

How to Help Your Child WIN at Keyboard/Piano Lessons

There are far too many stories from folks who hated taking music lessons as children. One way to reduce that number is by establishing some guidelines for parents to improve your child's lesson experience.

How Long Should My Child Take Lessons?

Contrary to the “popular wisdom” children learn keyboard/piano very slowly. A smart parent who thinks about this a bit can explain it easily. Thus, children's lessons go on for quite some time. In order to prevent “burn out” or your child hating lessons and wanting to quit start by making a deal right up front; “I'll give you lessons but you have to agree to take them for a year.” In that time, a great teacher can encourage your child to continue. If this doesn't happen, permit the child to quit after the year.

How Old Should My Child Be?

A more correct question is, “How mature must they be?” For example, when the child is quite young a parent must help with their practice, even if that parent doesn't play the instrument. A good teacher can explain how. Later (the teacher will tell you when) the child has to practice on their own and will need to be mature enough to do so successfully.

What Instrument Should I Purchase?

Again, conventional wisdom is quite wrong. Cheap keyboards are best for many reasons, not the least of which is expense. Expensive pianos are wonderful for piano store sales people but not so hot for kids. Keyboards are cheap, never need tuning, and have loads of electronics which help keep kids interested. Additionally, their keys go down easily, which is important for weak fingers. You can plug in headphones for practice at any hour. When and if the child gets more interested, you can upgrade then. My recommendation is to spend money on high quality lessons, not on the initial instrument.

Which Teacher Should I Get for My Child?

Find a teacher that can balance “fun and fundamentals.” Too permissive a teacher or one too strict both lose children's interest. In the first case, your child never actually learns to play and in the second they never get a chance to do so. You can usually discover the reality of the teacher's approach over the phone. Parents that opt to let finances and/or convenience dictate the teacher are making a mistake.

How Long Should a Child's Lessons Be?

I have found that an hour is about the longest a lesson can be productively run, while a half-hour is too short for some teachers.

How Can You Help I Help at Home?

First off, attend the lessons. Do NOT just drop them off and run errands. This is how you will know what is happening and the teacher can find out no practice occurred because Aunt Edna was visiting. Always get clear directions IN WRITING from the instructor. Then, once at home, ensure that your child's schedule allows all assignments to be completed. An experienced teacher can tell you how much time is right. Remember that merely passing time is NOT the goal of good, efficient practice.