

GETTING AN INSTRUMENT

It is important to have a good instrument to play. An instrument that is not working properly or is the wrong size will make learning more difficult and less rewarding. Many people have an instrument that's been languishing in the attic for many years: it may turn out to be a good-quality instrument, or it may not. It is important to get it checked over by an expert before using it for lessons.

There are three main options to get the instrument that's best for your child.

1. Buy it outright.

Any music shop will be able to give you advice on the best instrument. Instruments can be very expensive though, so make sure you get one that's appropriate for a beginner. Any decent beginner's instrument should take a child through the first 5 years or so: if a player gets serious about it, you can then invest in a better instrument. PLEASE NOTE: this does not apply to guitars, violins or 'cellos. Please see the information below.

2. Pay for it over a period of time.

You can spread the cost of payment over a 24-month period by signing up with Normans Musical Instruments. You may pull out of the agreement after 3 months and return the instrument. After the third month, you will be committed to the 24-month period, at the end of which you will own the instrument outright. Normans hires: clarinets, saxophones, trumpets and flutes. www.normansrental.co.uk

3. Hire the instrument through Ealing Music Service.

This is the cheapest option. EMS has good-quality instruments which they hire to any child having lessons at Fielding. You will however not own the instrument at the end of the hire period. This option has advantages for string players: violins and 'cellos come in different sizes, and children can progress up through the sizes as they grow. EMS will swap the smaller instrument for a larger one as necessary. EMS hires every type of instrument we teach at Fielding, with the exception of guitars. ealingmusicservice.com/hire

Guitars:

PLEASE NOTE: you are not able to hire a guitar.

These are reasonably cheap, and you will need to buy your guitar outright before lessons start. At Fielding, we teach classical guitar. That's because it provides the player with the widest range of skills (including how to read traditional music notation). Classical guitar gives the greatest flexibility, and players can easily adapt to all styles, including rock, folk and country. Primary school children should start with a 3/4-size guitar and will need to get a foot-rest as well. These are widely available through different web sites, including Normans, and from music shops. You should also buy a foot-rest (available on Amazon etc. for under £10 – search “guitar foot rest”).

Flutes:

If the player is quite small, you might need to get a flute with a curved head-joint. This will enable the player's arms to reach the keys at the far end of the instrument. (If you buy a flute with the curved head-joint, you will be able to buy a straight head-joint once the player's arms are long enough – you don't need to buy a completely new instrument.)

Clarinets:

Make sure you get a B-flat clarinet. If you choose to hire from Normans, you will have the option to choose a Mini-Clarinet, ideal for smaller players. The Mini-Clarinets are all second-hand, and you can swap it for a brand new full-sized clarinet when the child is ready.

Saxophones:

Make sure you get an Alto saxophone.

Trumpets:

Make sure you get a B-flat trumpet. There are cheaper plastic trumpets available and, while they are fine for beginners, it won't be long before the child is ready to progress to a traditional metal instrument. My advice is to start with the brass.

Violins and 'Cellos:

These instruments are available for hire through Ealing Music Service, or you can purchase one outright. I do suggest that you hire to begin with: both instruments come in a variety of sizes, and children will progress up through them as they grow. In order for a child to be able to learn 'cello or violin, the instrument has to be matched to the individual. EMS offers the best way of doing this.