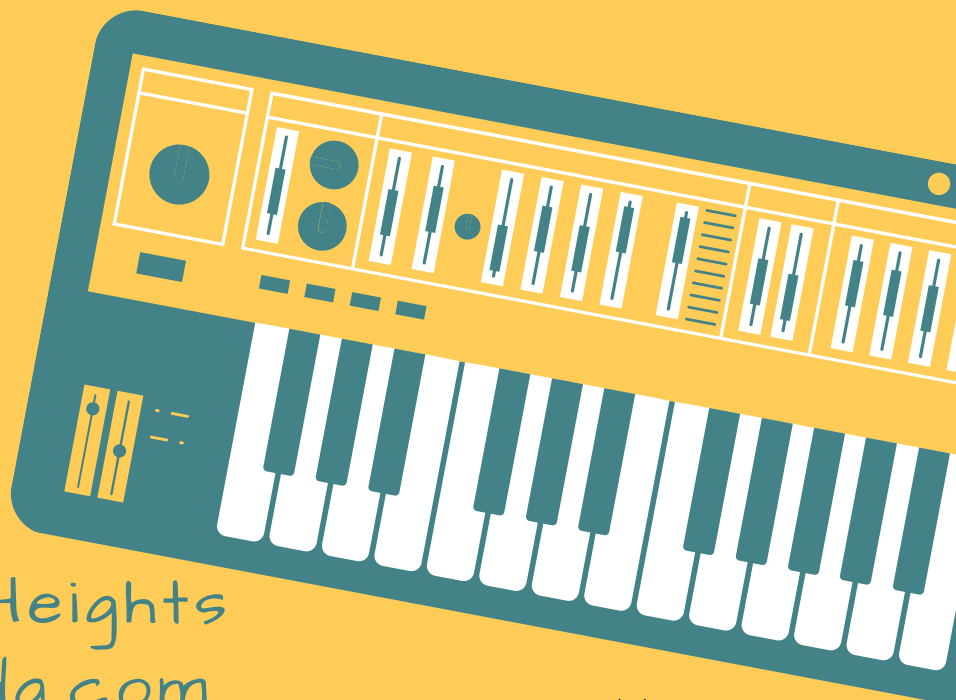




# NEED HELP CHOOSING A KEYBOARD?

*Let's do this!*



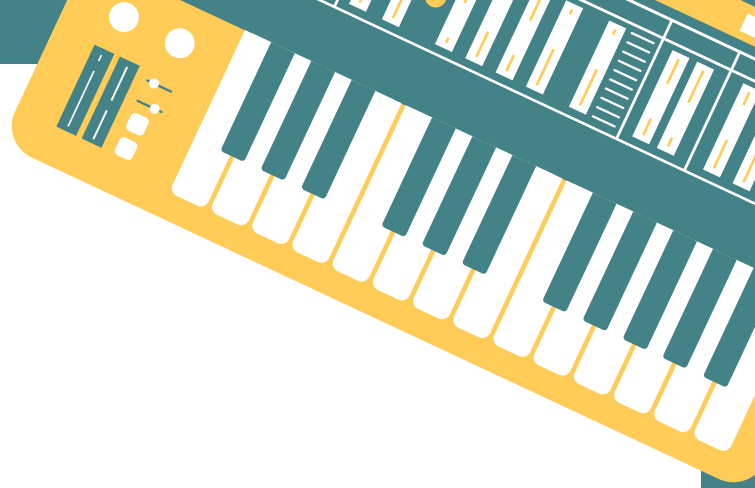
Maestro Heights  
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# WHAT DO I NEED?

There are so many wonderful keyboards, digital pianos and acoustic pianos on the market that to choose one can feel overwhelming. The question is really, "What kind of keyboard do I need to begin piano studies?"

