

So...

**your kid wants
to play in the
school band.**



(Uh oh. Now what?)

**How to find the best
entry-level instrument possible
(and have some fun in the process).**

A GUIDE FOR PARENTS AND EDUCATORS FROM NAPBIRT
THE NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF PROFESSIONAL BAND
INSTRUMENT REPAIR TECHNICIANS, INC.



FOR MORE VALUABLE GUIDANCE AND INFORMATION,
visit us at www.napbirt.org

A bad instrument is a very bad reason for any child to lose interest in music.

**You've already made
one good decision...**

We'll help you make some others.

Your decision to provide your child with an opportunity to play a musical instrument is one that can benefit him or her literally for a lifetime.

Learning to play an instrument provides development on many levels. To name just a few, it:

- Teaches self-discipline
- Rewards effort with the pride of accomplishment
- Develops fine motor skills and auditory acuity
- Enables abstract thinking
- Teaches applied mathematics
- Develops hand-eye coordination
- Builds self-confidence
- Teaches the value of teamwork

Perhaps most importantly, learning to play an instrument shows how taking a one-step-at-a-time, building-block approach to challenges can lead naturally and sequentially to accomplishment in almost any endeavor – musical or otherwise.

And, of course, learning to play an instrument teaches about the fascinating world of music... which means that it can simply be...

fun.

Your involvement really matters...

Just as with everything else your child expresses an interest in, your attitude, support and involvement are important to his or her ability to succeed in music. This includes offering ongoing support and encouragement, of course.

And it also means providing an instrument that is in proper working condition to make playing music as easy as possible.

Nothing discourages a child from playing music more quickly than an instrument that doesn't perform well – and a bad instrument is a very bad reason for any child to lose interest in music.



The best news is...

A good instrument doesn't require a second mortgage.

There are many levels of "beginner band instruments" available on today's market. But not all are suitable for beginners. This brochure will help you choose the right instrument for your virtual virtuoso, and get the best value for your money.

Any questions? Like...

What do I look for?

Rent or Buy?

Who can I turn to?

New or Used?

What questions should I ask?

How much will it cost?

Good! Let's tackle them one-by-one (although not necessarily in order).

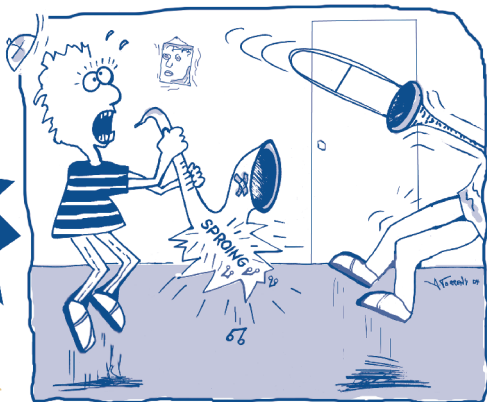
Where do I start?

Talk to your school's music educator (or a local private music teacher). He or she may have preferences regarding brands or models found to give good results and service. They may also recommend a local music store to provide those instruments for you.

Call or visit your local music store. They will be familiar with the instruments local teachers prefer. They'll also know what other items may be needed such as reeds, strings, music and accessories.

Consult with a professional repair technician. He or she can suggest instruments that are durable. Technicians know the serviceability of each brand, and know the availability of repair parts.

Quality
Matters!



What do I look for?

You're looking for an instrument of sufficient quality and durability to usher your child's musical experience along for at least three to four years.

"Quality" here means four basic "abilities:"

- 1. Playability.** Your child needs an instrument that plays as easily as possible – *and plays in tune*. Every instrument is difficult to play the first time a child tries to play it. A quality instrument helps the student play well. Sadly, there are instruments on the market today that are so poorly designed and constructed that they hinder progress and discourage even the most "naturally gifted" musical students.
- 2. Durability.** Let's face it: kids are kids. Their instruments need to be built well enough to stand up to rehearsals, school bus trips, maybe parades... you get the picture.
- 3. Repairability.** All instruments need repair at one point or another. What makes for a happy musical experience is an instrument that can be repaired locally using commonly available repair techniques and replacement parts.
- 4. Warranty-"ability."** Whenever possible, consider only brands that offer a warranty. Factory warranties vary in duration; get all the details before you buy.

