



SuzukiPiano
Association of Ottawa/Gatineau
suzukipiano.on.ca

Tips for Buying and Caring for a Piano

Buying a New Piano

A good way to start looking for a piano is to do some research on the internet (visit the sites of the major brand names for example) and to visit several piano dealers recommended by your teacher. Does the sales price include the bench, transportation and a first tuning? Ask if the store rents pianos with the option to buy. Some stores offer financing. Will the piano fit in with your furniture at home? Some glossy finishes, especially black, show up dust quite easily.

Buying a Used Piano

Unlike string instruments, pianos do not age well. As a general rule avoid buying a piano that is more than 50 year old; usually a piano under twenty years old is the safest buy. When you go to take a look at a used piano, open the top "lid" of the instrument. Bring a flashlight and look inside: is it dirty, moldy or rusted? The big panel of wood behind the piano--the sound board-- must not be cracked. Do all the keys work? If they are a yellowish colour, they are probably made with ivory which would suggest that the piano is old. (More recent pianos have plastic-coated keys.) Depress the pedals: do they squeak or stick? All three pedals are unnecessary; two is fine. Ask if the bench is included.

If you think the piano may be suitable ask a piano technician to go back with you for a second visit to inspect the instrument. The piano technician can tell you the age and country of origin of the piano by consulting the serial number usually located on the metal plate inside the top "lid" of the piano.

Some pianos made overseas may not be suited to a Canadian climate. To find a technician, ask your teacher or consult the yellow pages. Some technicians may offer a free tuning after an appraisal. To have the instrument transported to your home, ask movers who specialize in pianos.

Caring for Your Piano

Choose a place for your piano carefully. Avoid areas with frequent temperature/humidity changes near windows, doors and radiators. You might consider putting your piano against an inside wall of the house rather than an outside one to keep temperature fluctuations to a minimum. Maintaining a constant temperature and a humidity level of about 40% will help keep the piano in good shape and in tune. If you put the piano under a ceiling fan, the sound could be distorted when the fan is on high speed.

Your pianist needs a quiet place to practice and to concentrate. At the same time, your family life should not have to come to a complete standstill every time someone is practicing. Perhaps the living room, for example, is not the best place to put the piano.

Do not place objects on the piano that could fall down and hurt someone or damage the keys. Vases full of water could tip over and drip down into the mechanism. Wait a few weeks after moving the piano into your home before having it tuned. The move itself and the temperature/humidity levels in your house will cause the strings/tuning pins etc. to undergo a period of adjustment. Do not let your instrument dry out in the winter. Ask your tuner for recommendations in this respect.

Clean the keys with a damp cloth. Cleaners and polishes could damage the finish on the keys and make them slippery. When not in use close the lid over the piano keys to keep out dust. Do not tinker yourself with the piano or place objects (i.e. mothballs) inside. Have the piano tuned once or twice a year: at the beginning of a new season; a good time when temperature/humidity levels have changed. The best way to maintain your piano is to use it. Another good reason to practice!