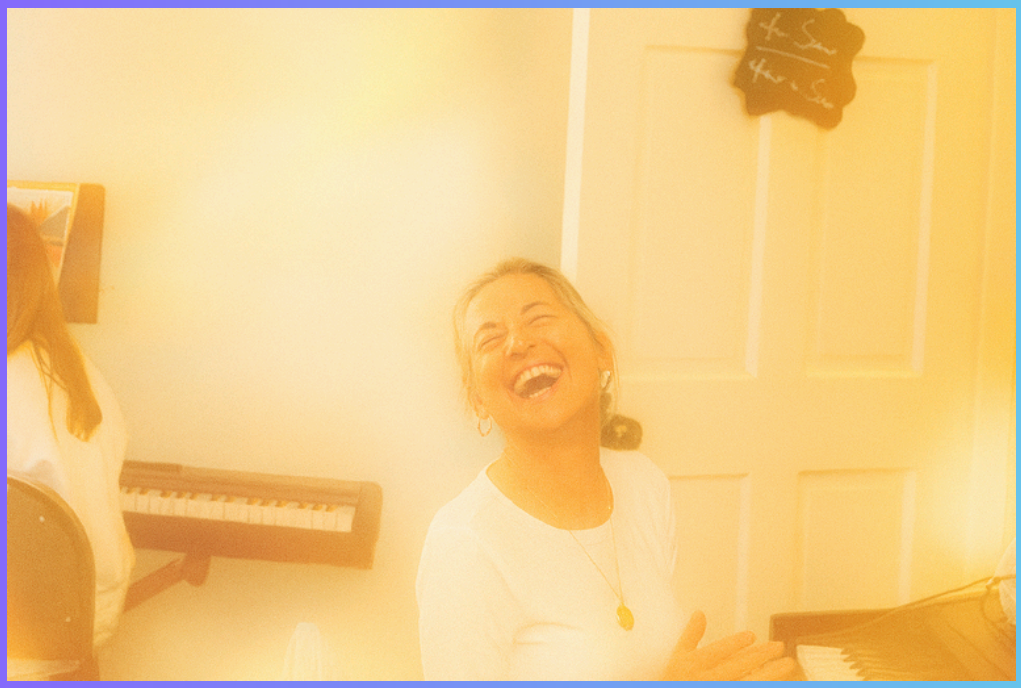
Quick Start Guide:

Buying Your First Keyboard



Skip the spec soup. Pick the keyboard that fits your life, so you actually play.

Welcome!

Buying a keyboard can feel overwhelming — there are so many options and it can feel like a huge research project that gets in the way of just playing! So here is a quick start guide that asks the questions most beginners (and even many piano store clerks) **don't even think to ask.**

💡 **Just so you know:** I'm not paid or compensated by any store or brand mentioned here. These are honest recommendations based on what really helps my students.

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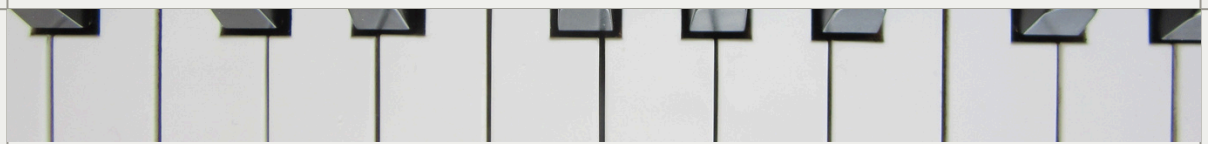
The Top Mistakes Beginners Make When Buying a Keyboard 🎹

Keyboard Options: Bare minimum, Good, Better, Overkill 🛍️

Where to Try & Buy in Austin 📍

Once You're in the Store: Shopping Checklist 📋

Ready to Play? ✨🎹



The Top Mistakes Beginners Make When Buying a Keyboard

⚠️ The Top Mistakes Beginner Piano Players Make

- They don't consider where or how the keyboard fits into their life.
- They go too cheap.
- They go too pricey.

❓ Questions to Ask Yourself

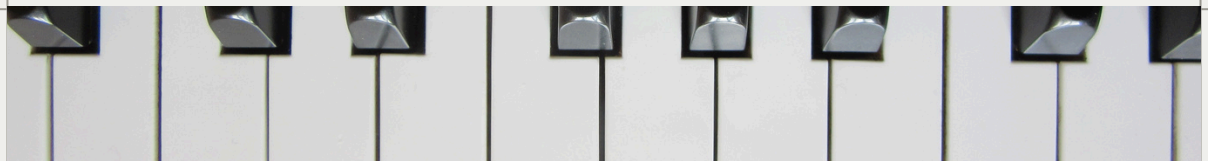
- If I'm too cheap on my keyboard purchase, will I regret or avoid playing it?
- Will I have access to a keyboard with weighted keys if I don't buy one?
- Am I adding pressure by buying something beyond my budget?

