

What Qualities Should You Look For When Selecting a Teacher?

After you've determined your goals, it's time to begin your search. Most qualified teachers have worked with beginning students and are well-versed in teaching basic techniques and rudimentary music skills such as reading music.

If you're interested in pursuing a particular genre of music like jazz or classical, it may make sense to find a piano teacher whose training is specialized in those areas. There are several questions you should ask when meeting with any candidates:

- Can they provide letters of recommendation from current or former students?
- Do they have teaching credentials?
- How far can they take you? Do they work mostly with beginners or do they focus on more advanced students?
- Do they work best with adults or children?
- Do they have any affiliations?
- Where do they conduct lessons? Do they work from their home, a studio, a school, online, or do they come to your home?
- How many years of experience do they have playing and teaching?

It's important to ask about their teaching background and the age level they are most comfortable working with, especially if you're arranging lessons for your child.

There are many techniques and teaching methods, such as the **Suzuki Method**, that are geared toward younger students. Make sure to ask your child's teacher if they have experience working with students your child's age and if they have a preferred teaching method. For many young beginners, the right first teacher can be the difference between playing music for their entire lives or quitting early.

A good teacher will exhibit qualities like empathy, patience, and a positive attitude. They will use positive reinforcement, but still know how to push when necessary. They will recognize and reward accomplishment, but know when to "lighten things up."

As with most creative efforts, it's best to begin by working with a professional teacher. Taking lessons with a family friend that dabbles on the piano may not be the most effective way to start your lifetime of learning. A professional teacher, on the other hand, will give you or your child a strong foundation in proper technique, and will have the skills and experience to try another approach if you don't "get it" with their first explanation. A professional teacher can also assess your specific needs and gear the lessons to your abilities and interests.

Of course, the most important key to success actually rests on you, the student. The best teachers in the world can only give you the information you need to learn. In the end, you or your child need to make a firm commitment to faithfully go to lessons and practice!

Be realistic and remember that you aren't going to be playing overnight. There are going to be hard times when you're learning a difficult exercise or a tricky new song that will frustrate you and maybe even make you want to give up. These are the times that a professional teacher will be the most helpful. They will stay by your side to remind you of the pride and accomplishment you'll feel when you finally master that difficult piece of music.

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