



Renting vs Buying a String Instrument

So, your child wants to play an instrument! Your heart swells as you imagine your son or daughter practicing scales in their room or joining their classmates on stage in the school auditorium for the first recital. Seeing your child develop an interest in music can be a wonderful experience and buying or renting an instrument for a student is an exciting moment for the whole family.

But for parents new to the process, deciding whether to buy or rent a musical instrument can be a bit intimidating. Kids are notoriously fickle, and you may wonder if this latest interest will fade like so many others. Does it make sense to buy an instrument for your daughter, who kicked her ballet shoes to the curb once she discovered soccer? On the other hand, after begging for a guinea pig, didn't she clean its cage and feed it every day, just as she promised? For these reasons and more, many parents find themselves flummoxed by the question "Should I rent or buy?"

There are three main factors to take into initial consideration when deciding whether to rent or buy a student instrument:

- **LONGEVITY**—Is your child uncertain about which instrument they want to play, or do you have doubts as to how long or how seriously they are willing to commit to learning?
- **FINANCE**—Would it be a financial strain to pay a lump sum to purchase an instrument vs. making payments?
- **SIZE**—Is your child both new to playing and in need an instrument that is smaller than full size?

If you can answer "yes" to any of these questions, it would be a good idea to seriously consider renting your child's instrument. Continue reading for more details.

Benefits of Renting an Instrument

Convenience

Rental programs make finding an instrument easy. Most schools partner with local shops that take the guesswork out of a process that is new to many parents. It's a good idea to go with your school's recommended supplier—that way you know you'll be getting a quality, teacher-approved instrument from a store that offers free and fast delivery, even online. When you rent a student instrument from your school's suggested vendor, you won't have to spend a lot of time agonizing over which model or brand to choose, as you might when buying one.

Insurance

Let's face it: kids aren't always gentle with their belongings. The thought of purchasing a delicate, expensive stringed instrument only to have it break in your child's care can be hard to swallow. And it's not just your own child you have to worry about—in fact, in most cases when damage occurs, it is caused by a peer or person other than the child. Most rental programs include the option to add damage protection to ward against unforeseen events for just a few extra dollars each month.

Ability to Exchange Instruments

If your child is new to playing and needs an instrument that's smaller than full size, renting is the clear choice. When she has a growth spurt and needs a larger instrument, you can easily make the exchange. Great rental programs will even make it easy for you to swap out your rental for the next size up, when the time comes.

However, if your child is past the first-year mark and is still playing an instrument that is less than full size, you should consider purchasing or leasing-to-own. Buying an instrument will be most cost-effective in the long run if the vendor has a generous trade-in policy.

Trial-Friendliness

If your child is a brand-new musician, making a large financial commitment is a bit of a gamble. It may be wise to rent the instrument for at least the first year while he is discovering whether he enjoys playing. At that point, if your child decides he wants to try a different instrument or pursue an interest other than music, you can simply return the instrument to the store and cease making payments. Keep in mind, though, that it will take time for your child to get past the initial threshold when playing becomes easy and more enjoyable. Whether you're buying or renting, it's a good rule of thumb to encourage your child to try playing for a year before deciding the instrument isn't for him.

Cost-Effectiveness

As mentioned above, if your budding musician is brand new to playing, making a large financial investment up front may be risky. For a reasonable monthly price, you can test the waters to see if playing the instrument will be a long-term part of your child's life. If your child wishes to continue past the first year, however, it may be in your best interest to buy the instrument instead.