Make sure you can adapt...

In my studio, I make sure students get exposed to both weighted and budget keyboards so you can play well on anything—so you don't freeze when someone hands you a 'cheapie' keyboard because all you've played is weighted (don't ask me how I know, 🤣).

A touch is worth a thousand words...

👉 Make sure to physically touch the keyboard you want to buy. You'll know if you feel happy with a lightweight one that's easy on your budget and can go on the couch after work or on a weekend trip...or if you know you want a dedicated station with weighted keys and sound/feel really matters to you right at the outset.



Keyboard Options:

Bare Minimum, Good, Better, Overkill

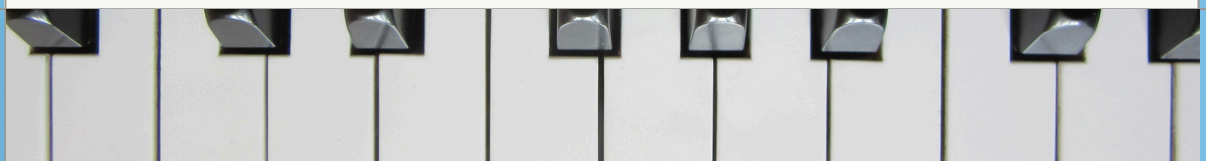
💸 Bare Minimum / Tight Budget

When you start playing, you won't be using all 88 keys right away — the first lesson only uses five keys! This bare minimum option has what you need if you just want to start playing today, but plan to upgrade once you're a few months or a year in.
It never hurts to have a travel-friendly keyboard for the couch or even around a campfire 🙂.

Casio CT-S300 (61-key) (~$220)

- Why pick it: ultra-portable (~7 lbs), touch-sensitive keys, headphones included → easy, low-pressure practice after work. Runs on batteries or adapter.
- What you get: 61 keys, 400 tones, USB-MIDI, headphone out, sustain pedal jack (add a simple pedal if not in your pack), X-stand, basic learning software.
- What it's missing: weighted action and 88 keys → not ideal for long-term technique or classical pieces.
- My guidance: great if budget is tight or you just want to start now. Plan to **upgrade to an 88-key weighted model once you're sure you're sticking with it.**

Used option: Can you get semi-weighted for around $200? Sometimes you can — look for Alesis Recital Pro or Casio CDP-S100 used, but always test the keys and make sure you have a return option.



Keyboard Options: Bare Minimum, Good, Better, Overkill

🎹 Keyboard Buying Tiers for Adult Beginners

Bare Minimum (~$200–$250)

- Example: Casio CT-S300 (61 keys, touch-sensitive) or RockJam 88 (semi-weighted, budget build).
- Why: Light, portable, and the cheapest way to get started. Good for testing if you'll stick with piano.
- Trade-offs: 61 keys is not full range; sound and action feel limited; plan to upgrade if you continue.
- Used option: See above — some semi-weighted models pop up used around $200.

Good (Entry 88-Key, ~$300–$500)

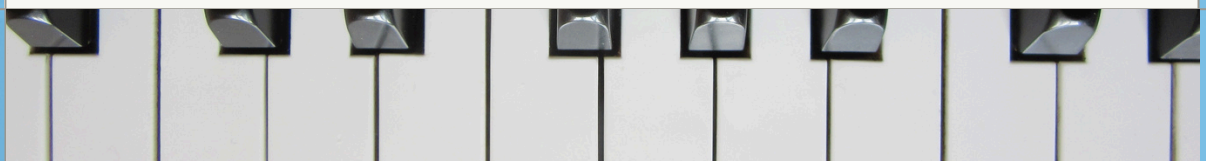
- Example: Yamaha P-45, Casio CDP-S160, Alesis Recital Pro.
- Why: Full 88 keys, at least semi-weighted (sometimes fully weighted), sustain pedal input. This is the minimum that feels like a "real piano."
- Trade-offs: Basic sounds/features; you'll probably want to upgrade in a year or two.

Better (Great for long term, ~$600–$800)

- Example: Roland FP-10, Yamaha P-125/225, Casio PX-S1100.
- Why: Weighted keys close to acoustic feel, slim and portable, headphone jack for private practice, better speakers.
- Trade-offs: Higher upfront cost, but you'll really appreciate it once you can hear and feel the difference.

Best (Longer Runway, ~$1,000+) Probably Overkill 🤣

- Example: Kawai ES120, Roland FP-30X, Yamaha DGX-670.
- Why: Graded hammer action, more nuanced sound, stronger speakers. Great if you're confident you'll stick with piano and want years of use.
- Trade-offs: Bigger investment, heavier/larger — probably overkill for most beginners.
- By the time your playing and ears are sensitive enough to have a preference for this top tier…you might actually want something different (like a darker sound, or brighter sound) so even if its in your budget, I still don't recommend it.



