and Casio has a CTK. The entry level of these lines (PSR-263 or CTK 2400) shouldn't cost more than \$120 new. You can buy them at a local shop or you can find them online.
- 5. Buying used.** If you want to save more money, you can try and find an older 61 key Yamaha or Casio. When evaluating a used instrument, check the outside appearance for dents or scratches. Turn it on and play each one of the keys to make sure they all sound and none of them stick. Then, flip it over and check the battery compartment to make sure it's clean with no battery acid spills or broken springs. Make sure you bring a pair of headphones with a 1/4" adaptor and test the headphone jack on the rear. If it all checks out OK and you find it for a good price, it's probably worth getting.
- 6. Remember!** This is a first instrument. If your child really enjoys playing, they may outgrow this keyboard in about 24 months. On the other hand, if you decide piano is not for your child, you'll be able to give this keyboard away to a younger sibling or extended family member as a gift. This is why we recommend a nice, inexpensive, low maintenance, low stress FIRST keyboard for iPianoLab students!