

Resources: Purchasing a Digital Piano

Congratulations! You've made the decision to purchase a digital piano. Now what?

Matching the Player's Needs:

- The minimum entry level starter piano for a beginner student would satisfy his or her needs for 1-2 years. Consider if you are prepared to buy another instrument after that amount of time. Although you might think you don't need them, some of the extra features on the higher end models may entice a student to practice longer and maintain overall interest in learning.

The Sound:

- Sometimes the instrument's weakest link is its built-in speaker system. Make sure to try the piano with and without headphones (bring your own headphones for consistency). In general the higher end models have better sound and more powerful built-in speakers, using a greater number of sampled sounds to more closely match the ideal of an acoustic instrument.
- Most entry-level digitals have a piano voice, as well as a few other instrumental voices, such as harpsichord, organ, vibes, and strings. Many other, slightly more expensive models come with expanded capabilities: many more instrument choices, easy-play background accompaniments, rhythms, special effects, and much more. Although you may not think you need them, these extras can enable the beginner, as well as family members who don't take lessons, to have a lot more fun. For an advancing player, the opportunities for musical creativity are significantly enhanced.

The Keyboard Size and Touch:

- A standard keyboard has 88 keys and it's best to start with this size if at all possible. There are some acceptable entry level keyboards with 76 keys that would be suitable for a very young beginner's first year or two of study (4-5 year old beginners), although students are sometimes disoriented when taking lessons on a full size instrument yet practicing at home on a shorter one.
- It's important that the touch of the digital piano matches as closely as possible to an acoustic instrument. The degree of sensitivity can range from those with a plastic spring feel to something quite close to the real thing. Yamaha brand uses a term called "Graded Hammer Action" in its higher end models and Roland uses the terms "Progressive Hammer Action" and "Ivory Feel Keyboard". If you are considering other brands you should make sure there is some reference to touch sensitivity and an attempt to mimic realistic action.

The Extras

- Some entry level pianos may not include pedals, benches, stands, and dust covers. Be careful to consider these additional costs when comparing models.

Some recommended models (costs as of August, 2014 online various sources including musiciansfriend.com, amazon.com, musiciansbuy.com, kraftmusic.com)

Roland RG-1 Digital Grand	Appropriate as a long-term instrument	\$5000
Roland DP 990F (or DP90)	Appropriate as a long-term instrument	\$2000
Yamaha Arius YDP V240	Appropriate as a long-term instrument	\$2000
Roland RP-401R	Appropriate as a long-term instrument	\$1600
Yamaha Arius YDP 162	Appropriate as a long-term entry level instrument	\$1500
Roland F-120 SuperNATURAL	Appropriate as a long-term entry level instrument	\$1300
Yamaha Arius YDP 142	Appropriate as a long-term entry level instrument	\$1100
Yamaha DGX 650	Entry level for any age beginner for first 1-2 yrs of study	\$800
Yamaha P105	Entry level for any age beginner for first 1-2 yrs of study	\$600 or \$700 with pedals
Yamaha YPG 535	Entry level for any age beginner for first 1-2 yrs of study	\$500
Yamaha P35	Entry level for any age beginner for first 1-2 yrs of study	\$500
Yamaha YPG 235 76-key portable grand piano	The absolute minimum, appropriate for a young beginner (4-5yrs) for first 1-2 yrs of study (Graded Soft Touch Action, not as desirable)	\$250

Where to purchase:

Retail stores with showrooms in the Birmingham area:

Alabama Piano Gallery
1425 Montgomery Highway
Suite 151
Birmingham, Alabama 35216
(205) 822-3331, www.alabamapianogallery.com

Acoustic Instruments: Steinway, Boston, Essex, Kohler & Campbell
Digital Instruments: Kurzweil, Samick

Ellis Piano
1550 Montgomery Highway
Birmingham, Alabama 35216
(205) 979-4463, www.ellispiano.com

Acoustic Instruments: Schimmel, Kawai, Yamaha, Cable-Nelson
Digital Instruments: Roland, Yamaha, Nord, Kawai, Korgs

Online:

www.amazon.com

www.musiciansfriend.com

www.kraftmusic.com

www.musiciansbuy.com