🛍️ Where to Try & Buy in Austin, Tx

🎶 **Strait Music — NW Austin**
📍 13945 N Highway 183 (183 @ Lakeline / Hwy 620), Austin, TX 78717
☎️ (512) 918-3743
💻 straitmusic.com

Local, family-owned. Big selection (lots of beginner-friendly keyboards), patient staff, and easy try-before-you-buy. Bonus: this location is right by my studio! ❤️

🎶 **Strait Music — Westlake**
📍 3201 Bee Caves Rd, Suite 140, Austin, TX 78746
☎️ (512) 476-6927
💻 straitmusic.com

West Austin option from the same locally-owned store.

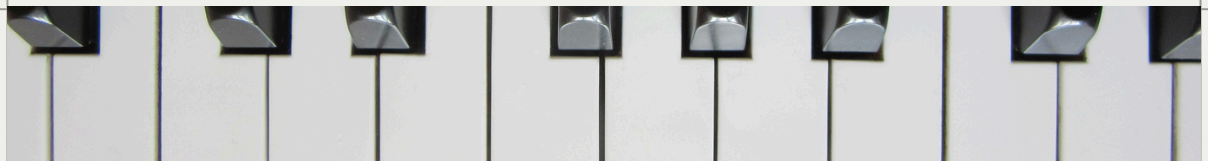
🎸 **Guitar Center — North Austin**
📍 2525 W Anderson Ln, Suite 200, Austin, TX 78757
☎️ (512) 419-0310
💻 guitarcenter.com

Wide new/used selection; you can try almost anything. But it's a national chain — reviews often say service is hit-or-miss. (If you can, support local first!)

🎹 **Steinway Piano Gallery — NW Austin**
📍 12980 Research Blvd, Austin, TX 78750
☎️ (512) 258-6100
💻 steinwayofaustin.com
Upscale showroom; visitors mention attentive, low-pressure help and lots of space to test pianos.

🎶 **Capital Music Center — North/Central Austin**
📍 6101 Burnet Rd, Austin, TX 78757
☎️ (512) 458-1933
💻 capitalmusiccenter.com
🌟 Locally owned, low-pressure, beginner-friendly demos of digital pianos.

✅ Pro Tip: Bring your own 🎧 headphones, ask about return policy + delivery, and remember: the right keyboard is the one that fits your life, not just the specs.



🛒 In-Store Keyboard Checklist

✅ 88 keys (full size or as close as you can get)

✅ Touch-sensitive (ideally weighted)

✅ Fits space/budget; easy to move if needed

📏 Measuring tape if needed

✅ Stand/bench sorted

🎧 Headphones — what kind of jack does it have?
((Standard 3.5mm vs ¼-inch). Make sure yours fit, or get an adapter)

📖 Music rest — does it include a stand for sheet music or tablet?

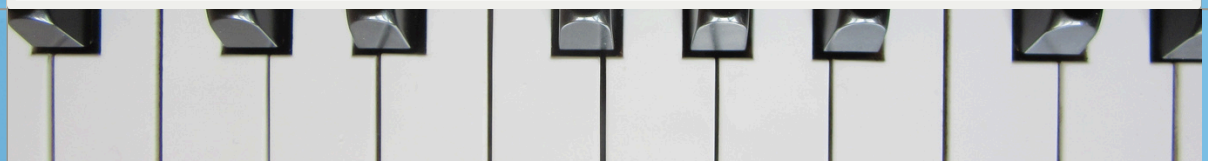
🔄 Return policy — can you bring it back if it doesn't feel right?

🙌 Play test — how does it feel to you? Do you enjoy touching the keys?

🎧 Headphone Jacks — What to Know

- 3.5mm jack (small) → Works with most everyday headphones. ⚠️ More fragile.
- ¼-inch jack (thicker "pro" size) → More durable, common on better keyboards. ⚠️ Needs an adapter if you only have regular headphones.

👉 Pro tip: If your dream keyboard only has a ¼-inch jack, no problem — a $5 adapter lets you use normal headphones.



About Chris



I know exactly what it's like to learn piano as an adult — I went deeper into piano later in life, not as a prodigy.

That's why I focus on what matters for adults: finally playing the piano — the instrument you've always wanted to learn —
finding a positive creative outlet, and enjoying a screen-free way to lose yourself
in the music at the end of a long day.

My students often tell me they feel calmer, lighter, and more inspired after playing — and that's the kind of joy I love helping people discover.

✨ Ready to see what piano can bring into your life? Claim your Free First Lesson and see how fun (and stress-free) learning can be.

👉 Synergisticsinging.com/piano

Anything you wish this guide covered?

🎉 Good news! I'm cooking up the EPIC deep-dive version. Got Qs? ✉️ Chris@synergisticsinging.com

Ready to Play? 🎹

Put your new keyboard to good use!

Claim your Free First Lesson and see how fun (and stress-free) learning can be.

👉 Synergisticsinging.com/piano

