

Finding The Right Violin

Buy or Rent?

People usually **buy** violins, but some parents find it useful to **rent** an instrument instead. You may wish to consider violin rental in the following situations:

- **Size** - A fast-growing child may need to change quickly to a larger violin! Rental schemes often allow for cost-free or reduced-rate instrument exchange when you need to upgrade to a bigger size.
- **Commitment** - If you want your child to try the violin, but you're not yet 100% sure that they will learn it long term, then you can try an instrument out for a few months and see how they get on.
- **Affordability** - Rental is a low-cost way to begin learning. But be careful to calculate the true cost; in some situations, buying can work out cheaper than long term rental.

If you have more than one child and you would like them both to play the violin, then it is generally cheaper to buy an instrument, and hand it down to the younger child when the older child finishes using it.

This will usually work with an age gap of two to three years between children. If they are closer in age, there may be significant overlap of when they need each size.

Some shops also offer **purchase schemes** where an initial deposit or regular rental payments can be put towards a long term purchase. Be sure to ask retailers about all the different purchase options that are available.

Where to Buy

A child's first violin is likely to come from one of three main channels:

1) General Music Retail Shop - A general music retailer, offering a wide range of products for many different types of musical instrument, will often stock student violins.

2) Specialist Violin (String) Shop - A specialist music retailer, usually with in-house luthiers (violin repairers/makers), who have specific expertise in violins and violas (and usually cellos and double basses too).

3) Online Store - An online version of either a music shop or a violin/string shop. Sometimes these are online-only stores; sometimes they are part of a retailer who also has an offline presence.

Other Options / What to Avoid

For entry-level children's instruments, you should avoid specialist **violin dealers** who generally handle only expensive, vintage instruments.

An alternative option is to purchase second hand from a **private seller**, but if you can't try the instrument beforehand, be sure to know exactly what you are buying.

Stick to well-known brands, especially if you are buying from **eBay** or an online **classifieds** site, and always get a clear picture of the **condition** of the instrument before you pay for it!



Things to Consider

In the rush to find an instrument, it's easy to remember that looking for instruments can actually be a **lot of fun!**

Visiting violin shops and music shops can be a really interesting and educational activity for your child, so if you can find the time, enjoy the experience of taking them to a music retail store.

It's important to **test** the instruments you want to buy wherever possible, which is why visiting a shop is usually better than buying online, unless you already know exactly what you want.

If you're buying an instrument that's more expensive than just a beginner violin outfit (see 'Beginner Outfits', below), then you may even find that a violin shop will allow you to take the instrument 'on approval', so that you can live with it for a week or two before making a final decision.

When you're trying out an instrument, you'll need to consider:

Price

Have you budgeted for a good bow, case, shoulder rest and accessories (see 'Accessories', below)... as well as the cost of the instrument itself?

Is it going to be cheaper in the long term to buy or to rent? Which will be more convenient? What offers the best long term value?

Sound

What does the violin sound like? Does it sound as nice as it does close up? Do you and your child like the sound of the instrument? Make sure that you get someone to *play the violin to you*, as well as getting your child to try it.

Playability

Is the instrument easy to play? Is it set up right? How does it feel when your child puts it in playing position? Is it definitely the right size? Remember, you can always change the **chin rest** and the **shoulder rest** on an instrument (see below).

Condition

If the violin is new, is it **set up correctly**? A violin shop will do this for you, but if you're ordering it through the Internet or by mail order then you may struggle to set it up yourself if the bridge or strings aren't correctly set up when it arrives.

Insurance

Insurance probably isn't necessary for a child's violin (though it's worth checking to see if home contents insurance covers musical instruments too).

If your child later upgrades to a more expensive instrument, it is worth exploring insurance options with specialist musical instrument insurers.

Shop around

Become well informed, and get a sense of what's available *before* you buy. A good shop or dealer *won't* pressure you into making a purchase... the best ones will see you as a potential customer for life, and so they'll be focused on making sure that you have **the right instrument for you**.

Be Savvy

There are plenty of people retailing or reselling musical instruments who have absolutely no idea about the instruments themselves!

Armed with the information in this booklet, you're already much better informed than most people who are purchasing a violin, so trust your instinct - or if you're unsure, email support@violinschool.com for a second opinion, and we will be very happy to advise you!