

## Time to Purchase a Piano

Starting piano lessons can be an exciting time for the whole family. Students of all ages look forward to getting a new instrument to practice on in their home. **It is necessary for students to have a piano in the home**, preferably for a month or two before they even begin lessons. This will allow them to begin playfully exploring the piano before they start learning with their teacher. If there is not an instrument in the home when lessons begin, the student will be unable to practice daily, and any investment of time and money in the cost of weekly lessons will be wasted.

### What kind of piano do I need?

#### Option 1: Acoustic upright piano

I recommend families begin by purchasing a used upright acoustic piano in good condition, from a reputable brand such as Kawai or Yamaha. Acoustic pianos allow the student to learn to control the loudness and softness of notes played using the hammer mechanisms of real pianos. This is beneficial for their technical and musical development. Since all future concert performances, exams, and competitions will be performed on acoustic pianos, it is extremely beneficial for the student to have access to an acoustic piano in the home from the start. Furthermore, nothing can compete with the richness in sound of real hammers striking real strings as they resonant in the wooden chamber of the piano.

#### Acoustic piano maintenance:

Without proper, ongoing care, acoustic pianos can seriously degrade in structure, function, and value. The following maintenance steps should be taken to ensure that you protect your investment for decades of playing and retain its value should you wish to sell it in the future:

1. **Yearly tuning:** The piano needs to be tuned regularly. Ideally it should be done twice a year, but at a minimum once a year. This will not only keep the piano sounding its best, but also ensure the complex mechanisms controlling the strings' tension are kept in good repair. Tuning costs around \$120.
2. **Control the humidity in the home:** The humidity should be kept constant in the room the piano sits in. Try to maintain around 25% humidity, or follow the guidelines of a registered piano technician.
3. **Install a humidity control system in the piano:** It is almost impossible to keep the ambient humidity constant in a climate like Ottawa's. It is highly recommended that you install a humidity control system directly in the piano. Consult with your registered piano technician for more information.
4. **Get the piano regulated:** This will ensure that all the hammer mechanisms are in good working order and that it is easy to control the loudness and tone of the instrument. This should be done every 5 years. Regulation costs around \$1000.

***\*\*Use a registered piano technician for all piano maintenance\*\****

**I HIGHLY recommend Andy Adams: <https://pianotunerottawa.com/>**

## Option 2: Electronic piano

It is not realistic to own or maintain an acoustic piano for some families. People living in apartment buildings may need to practice with headphones on or with a reduced volume. People who move frequently may require a portable piano that can easily be transported from place to place. The good news is that many fine electronic pianos are now available from companies such as Roland, Yamaha, Kawai, Korg, and Casio. Some of the higher end electronic pianos even mimic the key mechanisms of electronic pianos. If an acoustic piano is out of your family's budget or if your home cannot accommodate the size and maintenance requirements of an acoustic piano, a good quality electronic piano can be an excellent alternative instrument.

If you decide an electronic piano is best for your family, it is important to make sure that the piano has the following characteristics:

1. The piano must have a full set of 88 keys. (Shorter keyboards are insufficient.)
2. The piano must have touch-sensitive keys to control the loudness of dynamics.
3. The piano must include a sustain pedal mechanism.

## Where can I purchase a piano?

I recommend purchasing a piano from a reputable piano retailer. In Ottawa these include:

Ottawa Pianos  
1412 Bank Street  
Ottawa, ON  
K1H 7Y9  
613-731-5678  
[www.ottawapianos.com](http://www.ottawapianos.com)

Steinway Piano Gallery of Ottawa  
1481 Innes Road  
Ottawa, ON  
K1B 1C5  
613-842-8388  
<http://www.ottawasteinway.ca/>

Other retailers include chain stores such as St. John's Music or Long and McQuade. **Many of these stores rent electronic pianos for a monthly fee of around \$50.**

## Buying a piano second hand

I highly recommend buying a second-hand piano, especially for a first instrument. This will help you get the most for your money. The piano market is flooded with second-hand uprights because many families buy them new and then don't use them, and then try to sell them a few years later. Many retailers have second-hand pianos available for purchase that will have been checked over and maintained. **If you wish to buy a second-hand piano in a private sale, be sure to have the piano tested and appraised by a registered piano technician.** It is almost impossible to be sure of the condition and value of a piano without a professional opinion, even for seasoned musicians. Protect yourself in a private sale by investing in a professional appraisal by a registered technician.

**\*\*Use a registered piano technician for appraising pianos in private sales\*\***  
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