

5 Best Beginner MIDI Controllers - Our Buyers Guide

When you want to start making music, beats, or sounds, it can be daunting to know where to begin. Creating something outstanding comes down to a lot more than just having the creative vision. Especially for beginners, it's important to start off with all the essential equipment you need to set yourself up for success.

MIDI controllers are a staple for every musician looking to create true art. There is an abundance of various types of MIDI controllers available today, and many of them can be tailored to fit your specific needs. It can be overwhelming to know which MIDI controller is suitable for you and your craft as a beginner. On top of that, it can even be confusing to understand *how exactly to use your MIDI controller*.

MIDI stands for "Musical Instrument Digital Interface". A MIDI keyboard controller is an electronic instrument that allows you to make music or beats. However, **a MIDI controller can't make sounds on its own**. It needs to be connected to something like a PC or laptop to be able to operate.

Components Of Your MIDI Controller

There are a few significant aspects of a MIDI controller that you should consider when evaluating your needs. You should base your choice of a MIDI controller on what kinds of music, beats, or sounds you are planning to make.

Keys

MIDI controllers can come with any number of keys. The amount of keys typically ranges anywhere from 25 keys to 61 keys. If you are simply wanting to make beats or sounds, you probably won't be requiring a full-sized keyboard and can settle on a lower number of keys.

Pads, Knobs, And Wheels

In addition to keys, many MIDI controllers come with additional features like pads, knobs, and wheels. For beat makers, having pads on your MIDI controller can be especially useful. It can make creating beats with drums and other samples much easier. Pads are usually also velocity-sensitive, meaning the harder you hit them, the louder the sound will be. Having physical knobs and wheels present on your MIDI controller can offer another level of command over your sounds. All of these features can provide a great benefit while making music and beats.

Additional Equipment and Software

One thing that many beginners may overlook is the software that you will be needing to operate your MIDI controller. Since MIDI controllers don't have external speakers and can't make sounds on their own, they rely on software on your laptop, PC, tablet, or even smartphone they are connected to. So keep in mind that in addition to your MIDI controller, you will be needing one of these devices as well as the proper software. To connect your MIDI controller to your device, you'll also be needing a USB cable if it is a USB midi controller, which all on this list are.

The software that a MIDI controller relies on to work is called a DAW (Digital Audio Workspace). Using your DAW, you will be able to record and produce beats and music from your MIDI controller. It is also important to find a reliable DAW and stick with it throughout your time making music and beats. It's also a good idea to start off in the beginning with a more simple, easy-to-learn DAW until you get the hang of it, then move to a more advanced choice later. There are free DAWs available on the market, and a lot of the time when you purchase a MIDI controller, a DAW can come included with it to be installed on your computer.

Best Beginner MIDI Controllers

M-Audio Keystation 49 MK3

A high-quality choice for those who are looking to make primarily piano recordings.

Specs:

- 49 keys
- Best for piano recordings
- DAW software included
- Pitch/modulation wheels
- 4.85 lbs

The M-Audio Keystation 49 MK3 is a MIDI keyboard controller with 49 velocity-sensitive keys. This impressive MIDI keyboard spans over four octaves and is ideal if you are looking to do piano recordings. Though it boasts an outstanding 49 keys, this MIDI keyboard is still compact and has fantastic quality. M-Audio is a trusted brand in the music world and this MIDI controller is a popular choice for many musicians. In addition, it has two wheels for pitch and modulation, as well as additional features such as a volume fader, volume up/down buttons, and an input for a pedal if you wish to use one. This MIDI keyboard controller also comes with a comprehensive software package complete with MPC Beats, Ableton Live Lite, Velvet, XPand 2, Mini Grand, and Touch Loops. The M-Audio Keystation 49 MK3 has everything you need as a beginning musician if you need a MIDI keyboard primarily for piano recordings.

