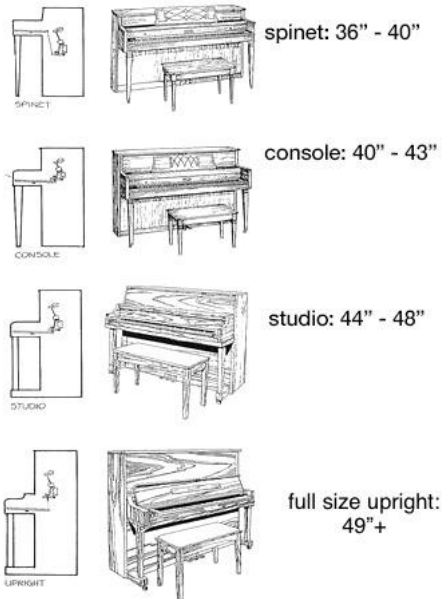


Vertical Piano Sizes



Sizing Up The Uprights



One of the most common designs of piano today is the upright or vertical piano.

Since its invention, the piano has been presented in many different sizes and shapes. One of the most common designs of piano today is the upright or vertical piano. These terms refer to the direction the strings run; a grand piano has strings that run horizontal to the ground whereas a vertical piano has strings that run perpendicular to the ground. We stand upright from floor to ceiling and so have aptly named the instrument that does the same. The next terms I will present focus on the length of strings in the piano and the case size and design.

In an attempt to make pianos smaller and cheaper during the 1940s and 1950s, the *spinet* piano was invented. I have heard many professional musicians claim that this should not even be referred to as a piano. Indeed I agree as it functions more as a representation of a piano like a keyboard, than as an actual acoustic instrument for music making. They contain what's called a drop action where the mechanism sits below the keys as seen in the photo above. This type of action is small and cramped and will never be as efficient as the other designs. The strings are also very short causing an unclear tone in the bass and middle. The factories produced these cheaply and sold them for low prices. There are no companies that currently produce spinets as much of the musical community has condemned them as poor quality instruments that are more for banging out a few chords at a party than for serious piano literature. The action is different enough that learning on a spinet will affect playing ability when switching to a better design of upright piano.



The next size is the *console*. These pianos are slightly larger than spinets and often do not contain a style of drop action. The cases on these are usually more ornate as this is the most common size of piano for the average owner. Consoles have a more pleasing tone than a spinet due to slightly longer strings and better construction overall. These pianos are often a good starting point for a new student of piano, but are also not for serious piano literature. They function more as a piano that looks nice in the home of a hobbyist, but are still not serious instruments.

The leverage and feel of the action will be different depending on the size of the piano.

The *studio* size of uprights are the first of the more serious and professional uprights. These pianos are large enough and built well enough to produce a good tone and contain an action capable of playing serious piano literature. They are referred to as *studio* because they can often be found in a music teaching studio. Teachers of other instruments often also prefer an upright piano of this size and build for playing duets with a pianist if a grand is not available. If from a good company, studio uprights can sound better and be more satisfying to play than some of the small, cheaply-made grand pianos. This is the recommended size of upright if the budget does not allow for a full sized upright.

The *full size* uprights are the largest pianos available with vertical strings. Most of these pianos come from long ago when upright pianos were built as large as possible to compete with grand pianos. A common name for this size, though misleading, is the upright grand or cabinet grand. Upright piano actions differ significantly from grand piano actions, making the upright grand strictly a marketing term, but the intent was to advertise that the strings were as long as the strings in a grand piano and therefore must have as good a tone as a grand piano. This is more or less true, but the name is confusing if you do not understand the internal construction. These full sized uprights also have a long piece of wood extending up from the end of the key up to the action parts whereas the console and studio action parts rest directly on the end of the key. The leverage and feel of the action will be different depending on the size of the piano. Manufacturers still produce this size of piano, though not quite as large as some of the ones produced over a century ago.

Each of these upright have a different purpose and will help or hinder your musical experience depending on the context.