

Instrumental Music Notes

Upcoming Email topics:

- Getting an Instrument
- Helpful Websites or Apps
- General Instrumental Music Schedule
- Recruitment
- Books & Accessories
- Parents Roles
- Schedule & First Lesson Prep
- Practice Charts & Incentive Plan

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Ensuring Success Topic 2: How and Where to Get an Instrument

There are many ways to obtain an instrument for your child. Since instruments can cost anywhere from several hundred dollars up to several thousand, this is not a decision to make lightly. Do some research on different instruments, brands, and prices out there. I will discuss many of the options that are available as well as recommended brands and what to look for when purchasing. If you already own the instrument your child is going to play, you may want to keep this info in mind if you ever need to upgrade that instrument.

There are basically three options how HOW to get an instrument—purchase, rent, or borrow.

Renting an instrument: Most music stores offer a program called “rent to own.” This is usually the best option in the beginning stages of learning an instrument. Essentially, you would pay a monthly fee that is put toward the ultimate purchase price of the instrument. Once you have reached the purchase price, you own the instrument. However, if your child would decide to stop playing at any time during the rental period, the instrument can be returned to the music store with no further financial obligation. The music store that services our school, Menchey Music Service, offers an initial 3 month trial period. The first payment covers the first three months rental; after that the payments would be made on a monthly basis until you return the instrument or reach the purchase price of the instrument. During the rental period, Menchey’s agrees to repair or replace the instrument in the case of damage or theft - an added bonus!

*Rent to own plans vary from music store to music store, so you may want to call around to see which one offers you the best deal. Not all of them offer their repair/replacement fee as part of the rental payment. All offer rental on new or used instruments. You will want to verify the condition of any used instruments, as some stores seem to have higher standards than others. Used instruments will usually have the same monthly fee, but the purchase price will be lower than a new instrument.

Purchasing an instrument: Obviously purchasing an instrument outright is always an option.

From a music store: Some music stores do offer a discounted price for a straight purchase. At the very least, you may avoid any finance charges from making monthly payments. Most stores offer older, less expensive used instruments for purchase only; they typically reserve their newer used instruments for the rental program. Insist that any used instruments be in good repair, or that the music store will agree to repair any issues that are found free of charge. I am happy to check out instruments to see if they are in good working order once school begins. Most reputable stores will agree to this.

From other sources: I have had students in the past who have found wonderful deals on instruments through eBay, craigslist, even pawnshops! The key here is to know what you are looking for, research the brands/models of instrument being offered. Include in the agreement that you would like the instruments to be evaluated by a qualified repair shop or teacher. If purchasing through from a non-music store source, plan on taking the instrument into a music store for a deep cleaning. The cost of this varies by instrument, but I would strongly recommend this process! They will also be able to advise you of any maintenance that should be done to the instrument. Feel free to contact me with any questions regarding this! I want your children to be successful just as much as you do! In addition, I often have past parents contact me with instruments they are trying to sell, so I can always pass that info on to you.

Borrowing: Borrowing from family, friends, neighbors, etc. can be a great way to get started with an instrument, again provided the instrument is in good repair. I would recommend taking borrowed instruments in to a music store for their deep cleaning process, as well as to see if any repairs need to be made for the instrument to work its best.

School-owned instruments: The County owns quite a few instruments for student use. Most of these are the larger, most expensive instruments, but we do have a small supply of other instruments for students in financial need. We want all children to have the opportunity to experience playing an instrument if they wish to, regardless of financial barriers. If you have not been able to obtain an instrument through any of the means mentioned above, PLEASE contact me. I cannot guarantee that I will be able to find the perfect instrument, or even your child’s first choice instrument (no saxophones or percussion kits, sorry!) but I can help you investigate all other instrument options.

Please take a look at the BCPS list of recommended brands of instruments. This is not an absolute list, but you can use it as a guideline when looking at instruments.

My best advice is to begin researching NOW!

Please note, instruments do not need to be rented or purchased until the middle of September. Lessons will begin during either the third or last week of September. All students will need to have made arrangements to have an instrument by then.

My next email will highlight several helpful websites and/or smartphone/tablet apps that I have discovered!

Musically Yours,
Mrs. Carol Hutton