



# How To Choose A MIDI Keyboard Controller in 8 Steps



## 1. Set Your Budget:

Are you on a tight budget? Or do you prefer to spend more and get something better? Controllers range between \$70 and \$2000 USD.

## 2. What Do You Need It For?

Beatmaking, music production, mixing, playing live, or all of these things?

## 3. Choose Your Features:

Keys, knobs, pads, faders... or all of them? *This depends on your production style.*

Do you use your mouse for most controls and need a keyboard for melodies? Go for keys only.

Do you like to create beats? And modulate effects in real time? Make sure you have pads and knobs.

Want to look at your computer screen as little as possible? Get an all-in-one: knobs, faders, pads and buttons.

## 4. ...And How Many You Need:

Piano players may go for the full 88 keys. But not all of us need the entire piano keyboard. Most producers look for 49 keys.

The number of keys on MIDI keyboards are either 25, 49, 61 or 88 keys. Some have 32 or 37 keys.

## 5. Pick Your Size:

Are you gonna play shows with it? Is your desk space limited in your music studio? Do you make music when you travel?

If you said yes: look for a compact MIDI controller.

## 6. Choose Your Keyboard Feel:

'Weighted keys' are heavier. Playing them feels like playing a real piano. But these are more expensive.

There are also non-weighted keys called 'synth-action' – the lighter plastic ones. They're the standard for most synths.

In between the two you've got 'semi-weighted' keys. They have some weight but not as much as a piano.

## 7. Think of DAW Compatibility:

Most MIDI controllers work with all DAWs. Knobs and buttons can be reassigned to whatever you want. Some are designed for a particular DAW.

If you don't already have a DAW: some controllers come with free production software. That might save you some money.

## 8. Choose your brand:

One last thing to consider is whether you're attached to a certain brand.

Some companies are known for their good built quality – like Native Instruments or Keith McMillen – and others for their cost effectiveness – like Behringer.

*You've determined what your needs are. Time to choose your controller!  
Go back to our list and look at the categories to guide your choice. Good luck!*