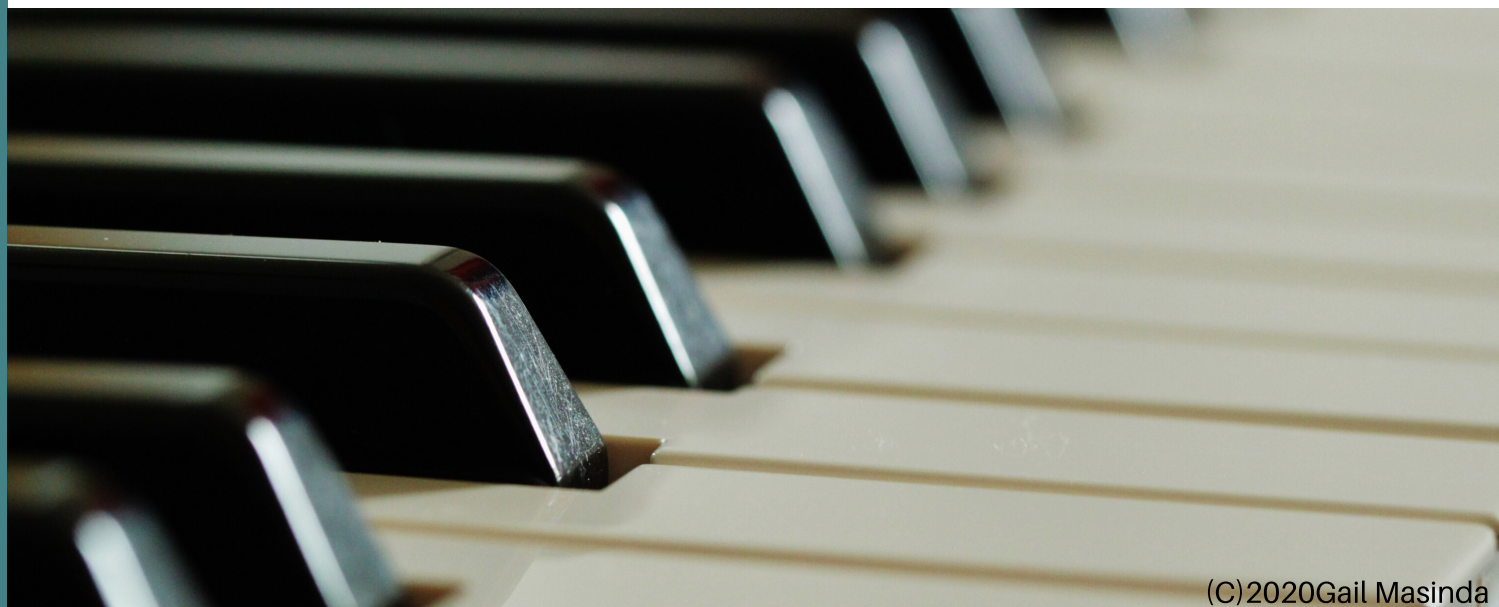


In an ideal world, we would all have pianos with 88 weighted keys. While the debate continues whether acoustic or digital/electronic is best, having a piano that is totally functional and in tune is absolutely necessary.

Does that seem obvious to you? Perhaps surprisingly, it doesn't appear that way to everyone. I can't begin to count how many times I've had conversations that included phrases such as "most of the keys work" or "my mom had it tuned when I was taking lessons, about 15 years ago," or "he is just a beginner, so it's good enough." You get the idea.

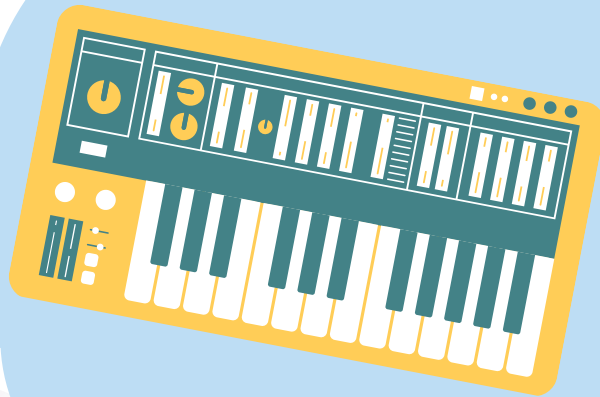
As much as I want all students to have a full-size piano (whether digital or acoustic), I understand that it is simply not always possible. We need to talk about the next option: portable keyboards.

Before I get blasted by people saying keyboards are never acceptable for beginning piano studies, please know that I am being realistic here. I would prefer to have students begin with a keyboard than never learn the joys of making music because they didn't own a piano. And honestly, I would prefer that they begin with a keyboard and not a broken down, never-can-be-tuned acoustic piano simply because it is a "real" piano.





Getting down off of my soap box now, let's talk about keyboards. What brand? I have personal preferences, but that is not what matters. How much should it cost? That depends on so many factors beyond the scope of this post. Here, however, is my list of what I consider minimum standards.





## 61 Keys

You need at least 61 keys, but more is better. Make sure the keys are 'full size', meaning they are the same size as piano keys.

Some keyboards have keys that are a little narrower or not quite as long.



## Touch Sensitive

The keys should be touch sensitive (or velocity sensitive or whatever the manufacturer calls it). This means that when you strike the key with more weight, it produces a louder sound; less weight creates a softer sound.