Should I rent or buy?

Rental or lease programs are often excellent choices. Many programs work hand-in-hand with local music educators to help ensure your child's success in music.

- Offer flexibility
- Low initial investment with various payment schedules
- Maintenance plans offered to keep the instrument in proper adjustment; many plans provide loaners when available
- Most plans allow you to switch instruments with little or no penalty within a specified time period.

This last point is especially important because it allows greater flexibility in discovering what instrument your child really wants to play. After all – it makes no sense to insist Maryellen practice that piccolo when what she really wants is a bass drum.

New or Used?

Quality matters. Look for real quality. Remember – we're looking for an instrument that meets our four basic "abilities:" playability, durability, repairability and warranty-ability.

New isn't always the best way to go. This is especially true when it comes to beginner instruments. There are many levels of new instruments on the market today, some at ridiculously "attractive" prices. We've chosen the word "ridiculous" carefully. Keep in mind that new instruments:

- Vary in quality – not all are suited for beginners
- Not all play easily or play in tune
- Not all are durable
- Not all are easily serviceable
- Money saved on initial price may be used up two-fold in repairs

Used instruments can offer excellent value. While most kids (if given the opportunity) will lobby for a brand new instrument, you can often either save some money buying a used instrument – or get a higher quality instrument for the price of a new entry-level one. Used instruments:

- Are usually priced at 1/3 - 1/2 the cost of comparable new models
- Can be better than some new models currently on the market if in good condition

What to look for:

- Before you buy, have it inspected by a NAPBIRT technician or music educator to make sure it is in good condition and proper adjustment
- Find out if repair parts are still available.

Where should I shop?

Getting value for your money

You can find instruments for sale in a wide variety of locations. The best place to shop is the one that gives you and your child the best quality at the best price – in other words, the best combination of the four abilities:

Playability, durability, repairability and warranty-ability.

As we said earlier – getting a good instrument doesn't have to mean taking out a second mortgage.

Local band instrument retailer

This is a good place to start, for a number of reasons:

- Offers best choice of new, used and rentals
- Variety of financing options
- Provides repair and service
- Advice of a knowledgeable staff
- Usually closely associated with your school music program and teacher
- Offers convenient pick-up and delivery service to schools for repairs

Internet catalog companies

You can find good values on the internet IF you shop wisely.

Here are some of the good and not-so-good aspects of online companies:

- Good choice of new and used instruments
- Sometimes no distinction between new and used instruments
- Limited or no service available
- Seek out a NAPBIRT technician before your grace period is up to have the instrument inspected for quality and shipping damage.

Bottom line – know who you're dealing with. Call the company and/or ask your music educator or NAPBIRT repair technician about the company's reputation.

Internet auction sites

There can sometimes be great deals here – BUT you have to know exactly what you're looking for and what it's really worth.

When you hit the "Bid" button, just remember:

- Condition not guaranteed to be as represented
- If not packed properly, could be damaged in shipping
- Buyer beware!



Department stores/Wholesale clubs

- May offer only basic entry level instruments
- May not have knowledgeable sales staff
- May not have on-site service or support

Private Sales or Friends

Buying privately can be tempting and convenient. Just remember, these transactions:

- May offer no warranties
- May not offer a money-back guarantee
- Be prepared to take it to a NAPBIRT technician to have it inspected and serviced

Be sure and consult with your music educator or NAPBIRT technician first.

Best advice: Always consult with a trained educator or professional repair technician. Technicians who are members of the National Association of Professional Band Instrument Repair Technicians, Inc. (NAPBIRT) can help you and your child get the best value and most enjoyment from the endlessly fascinating world of music.

For more valuable information and guidance, visit our website at www.napbirt.org.



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