**Can I Start Piano Lessons on an Electric Keyboard?**

Is it possible to get by with piano lessons on a keyboard? Parents and students frequently ask me why not a keyboard?  We have a keyboard, and I would like to take piano lessons.  My first questions are:  Is your keyboard an 88 key, piano-weighted keyboard?  Do you have pedals, or at least a damper pedal for it?

Electric pianos often have fewer than the 88 keys found on an acoustic piano.  The common sizes are 49 keys, 64 keys, and 73 keys.   I have found that the keys are often smaller than your acoustic piano, and are not weighted, meaning they are easily pressed.

Often people will go out and purchase a piano by asking the salesman for a “keyboard.”   They walk out of the store after spending hundreds of dollars with what they think is the right instrument.  The key is to ask for a “digital grand piano with weighted keys.”  Then the salesman will know what you want, and you won’t spend much more.

Here are some of the common practices I have found with students with keyboards.  Often times, the batteries wear out and the child doesn’t get to practice during that week.  Adapters are available for most of these keyboards, but they are not always accessible to the child when needed.   The keyboard gets moved around and the child doesn’t have a quiet place to practice.  The keyboard sits on a desk, or a bed, or a chest-a-drawers, or is under the bed.  The discipline for practicing just loses its appeal.  Learning an instrument takes practice, consistency and determination.  Parents play an important role in the success of their child(ren), and having an adequate instrument in a study friendly setting to practice on is the first step to this success.

It is crucial to have an acoustic piano or a digital piano with eighty-eight weighted keys and three pedals to practice on.  A keyboard just will not do.   Keyboards may look like pianos, but they are very different.  Keyboards do come in a variety of sizes and are more for synthesizer fun or play.  They are not actual pianos.  Pianos or keyboard weighted pianos react to touch.  Therefore, you get the percussiveness that is the reason the piano got its’ original name back in the 1700’s.  It was first named the “pianoforte” for its ability to give its players and audience the range of dynamics (loud and soft) that the harpsichords and clavichords could not.

When a keyboard student comes to lesson and learns the difference in sound and touch from an electric keyboard to the digital/or acoustic piano, they become disenchanted.  A keyboard is just not the same as a piano.   Keyboards don’t have pedals, and they can’t create the loud and soft with touch. The students that do continue piano study are the one’s that eventually get a full 88 key weighted digital piano or an acoustic piano; and it makes a big difference with their progress, technique, and practice.