## Sustain Pedal

This is a footswitch that plugs into the back of the keyboard. While it is most often called an accessory, I consider it an absolute necessity. Even if your budget requires you to buy the pedal later, be sure the keyboard will accept a pedal. Not all of them do. (A button marked 'sustain' is not the same thing.)



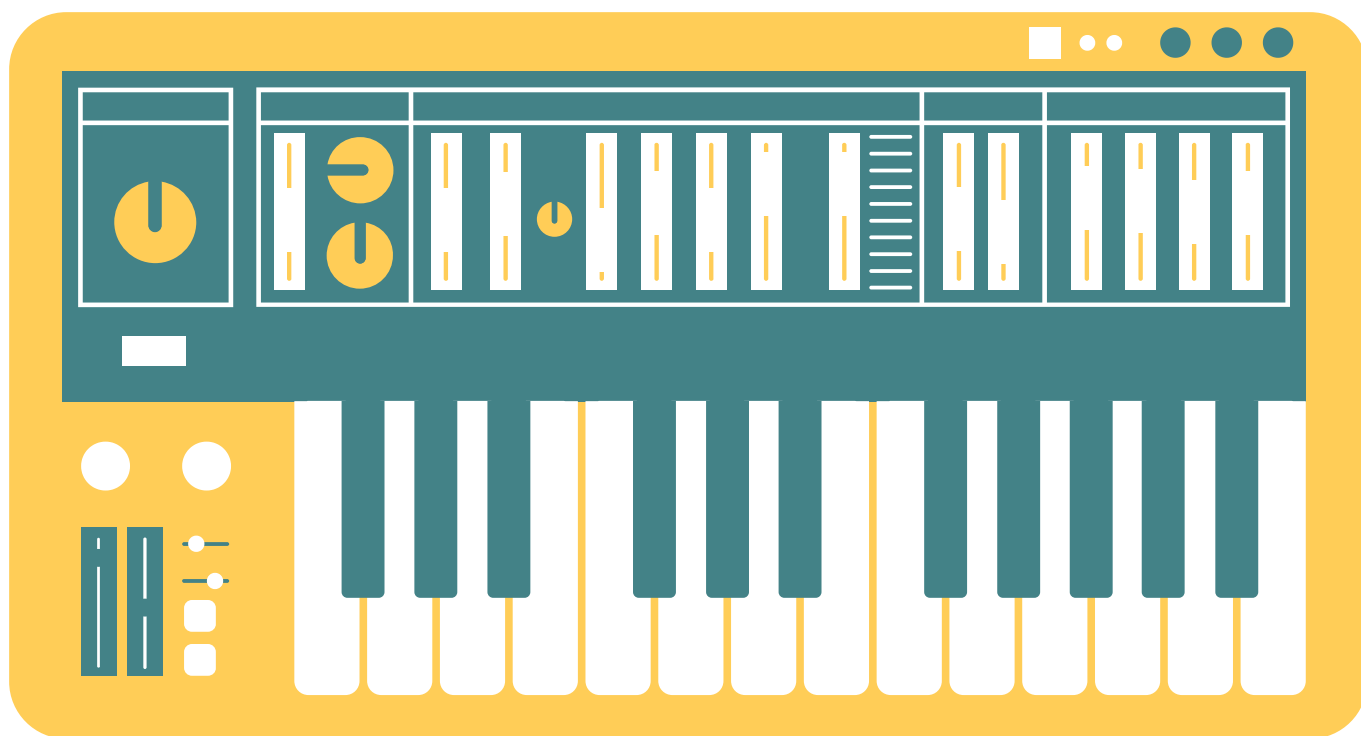
## AC adapter

Keyboards are battery hogs, and regular daily practice is super important. It is pretty discouraging to have a student tell me he couldn't practice because the batteries died.



# Stand and Bench

The keyboard should be placed at the correct height so that the proper playing posture becomes a part of the practice habit. I have students that slump over the piano in my studio because at home they practice on a keyboard sitting on a bed. Not good. Along with the stand, you will need a bench at the correct height.





Electronic keyboards typically have a variety of "bells and whistles." Some are helpful, some are fun, and some are just marketing tools to tempt you to buy one keyboard over another. When making your selections, stick to features we have talked about and you will have a keyboard that will last you quite awhile. A keyboard is not a permanent replacement for an acoustic or digital piano, but it can get you off to a good start.

Got questions? Ask away!  
maestroheights@gmail.com

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