

Tips on Buying Quality Band Instruments

Before you start looking for an instrument, here are some professional tips on how to choose quality instrument without breaking your budget.

Each year, thousands beginning band students begin the wonderful pursuit of learning a musical instrument only to be frustrated with a low quality instrument. Unfortunately, some companies produce and sell discount instruments that are such a low quality, students don't have a chance of succeeding in their first year of band.

How do you know which instruments are okay for a beginner? It's not easy since poor quality instruments look basically the same to the untrained eye. Their trumpets are just as shiny as better quality instruments. Newer is not necessarily better if the instrument is made of poor materials or with poor craftsmanship! If it has to say "band director" approved and comes with white gloves that is a tip-off to a poor quality instrument. Quality manufacturers have brand names that speak for themselves and do not have to convince you with flashy descriptions of their product.

A general rule for band instruments is to check on where it was manufactured. Almost all instruments made in the U.S.A. and Japan are good for beginners. Quality instruments have serial numbers that can be tracked to the company year of manufacture. Some quality brands include Artley, Armstrong, Bach, Benge, Blessing, Boosey & Hawkes, Buffet, Bundy, Conn, Eastman, Emerson, Gemeinhardt, Getzen, Jupiter, Holton, King, Leblanc, Ludwig, Olds, Pearl, Remo, Selmer, Vito, Yamaha, Yanagisawa and Zildjian and Zonda. Most band instruments manufactured in China or India are of very low quality. They are not repairable in reputable music shops because the metal keys will break too easily, or the brass valves have not been machined properly. Many times, the instrument will not play in tune!

The best method to determine the quality of any instrument is to ask a local school band director. They have seen the frustration of beginners who try to learn with a low-quality instrument. Some online music stores sell only quality music instruments. Others sell only poor quality instruments for cheap prices. In general, beware of instrument that are a lot cheaper than the others. The old buyer's rule is still true: *"You get what you pay for."* Instruments may be rented or purchased from Art's Music or any other local school music dealer you choose to do business with. If you rent an instrument from Art's, you will be assured quality and good service, if the instrument ever needs repair. If you would like to shop around, that's fine, just let the band director point you in the right direction. There are some other music stores that can be utilized, but Art's comes weekly to our school to do repairs and take care of our supply needs.

A good used instrument may have some cosmetic blemishes, but the pads on woodwind instruments will all be intact and the brass slides and valves will work smoothly. Many times, it is worth having an older instrument serviced. Pawn shops may have some quality used instruments in the recommended brands. Instruments from family and friends may be used, but you need to make sure it is in good playing condition, especially if it has been stored for a long time. If you have any questions about what you are considering, please ask the band director about it, or better yet, see if you can bring it in and let the band director check it out for you.

With the exception of a few of the larger brass and woodwind instruments, students are expected to provide their own instruments. The school loans certain instruments, such as French horns, Baritones, Tubas, some Trombones, Bass Clarinets and Tenor/Baritone Saxophones, to students assigned to these instruments as they are available. Students using school instruments must complete a usage agreement form and will be financially responsible for all supplies needed for those instruments and any repairs that are necessary as long as the instrument is issued. Students who abuse a school instrument will lose the privilege of using it.

When shopping for instruments, please note the following brands that are known for high quality and serviceability. If purchasing new, please use a reputable school music store. We are seeing more and more imposters being sold online! Ask the band director for guidance!

For Woodwinds: Antiqua Supreme, Armstrong, Artley, Boosey & Hawkes, Buffett Bundy, Cannonballl, Conn, Eastman, Fox, Gemeinhardt, Jupiter, Kellworth, King, Leblanc, Selmer, Vito, Yamaha, Yanagasawa

For Brass: Bach, Benge, Bessen, Blessing, Bundy, Conn, Eastman, Getzen, Holton, Jupiter, King, Selmer, Yamaha

