



DaVinci Center for MUSICAL Arts



- 1. Under \$500.00:** You will have to do your own research. You will need some luck to find anything usable. Do yourself a huge favor and have the piano checked by a qualified piano technician before you pay for it, or have it moved to your house. If you do not, you may find yourself in the unenviable situation of having to pay to have the piano junked.
- 2. Under \$1,000.00:** Same as above but taking twice the financial risk.
- 3. Under \$1,500.00:** For this price, you can, with luck, find a reconditioned spinet or console from a dealer. The dealer is likely to have taken the piano in on trade. A piano like this will be reconditioned. This means the piano has been cleaned inside and out, and the action has been given a once-over to make sure the piano will play reliably. The case will be polished. Some kind of warranty will be given. At this price point, you should expect that the piano plays properly and holds a tuning. However, it would be unrealistic to expect a great-sounding, musically inspiring piano. The piano will almost certainly be at least forty years old.

Rule #1: If your budget is lower than \$7,500.00, do not even look at grand pianos.

4. Under \$2,000.00: Same as above, but with a more attractive cabinet. At this price point you would expect the piano to be at least thirty years old.

5. Under \$3,500.00: Now you are getting to the point where you can expect to get a decent musical instrument. At this price point, you should be able to find a console or studio upright that has a good musical sound and a solid touch to the action. The best examples of pianos in this price range are Yamaha, Kawai, Young Chang, Samick, and Sohmer. Yamaha would be the best in this category. You should be looking at pianos no older than the mid-1970s for Yamaha and no older than the mid-1980s for the others.

6. \$3,500.00- \$4,500.00: This is a realistic price range at which you can find a piano that an advanced student can use to develop his pianistic abilities. The best pianos to get in this price range are Yamaha and Kawai 48 in. to 52 in. upright pianos. These are the instruments that you find in the practice rooms of universities and music schools. At the low end of the price range, you find older pianos. I can't recommend any piano older than 1975. There is also a nice subcategory in this price range. Charles Walter and Sons make a very high-quality console. This is the best-made American upright other than Steinway. The case of these pianos is beautifully made. The voice of the piano can be made satisfactory by an expert technician.

7. \$4,500.00- \$5,500.00: The same as above, but the pianos should be from the 90's. There are models of Yamaha that have posts in the back in the shape of an X instead of vertical parallel posts. These pianos have a superior design. I have included them in this category because they have the potential for a warmer, richer sound. In my opinion, this is as much as anyone would need to spend for a used upright piano.

Rule #1: If your budget is **lower than \$7,500.00**, do not even look at grand pianos. Unless you are very lucky, you are likely to wind up with a piano that would require unrealistically expensive repairs. Here is a common example. John Doe purchases a Knabe grand piano for \$500.00. He is all excited because his child will begin lessons and needs a piano on which to practice. He spends a further \$300.00 to get the piano moved to his house. Even though John does not know much about pianos he knows that it is out of tune. He calls a tuner and finds out that the piano will not hold a tune because the pin block is too loose. He finds that the pin block cannot be replaced unless the piano is rebuilt. The repair bill is \$6,000.00 to replace the pin block, replace the strings, the dampers, and tune the piano up to pitch and get the action to work properly. John has just wasted \$800.00 on a piano that is unusable unless he spends an extra \$6,000.00. John will likely be spending another \$300.00 to have the piano removed.

8. \$7,500- \$10,000.00: You are in a good place with lots of possibilities. In this price range, you should be able to purchase a small Korean or Japanese piano from a dealer. Common brands in this price and size range are Yamaha, Young Chang, Kawai, Boston, and Samick. You can go as old as 1975 for a Yamaha grand in this price range, and for the other brands, you should go no older than 1985.

9. \$10,000.00 - \$15,000.00: In this price range, you should expect to find very good quality Yamaha and Kawai grand pianos up to 6 ft. 5 in. Good models are Yamaha G2, G3, C1, C2, C3, C5, and Kawai KG2, KG3, KG5, RX2, RX3.

Also, in this category, you will find rebuilt and refinished grand pianos from reputable piano rebuilders. These pianos will also have rebuilt actions. Typical brands are **Chickering, Knabe, Baldwin, Broadwood, Sohmer, Mason, and Hamlin, and many lesser known but equally good brands**. At this price range, you should expect five-year warranties to be included in the price of the piano.

10. \$15,000.00 - \$20,000.00: You are now in reconditioned Steinway and Mason and Hamlin country. This is "no country for old men". You will be paying a lot of money for a piano **that will eventually need to be restored**. The price of restoration for a Steinway M (5 ft. 7 in.) is \$20,000.00. The price of restoration for a Steinway D (concert grand) is \$30,000.00. In my opinion, which is supported by thirty years of experience, it is more economical and satisfying to take the next step and get a fully refinished, rebuilt or restored piano.

11. \$20,000.00 and up. Here are realistic prices for the different models of rebuilt and refinished or restored Steinway and Mason and Hamlin pianos:

- Steinway S typically rebuilt and refinished with new action \$23,000-\$25,000
- Mason T typically rebuilt and refinished with new action \$19,000.00 - \$23,000
- Steinway M rebuilt and refinished with new action \$25,000- \$30,000
- Mason A with new restored with new soundboard and new action \$25,000.00 - \$30,000.00
- Steinway O restored \$32,000.00-\$38,000.00
- Steinway A restored \$35,000.00-\$50,000.00
- Mason AA restored \$35,000.00
- Steinway B restored \$45,000.00 - \$70,000.00
- Mason BB restored \$45,000.00 - \$50,000.00
- Steinway C restored \$55,000 - \$85,000.00
- Steinway D restored \$65,000.00 - \$150,000.00

- Mason CC \$55,000.00- \$65,000.00

Rule #2: Unless you are buying a piano from a well-known piano restoration house that is giving you a five-year warranty, you need a piano professional to look at the piano for you.

Rule #3: A good Upright is a much better piano than a crummy grand piano – and much less expensive.

Do not develop “analysis paralysis,” or you will be looking for the perfect piano forever. Stick to your budget, buy from a reputable dealer who gives a warranty, and have a piano professional validate your choice.