

Getting an Instrument

JOIN 5TH GRADE BAND www.BellinghamMusic.org/join

Please read this before you buy an instrument from Amazon, BJ's EBay, Craigslist or any place that is not a music dealer or specialized music vendor.

Read below for more info.

RENTING

The recommended way to getting an instrument for beginning study is by renting it from [Rick's Musical Instruments](#) (our primary music dealer in Bellingham). We will hold an "Instrument Rental Night" in early September for families to rent and take home their student's instrument.

Generally when a student starts band in fifth grade, they begin by renting an instrument. Rick's has a great rental program that starts with an "introductory period" where you pay a set price to rent the instrument over a 4 ½ month period. Once this 4 ½ month period ends, you can continue renting this instrument at a monthly rate. This information is all outlined in the contract you sign at the beginning of the 4 ½ month rental period. [Click here for a sample contract](#) (prices may not reflect the actual contract).

Renting an instrument through Rick's allows for a few advantages over buying the instrument outright. For instance, instead of putting a \$700 instrument on your credit card, Rick's spreads out the payments over a period of time (usually 3-4 years, depending on the total cost of the instrument). Once the period is over, you own the instrument (this is commonly called "Rent-to-Own"). Another advantage to renting through Rick's is that if the instrument ever needs any repairs, they are taken care of at no additional charge to the monthly fee. Additionally, Rick's sends a representative to Bellingham once per week who can deliver items you may wish to purchase, and will take/return instruments that are in need of repair.

SCHOOL-OWNED INSTRUMENTS

The school owns a limited amount of instruments available for student use at no charge. Preference will be given to those students on free or reduced-cost lunch, or who have other financial burdens. Please speak with Mr. Glynn to see about this possibility.

BUYING MUSICAL INSTRUMENTS

There are a few things you want to keep in mind when purchasing an instrument for your young musician. First, a few basics about how instruments are categorized—there are three levels of instruments:

1. Student
2. Intermediate
3. Professional

Generally, students in fifth grade begin studying a musical instrument at the “Student” level. These are the least expensive instrument grade to produce, but are often quite durable. A student would “upgrade” to an intermediate level instrument when the student has reached about the eighth grade BUT only if the student is taking their instrument VERY seriously (i.e. practicing every day or several times a week, taking private lessons, auditioning for Districts, etc.). These intermediate level instruments are crafted a little more carefully, may be made out of some different materials (i.e. plastic clarinets vs. wood clarinets, nickel flutes vs. sterling silver flutes, etc.) and are generally more expensive than the student level instruments. Professional level instruments are usually purchased when it is evident that the student will continue on with music as a career, either as a performer or teacher. These are generally purchased during or just before a student’s senior year of high school in preparation for college auditions. As with intermediate instruments, a great deal of practice time, private lessons, and auditions would go along with a professional instrument.

If you decide to buy an instrument outright, you would be responsible for all three things outlined above:

- Paying the full price of the instrument upon getting the instrument.
- Paying for any damages or repairs as they occur.
- Being responsible for insurance for the instrument if it is ever lost or stolen.

These extra responsibilities for you as the owner can be overcome if the price is right and you are willing to have these extra responsibilities.

RECOMMENDATIONS

“Don’t buy a musical instrument where you can buy your groceries.”

There are various big-box chain retail stores that offer a “\$179 clarinet” or a “\$199 saxophone”. Although these stores are offering these instruments at a very reasonable price, it is ALWAYS best to buy a musical instrument from a reputable, experienced musical instrument dealer. If you buy the \$179 clarinet from your local big-box retailer, take it home, and find that it is faulty, you cannot take it back to the store where you purchased it and expect it to be repaired. They may exchange it for another one, and it might work out for you for a while, but in the long run, something might go wrong. Once your warranty runs out or the return/exchange period has ended, you probably will be out of luck. Music stores often will try to repair these instruments, but because of the materials that are used to produce these less expensive instruments, they may not be successful.

Another thing to be careful of is buying instruments on an online auction site. A quick search on an online auction site will give many results of less expensive instruments, or used instruments, but for similar reasons as above, it is probably best to avoid using an online auction site to buy instruments. You will most likely have a hard time exchanging an instrument bought on an online auction site and certainly the people you buy it from will not be able to repair it. If you do decide on purchasing an instrument on an online auction site, please consult with me first and I will help try to sort out the good instruments from the not-so-good instruments.

There are a series of very affordable instruments that have a very familiar series name associated with them available to purchase from a few stores that I use quite frequently called “Music 123” (<http://www.music123.com/>) and “The Woodwind and Brasswind” (<http://www.wwbw.com/>). These are high quality, sturdy, durable, solid instruments that are excellent for beginners. Some examples of prices are (as of June, 2014):

- [Gemeinhardt 2SP Series Student Flute](#) – \$479
- [Bundy BCL-300 Clarinet](#) – \$449 (Mouthpiece to get: Hite; Ligature: Rovner)
- [Gemeinhardt GSA500-LQ Alto Saxophone](#)- \$980 (Mouthpiece to get: Yamaha 4C; Ligature: Rovner)
- [Blessing BTR-1277 Series Student Bb Trumpet](#) – \$699 (Mouthpiece to get: Blessing 5C)
- [Blessing BTB-1280 Series Student Trombone](#) – \$699 (Mouthpiece to get: Blessing 12C)
- [Mapex MPX-MK32PC Bell/Percussion Kit](#) – \$199 (Drum sticks to get: Vic Firth SD 1 with wood tip)

These instruments, although priced more expensively to the “big-box store” instruments, are manufactured by highly reputable companies and are made of parts that are easily replaceable and repairable by local repair people. The instruments available through the rental program truly are made of higher quality and are more durable, but if finances are an issue, and you would like to purchase an affordable instrument, then I would recommend purchasing one of these instruments.

I hope this information has been helpful to you. Please do not hesitate to contact me with any more questions.