



PO Box 42
MITCHELL PARK SA 5043
Ph: (08) 8277 8656

Having access to suitable equipment

Like any sport, hobby or interest, it is absolutely imperative that the correct equipment is used to achieve in the desired field. It is very hard for a footballer to learn football if they are not provided with football boots, or to become an elite swimmer without regular access to a swimming pool. Someone who goes to craft classes is not able to make the required tasks if they do not own the tools or equipment. Likewise with music. It is unreasonable to expect a student to perform at high levels if they are not given regular access to a suitable instrument in working order, or given the appropriate support for practice from others in their day to day lives. We must all face the fact that many children of today want to participate in many and varied activities such as music, dance and sport, plus the added "time users" of the internet, computer games, TV. We must also not forget that the dreaded "Homework" commitment appears to be such a high demand on students of today for those who have drive to succeed academically.

The following information details many aspects of suitable instrument choice, easy access to appropriate music, and encouragement of practice. Please take the time to read this and let me know if I can of any further assistance.

PIANO

If a student is learning the **piano**, it is a must that they have daily access to a piano in good working order. Many old pianos can be purchased for a very minimal cost – these are usually this way for a reason, however the odd "bargain" has been known to be purchased in this way. It is also worth noting that piano's are available to rent with great rental schemes available where discounts are offered if the piano is purchased after it has been rented for a minimum time. every day to sit down and work hard on what they learnt in lessons.





It is essential that the following points are available on your piano:

- **All keys work** and create a “pitch” when played
- There are a minimum of **2 working pedals**. Some pianos have 3 pedals, although the 3rd pedal is not essential in the early levels.
- **The piano is tuned** or able to be tuned. Some older pianos are just not worth the money to tune them – they may not hold their tuning due to various reasons. A piano tuner / technician can advise you further on this.
- The piano **should be in reasonable tune** at all times. Without this, it will hinder the progress of the student learning to obtain the correct pitch and expected sounds when playing on another piano. Depending on many factors, this might mean that a tuning and touch-up should occur every 12 months or so. Newer pianos do not usually require tuning as frequently, depending on the environment in which they are used.
- **Piano stool** (preferably an adjustable piano stool to allow for height growth in a younger student). A student must not practice on a chair with a back, like a dining room chair as this will encourage poor posture and bad hand and arm techniques

A piano tuner / technician can advise if any problems are with your piano and if they are able to be fixed and approximate costings.

Another alternative to the standard “Acoustic Piano” now is the **Digital Piano**. As with everything there are advantages and disadvantages of a digital piano. The digital piano does not always feel or sound like an acoustic piano (unless you are paying very high prices), it requires power to run, and with anything electronic, things can go wrong with the workings of them. Technology is constantly being improved and therefore the digital piano will go out of date very easily and will decrease the value of the instrument.

The advantages are, it does not require tuning, it can have various sounds / rhythms etc that help create interest for students. They are generally midi compatible meaning they can be connected to a standard computer and music technology can be incorporated into learning. They typically take up less space (although the width is still the same with the same amount of keys) – the cabinets are low at the back and sometimes not a solid cabinet underneath, making them more portable than an acoustic piano. A digital piano can also be used with headphones, therefore creating a private practice environment without interruptions from others, or without interfering with other family regimes in the household. The minimum requirements for a digital piano are:

- **88 weighted keys** (hammer action like a piano)
- good **quality piano** sounds
- **Sustain and damper pedals**



ELECTRONIC KEYBOARD

If a student is learning the **electronic keyboard**, it is a must that they have daily access to a keyboard with:

- **5 octaves** (61 keys)
- **touch sensitive** keys
- good **quality sounds** / tones
- **various rhythms** and adjustable tempo
- **sustain pedal compatible** (preferable).



Other preferred options to have available are:

- programmable "preset" buttons in which to save combination settings, or external pre-set storage device (floppy disk / USB)
- midi compatible for computer generated music and further music development
- ability to record and playback student tracks

Absolutely essential accessories for a keyboard player are:

- Adjustable **keyboard stand**
- **Suitable chair** (preferably an adjustable keyboard stool or piano stool). A student must not practice on a chair with a back, like a dining room chair as this will encourage poor posture and bad hand and arm techniques
- **Music stand**, preferably attached to the keyboard. All modern keyboards should come with a music stand. If not it is recommended that a music rack be purchased that can sit behind the keyboard.

It is important for a parent / caregiver to understand that if a keyboard, lower end digital piano, or "poor condition" acoustic piano are used at the very early stages of learning, that an upgrade will be required should the student reach a certain level.

The initial commitment and outlay of finances usually governs what instrument is purchased, please consider that in giving the student an opportunity to learn an instrument, requires that they also have access to the correct functioning equipment. A suitable keyboard is a great way of finding out if a student will be interested in continuing learning, but parents must seriously consider committing to a suitable instrument if the student continues to develop and show interest in music after a short period of time.

More information on Choosing an instrument / How to buy the right piano / Getting the most from your new piano / Career options etc can be found by ordering the **free** "Australian Piano Buyers Guide" booklet available at www.pianobuyersguide.com.au. A very valuable source of information for anyone considering the upgrade.