

A BAND PARENT'S GUIDE TO BUYING AN INSTRUMENT



Whether you're a new or seasoned band parent, there will come a time when you're faced with the decision of whether or not to buy your child an instrument. Knowing what to buy, where to buy it, and how to part with a significant chunk of your wallet can be overwhelming, so we've got nine tips that will help ease your mind and give you an idea of how to start.

1. RENT If your student is a beginner, it's best to rent the instrument. Professional instruments can cost somewhere between a nice piece of jewelry and a small car. In order to avoid spending a large sum of money on an instrument that may only get used for a year, many band directors will encourage that you rent your instrument from a local music shop for the first year, if not several years.

2. KNOW WHAT YOU'RE PAYING FOR Talk to your band director or private lesson teacher about the best brand of instrument to get. They may recommend certain brands based on quality, your child's playing style, your budget, and intended use. Once you've got a couple of recommendations, do some research for yourself and see what would work best.

3. WORK YOUR CONTACTS. Talk to other band parents about their purchases and recommendations. If one of their kids happens to be quitting, see if you can buy or borrow their old instrument. Also, talk to local music directors and musicians to see if anyone is willing to lend/sell/give you an unused instrument they have lying around that just needs a quick fix at the repair shop to be in working order. This brings up...

4. NEW VS USED Like most things, used will be cheaper but somewhat riskier. Don't fear the risk though; it doesn't take much of a trained eye to see if an instrument looks dirty or broken. There's bound to be a bit of normal wear and tear, but if certain keys or valves are bent and not in good working condition, or if the instrument looks like it hasn't been cleaned in 10 years and there's still a reed stuck on the mouthpiece, those are things to take into consideration.



5. TAKE IT FOR A TEST DRIVE When you're going to look at an instrument, bring your child along with you so they can inspect and play the instrument for themselves; they'll be able to tell if something's wrong. If you're unsure about the quality of the instrument, take pictures of the instrument to a local music shop and talk to the employees or the instrument repair worker to see what it might cost to get it fixed, if necessary.

6. ONLINE SHOPPING If you decide to go the online route, Woodwind Brasswind is a great website to check out. They sell a wide variety of woodwind, brass, percussion and string instruments ranging from student to professional level. You can also buy accessories such as mouthpieces, swabs, reeds, metronomes, etc. at www.wwbw.com

Another good site to look at is Music for All. They carry all concert band instruments, but their selection isn't as wide.

However, they're a trustworthy source with a "Beat Your Price" feature if you're looking to buy a new instrument. www.musicforall.biz

There are a lot of other independent retailers online; just make sure that they have a reasonable return policy. Don't be afraid to call their customer service line either and ask them to inform you on the quality of the instrument you're considering. Ebay can also be a great source for instrument shopping because you can tell from reviews if a seller is accountable.

7. GREAT RESPONSIBILITY Buying your child his or her own instrument means they will have to take good care of it. Make sure your child is ready for this commitment and will properly clean and put away the instrument daily.



8. MARCHING QUALITY If you're buying an additional instrument for your child in marching band, get one that's super inexpensive. The most important quality in a marching instrument (although band directors will probably tell you different) is that it makes noise. That instrument will have to survive rain, wind, and potential collisions with sousaphone players. For example, you might choose to invest in a plastic clarinet rather than a wood clarinet if you need a slightly cheaper, more durable instrument that can be used in both concert and marching band. Again, talk to your band director, who will know exactly what to recommend.

9. THINK ABOUT THE FUTURE Make sure the investment makes sense. Most parents feel more comfortable after waiting a couple years to make sure their child is going to stick with it. It also helps to encourage your child to participate in music ensembles after high school and college. There are plenty of ways to get involved, such as playing in a community band or playing for a church choir. Not only will this ensure the value of your investment, but it will encourage your child to continue their musical growth through his or her entire life.

Remember, the instrument does not make the musician; the musician makes the instrument. It's possible to make a cheaper instrument sound stellar, and if your child is a beginner, there's no need to worry about getting a professional grade instrument just yet. Define a budget you can stick to for an instrument that fits the needs of your child. We hope these tips help, and feel free to let us know if you have any tips of your own by connecting with us on [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#).