

How to get an instrument/book/supplies for your Beginning IM lessons:

Please contact one of the following local music vendors to arrange to rent your instrument or pick up books and supplies.

K&C Music

781-769-6520

273 Lenox St. Norwood

Performance Music

781-938-6411

405-1 Main St. Woburn

National Music

781-933-6300

394 Main St. Woburn

The Music Place

978-664-6213

41 Main St. N. Reading

David French Music Co.

508-366-5994

53B Otis St., Westborough

Tewksbury Music Center

978-851-6700

1269 Main St. Tewksbury

Johnson Strings

800-359-9351

1029 Chestnut St. Newton Upper Falls

Renting vs. Buying

Buying a good quality, beginning level musical instrument is expensive. **We recommend renting an instrument for at least the first year to see if your child really does like to play the instrument they've chosen.** Like automobiles, musical instruments depreciate quickly, and it will be difficult to sell a purchased instrument and recoup your initial investment if your child opts to discontinue lessons.

Planning to Purchase a New Instrument?

While our music staff is always available to answer any questions that you may have about purchasing an instrument we offer these tips so that you will be an informed consumer. With the advent of e-bay and other internet resources, many times parents are purchasing instruments sight unseen. Newspaper ads and yard sales also offer great deals on instruments but sometimes the instruments may have problems which are not immediately noticeable to the untrained eye. Some instruments being offered are not standard in their range or key for a regular school ensemble setting. Department stores and wholesale clubs have begun to sell musical instruments that are either generic (no make or model engraved on the instrument) or machine made (rather than handmade). While they may be inexpensive, we have found that the construction of these instruments can be inconsistent and that sometimes, students can struggle to produce a good sound on them.

There is also a wide variety of novelty instruments that come in a rainbow of colors and may be built from non-traditional materials, such as plastic instead of the typical wood or metal. While these can be inexpensive and so much fun, the quality of the instrument can be inconsistent. We recommend that parents take any instrument that they purchase to a local instrument repair shop (see list above) to speak with technicians about the instrument they have purchased. Be sure to ask the technician how frequently they see you're your type of instrument for repairs and if replacement parts are easily available for your instrument.

However, there are some specific makes and models of instruments that are specially designed for young or less experienced students to use that are built to last and provide the students with ease of sound production. We suggest the following brands of instruments to you on the basis of our instrumental music department's nearly 70 years of combined teaching experience.

Strings (Violin/Viola/Cello/Bass) are handcrafted wooden instruments that require 4 strings and a bow. Suitable student instruments will have a label on the inside (peek through the F holes, or openings in the body of the instrument) that will say "MENC Approved" or "Glaesel Approved."

Flutes and piccolos are instruments built in the key of C. An older model of piccolo was made in the key of D flat and you may find a great deal on it, but it is unusable in a school ensemble. Our band students do not play piccolo until they reach high school. Gemeinhardt, Yamaha, and Armstrong are the three recommended brands of flutes and piccolos due to their solid construction and design features which make them most accessible for good sound production.

Clarinets come in a variety of keys and sizes, but for our purposes in the public schools all students play on a B flat soprano clarinet. Reliable brands for these instruments include Vito, Selmer, Yamaha, and Bundy. Clarinet cases should be large enough to accommodate the storage of reeds, a cleaning swab, cork grease and other maintenance supplies.

Elementary Band students will need a supply of #2 clarinet reeds.

Saxophones also come in a variety of keys and sizes. All of our band students use an E-flat Alto saxophone when they start out. Should the student desire to switch to a larger saxophone in middle or high school, we provide those instruments. When purchasing a saxophone the recommended brands are Selmer, Yamaha, Conn, and Vito. **Elementary Band students will need a supply of #2 ALTO sax reeds.**

Trumpets used by students in school bands are built in the key of B flat. Mouthpieces for student musicians are usually engraved with a 7C on the rim. Bach is a reliable manufacturer of mouthpieces. Reliable brands of trumpets include Holton, Bach, Yamaha, Olds, and Bundy.

Tenor slide trombones are used by our band students. A keyed (like a trumpet) trombone was invented some years ago but has largely fallen into antiquity and is not helpful to young trombone students. Holton, Yamaha, King, Bach, and Conn are suggested brands of tenor slide trombones.

Drum-sets are often high on the wish lists of aspiring percussionists. These are NOT needed for percussion lessons in elementary school. Reliable brands of drums include Ludwig, Pearl, Yamaha, and Tama. A typical drum-set includes a bass drum with pedal, a snare drum, a set of toms attached to the bass drum, and perhaps a floor tom. Cymbals are usually packaged separately and both Zildjian and Paiste are both reliable brands. A beginner drum-set should include a pair of hi-hat cymbals and a ride cymbal. Many other choices of cymbals can be added later. The purchase of hardware must also be anticipated when purchasing a drum set. Hardware includes the stand for the snare drum as well as the different cymbal stands and sometimes the pedal for the bass drum. Additionally, the seat for the drummer, which is called a throne, must be included in the initial purchase of a drum-set.