

How to choose a piano teacher

Choosing a piano teacher is a very personal decision. You want someone who will inspire you and help you nurture a love for playing the piano. A good piano teacher is a combination of a friend, mentor, and teacher.

Communication is key

When it comes to finding a piano teacher, talking to others about your search is important to your success.

Follow these basic guidelines to help ensure you select a teacher who is right for you:

- * Talk to friends, family, and colleagues who may be acquainted with piano teachers in your locality.
- * Seek recommendations from schools, churches, and music shops.
- * Interview prospective teachers, in person if possible, before making a commitment.
- * Attend a recital of a prospective teacher's students.
- * Ask to speak with some of the prospective teacher's students, past and present.
- * Take notes and share findings with a trusted friend or relative to help you with your decision.

Know what you want

Asking yourself several questions before starting your search will save you time and help you find the best teacher for your needs.

Consider these questions:

- * What do you want to achieve from piano lessons?
- * What are your musical tastes, ambitions, and goals?
- * How much time do you intend to spend practising the piano?
- * What musical style or styles would you like to learn?
- * Do you want to learn notation and music theory?

By working out which direction you want to go and how you want to get there, you'll have a better idea if the teachers you talk to are right for you.

How to interview teachers

Interviewing prospective teachers is a good way of finding one that meets your needs. When interviewing a teacher, pay attention to how you communicate with each other. This is indicative of how your lessons will flow. The teacher should be open and should want to share information about their experience, skills, and style.

Think about asking prospective teachers these questions:

- * What is your teaching experience in piano pedagogy and music education?

- * What age groups do you teach?
- * What types of ongoing professional development do you participate in?
- * Do you have a written agreement and studio policy? Will you review them with me?
- * Do you regularly evaluate your students' progress?
- * What teaching method and instructional materials do you use?
- * What styles of music do you teach?
- * What other elements are part of your teaching curriculum?
- * Do you require students to perform in piano recitals?
- * Do you offer other performing opportunities, such as music festivals and competitions?
- * Is your studio well equipped, with a good quality acoustic piano, and an extensive sheet music library?
- * Do you embrace technology in your studio, such as computers and music apps?
- * Do you have an online studio timetable and calendar for the students' use?
- * Do you have a website? What is its address?
- * How much practice time do you require each day?
- * What are your qualifications?
- * Have you taken the online course by the NSPCC - "Child Protection Awareness in Music"?
- * Are you a member of a professional association, such as the ISM or EPTA?
- * Have you been checked by the Disclosure and Barring Service?
- * Can I get references and testimonials?
- * Do you offer a trial lesson?
- * Can I sit in during the lessons? (for parents of younger children)
- * How long does each lesson last?
- * What is your hourly rate, and are the lessons paid in advance?
- * What method of payment do you accept?

Teaching and performance experience are important when considering a prospective teacher. Solid teaching experience suggests they are able to successfully communicate their knowledge to you. Performance experience ensures that your teacher is skilled enough musically to take you beyond the basics. A good piano teacher is patient and understanding and should make your lessons fun, relaxed, and informative.

The learning environment

A patient, friendly teaching atmosphere makes learning productive. A piano teacher's character and personality are as important as their technical skill. If you want a productive learning environment, you and your teacher need to have a rapport.

You should intuitively trust and respect your teacher. Talking to him/her should feel natural, and receiving instruction and constructive criticism from him/her should be a positive experience. Make sure your teacher is active in your education and progression. You should set goals together, and he/she should motivate you to practise.

You should feel like he/she is taking an interest in you personally rather than being just another student. As your lessons progress, check whether your teacher is reliable and committed to his/her students.

In conclusion, ensure you find a teacher who will fit your style and needs, who will help you succeed, and who will make you look forward to your next lesson.