



# YOUR KEYBOARD SHOPPERS GUIDE

*For the acoustic piano shoppers guide see: "14 Secrets To Buying A Great Piano For Less."*

## BEFORE YOU GO:

Before you go shopping you need to have a good idea of what type of piano you need. If you're unsure, read the blog post 'What Piano Should I Buy?' and read till the end to compare your situation to others and the pianos we recommend.

Once you know which type of piano you need—be it acoustic, digital or an electronic keyboard—it's time to do some pre-shopping research.

## YOUR MUST-HAVE FEATURES

It's important to have a think about what it is you want to do with your new piano and the features you need to make that happen. Do you want to produce music through your computer? You will need a USB output. Do you want to do gigs? You'll need stereo outputs. Do you want to play into a MIDI interface? You'll need a MIDI output and input. Do you want to experiment with other sounds? Which sounds?

Thinking about this before you go in will help you to be assertive about what your model of digital piano/keyboard should encompass.

## TIME TO VISIT SOME PIANOS

You've done all the research and thinking you can be reasonably expected to do! Now it's time to go to your local piano dealer and start playing pianos. ALL the pianos! Try everything, try acoustic and grand pianos even if you plan on buying digital. Play digital if you're buying a keyboard! Play all types, as many models as possible and try to compare critically how each sounds and feels to you. Remember, you're the one who is going to play it so strongly follow your opinion not someone else's. In many cases it's not just about 'good' or 'bad' pianos, it's bright, dark, mellow and everything in between. Go with your personal preference.

## RESEARCH:

It's good if you know something about the best piano brands before you head to the piano dealer. This will help you to distinguish when the sales person is offering you a good deal on a good piano, or just selling you something cheap that's been on the shop floor for years.

Research the main brands as recommended in my blog 'What Piano Should I Buy?'. You can even go onto the brand websites or YouTube to find demos of their models. You may find a particular piano tone that you like before you see one in person!

## THINK ABOUT \$\$\$

Before you go anywhere near a salesperson think about your absolute highest budget. It is recommended that you buy the best piano you can afford, but **afford** is the operative word here - your piano playing may be tainted if you feel like you have over-invested each time you sit down to practice.

Think about your preferred price and your highest price.

## COMPARE THE MARKET

It may take you a few visits to truly develop a preference for a brand or model of piano or keyboard. That is fine, you don't want to rush this purchase!

Once you do have a preferred brand & model you now need to talk to the sales person and see what their best offer is. You'll want to compare this offer with others on the market: other retail stores and online. But be sure to take into consideration whether they offer a warranty, delivery, free or discounted tune-ups/maintenance, additional accessories, etc because these all add to the cost in the end.

Remember, this is likely to be a long-term investment so take your time and find the best solution for you.

# 14 SECRETS TO BUYING A GREAT PIANO FOR LESS



- The easiest way to buy a piano is to go to a **reputable music store** and try out all their pianos.
- Music stores are almost always more expensive than private sales – but they also offer **warranties**.
- The best way to ensure you get something good is to take a **piano technician** with you to check out the piano.

[www.pianopicnic.com](http://www.pianopicnic.com)

## LOOK AT THE KEYS:

1. Are they level from one end of the piano to the other?
2. When you look at their vertical ends, do you see a square or a rectangle? The more square, the better.
3. When you push them, do they go down about 3/8"? Should be no more than that.
4. Can you move the keys far enough sideways that they hit each other? Not great.
5. Play each key lightly, do all the notes make a sound?
6. Is the tuning consistent? Play the same note in three or four different octaves simultaneously to check for tuning consistency.

## OPEN THE PIANO, EXAMINE THE STRINGS AND ACTION PARTS:

7. Look for stains or chewing marks on the wooden part of keys = signs of mice, it's bad.
8. Are any strings missing?
9. Does the piano have all its hammers and dampers? (The top 20 or so notes don't have dampers.)
10. Feel the hammers for softness (dry & hard is bad) and look for wear.
11. Do the hammers have bits missing? Are there holes in the felt? That is insect damage = piano has not been played regularly or looked after.

## OPEN THE BOTTOM OF THE PIANO AND INSPECT THE PEDALS, THE BRIDGES & THE GENERAL CONDITION OF THAT AREA.:

12. Pedals should move freely and quietly. By the time you push down 1/2", you should feel resistance and see movement in the action (dampers lifting, the hammer rail moving).
13. Look for any signs of mildew or water damage. If a piano has been flooded, this is where you'll find the evidence. It's more common than you might think....
14. Finally, look up the piano's serial number so you really know how old it is. Owners usually know when the piano came into their household, but they rarely know its true age.

## WHERE TO FIND THE SERIAL NUMBER?

**Upright piano:** inside, near or on the top, near the tuning pins, often stamped into the wood. Newer pianos might have a metal plate on the end/inside or have the number stamped on the back/outside.

**Grand piano:** originally on the metal plate, near the tuning pins. If the plate has been repainted, the number might be gone. In that case, look on the soundboard, near the hinge closer to the keys. Not there? You'll need to remove a leg...

*With the maker's name and the serial number, you can have your technician look it up.*