



I Need A Piano - What Should I Buy?

For the beginning levels of The Safari, a smaller (61-key) keyboard is all that is needed and you don't need to spend more than \$200-\$300 if you are unsure if your child will continue after the first year. A small keyboard can see them through the first couple of years however, while it is possible to complete the entire program with only a 61-key unit, I do not recommend it for long term as by Senior 2 the pieces use more notes than the keyboard has!

It is also important that the keyboard is touch sensitive (this means that it plays louder or softer depending on how hard you press the key). Full-size (88-key) keyboards/digital pianos are great and definitely superior in touch and tone, but are also of course more expensive :) If you are looking at purchasing a full size keyboard/digital piano, you can expect to spend about \$900 for a very basic one. Better models may be semi-weighted or weighted, graded, etc. These terms refer to the strength that it takes to press a key and the response that the piano has. It is best if the keyboard comes with a pedal, but it is usually possible to purchase one at a later date if it does not.

As with most things, higher prices will also bring improved quality – in this case in the sound of the instrument. High end digital pianos (digital pianos are a bit bigger and look more like an acoustic piano) will cost around \$7,000+, however for \$3,000 you will be able to purchase one that will last for 10-20 years if cared for properly. The Roland and Yamaha brands have proven to have the best longevity and the least problems, but a Casio can be just fine for beginner students. Hybrid pianos - which have the same action as an acoustic piano - are also a good option. I recommend the Yamaha NU1X (about \$5400) as a great long-term option. Kawai also makes a good hybrid piano.

Used keyboards are another option and can often be found on kijiji.ca for reasonable prices. If you choose this path however, please ensure that you plug it in and play EVERY key (and use the pedal if it has one) to make sure that it is in good working condition before you commit to the purchase.

New keyboards and digital pianos can be purchased at music stores such as Long & McQuade or St. John's (both near Chinook Centre) and also at Steinway Piano Gallery - Calgary (near the south Costco). You can also sometimes find lower end/cheaper keyboards at Costco or Best Buy. Better quality digital and hybrid pianos are only available through their designated local suppliers: Yamaha is at St. John's, Roland at Steinway Piano Gallery, and Kawai is at the Piano Gallery.

Acoustic pianos are an entirely different matter and if you are considering investing in this type of larger purchase please let me know and I will do my best to help advise you. Used acoustic pianos can sometimes be found for a few hundred dollars (you can even find older ones for free on kijiji.ca), but great care must be taken when purchasing them as sound boards may be damaged, they may no longer hold pitch, etc. You can expect that a new acoustic piano will cost at least \$6,000 (to \$20,000+) depending on the size and style that you wish to purchase. Steinway Piano Gallery, St. John's Music, Michael Lipnicki Fine Pianos, and The Piano Gallery are a few of the reputable dealers in Calgary.

We do not have any specific deals/agreements for Music and Play students at any of the dealers noted above, but I know that Blaine at St. John's Music or Brian at The Piano Gallery would be more than happy to assist you with your piano selection and you are welcome to tell them that Colleen from Music & Play recommended them. Happy shopping!