Akai Professional MPK Mini MK3

This stylish MIDI controller is great for making beats and is backed by the name of a reputable brand.

Specs:

- 25 keys
- 8 backlit drum pads
- 8 knobs
- DAW included
- 1.98 lbs

Akai has been creating high-quality and reliable MIDI controllers for years and has earned itself a reputable name in the music industry. This MIDI controller comes with a lot - not only does it have 25 velocity-sensitive keys, but it also has 8 impressive MPC-style drum pads and 8 knobs. For a beginner, this MIDI controller has pretty much the whole package to give you the tools to explore your creativity! The velocity-sensitive drum pads are even stylishly backlit, and the knobs can turn 360 degrees. The drum pads themselves come with Note Repeat and Full Level. This is great for when it comes time to lay down drums and trigger samples, as well as control your DAW. This exciting MIDI controller even comes with a music production starter kit complete with 2 GB of sound samples, MPC Beats, and 6 virtual instruments.

Midiplus AKM320

For the best budget-friendly option, this MIDI controller is great for beginners or traveling musicians.

Specs:

- 32 mini keys
- Pitch/modulation wheels
- Lightweight frame for easy transportation
- 1.59 lbs

The AKM320 is a lightweight and compact MIDI keyboard controller that is convenient for both in your workspace and if you are frequently traveling. If you need a portable MIDI controller for gigs, or you are just consistently on the move, this is a great choice for you. This budget-friendly option is also great for learning how to use a MIDI controller if you are a beginner. It has 32 velocity-sensitive mini keys that are good for making sounds or beats! It also has both pitch and modulation wheels, as well as octave and transpose buttons for easy key changes. This MIDI controller is great for beginners because of its simple design and easy-to-learn nature. However, because of its miniature and lightweight keys, it might not be the best option if your primary goal is to learn to play piano with it. Overall, the Midiplus AKM320 is a great beginner MIDI controller for those of you on a budget.

Arturia MINILAB MKII Universal MIDI Controller

A fantastic MIDI controller for music and beat-making if you are wanting a sleeker option.

Specs:

- 25 keys
- 8 pads and 16 knobs
- Mini design
- DAW included
- 4.07 lbs

For both beginners and expert musicians, the Arturia MINILAB MKII Universal MIDI Controller is a great option. Especially if you're a beginner, you probably don't have the luxury of making music and beats in a spacious studio. If you are in a smaller workspace and need to find ways to minimize your equipment, the Arturia MINILAB MKII Universal MIDI Controller is a great option for saving space. Its small design is perfect for restricted areas or if you are often traveling. Its sleek and compact design has 25 slim keys, as well as an impressive 8 pads and 16 knobs. On top of that, it also comes with DAW software included. This MIDI controller, though a smaller and compacted design, still has an amazing build quality that is hard to find.

Nektar GX61

An impressive 61-key MIDI controller that is great for piano recordings and creating music.

Specs:

- 61 keys
- DAW integration
- 8 programmable buttons
- Pitch/modulation wheels
- 6 lbs

The Nektar GX61 is an impressive MIDI controller that boasts 61 keys spanning over 38 inches of length. These velocity-sensitive keys are a great option if you are looking to make piano recordings. It also has pitch and modulation wheels, as well as octave and transpose buttons that are fantastic for piano players. This makes creating piano recordings more simple and more convenient. On top of that, there are 8 programmable buttons that can easily be integrated into your DAW. The greatest catch of this high-quality MIDI keyboard controller is that there are 61 keys - it's very rare for MIDI controllers to have such a high count of keys. This Nektar GX61 MIDI controller offers a fantastic level of playing that can be truly enjoyable for its users.

Conclusion

MIDI controllers are an essential tool to have if you are looking to start making music or beats. Even for beginners if you don't know where to start, finding the right MIDI controller is a great way to start your journey in music and beat creation. These five MIDI controllers here on this list are some of the best options available on the market for beginners looking for a midi controller.