

Your First Lower Brass Instrument

Today you will find many options if you are in the market for a trombone, French horn, or lower brass instrument. We hope that the following advice will be of use if you are looking to make a purchase.

In order to ensure a good learning outcome, student instruments should:

- Be easy to play
- Play in tune
- Have a good sound quality
- Be durable

Like other instruments, the cheaper a brass instrument is the more likely it will fall short in one of these key areas. It is important that student brass instruments have good quality slides and valve blocks so that the player doesn't get frustrated by continually sticky valves and slides.

It is also important that the case supplied be sturdy enough to withstand the rigors of the band room and transport, and be portable.

Making an investment in a good quality instrument will always pay off.

The student will have a much better learning outcome and be far less frustrated than with an inferior quality instrument. You will also find it much easier to on-sell a quality brand when the time comes, and it will hold its price much better. Just make sure to clean the instrument regularly and bath it every 2 to 3 months.

Choosing a New Trombone

Beginners almost always start on a Bb tenor trombone. The most important part is the long hand slide, it must be straight and run smoothly. More advanced trombones often have a valve but this is not necessary for the first few years. Good choices include:

- Yamaha YSL154
- Jupiter JTB500
- Carol Brass CTB2207
- Bach TB710
- Sierman STB-511
- Cambridge TB600L

Choosing a new French horn

These days we are very fortunate to have junior sized French horns available for primary school children. They are easy to handle and more affordable than the traditional double horn. These can be purchased either in the key of F or the key of Bb. You can expect to pay \$2000 and more for a new single French horn.

Double French horns have a thumb lever to switch between the two keys, making it easier to perform more complex pieces. However they are larger, heavier, and more expensive. If the player is at least high school age, you might prefer to buy a double French horn due to the larger size of the player. Student doubles usually come with a fixed bell, and professional horns usually have a detachable bell meaning it can be unscrewed and fit into a more portable case. Double French horns with fixed bells start at around \$4000 for a good quality instrument.

- Paxman Primo single horns in F or Bb for younger players
- Yamaha Single French horns in F or Bb
- Paxman Academy double French horn
- Jupiter JHR1150 double French horn
- Yamaha YHR567 double French horn

Choosing Lower Brass Instruments

(alto/tenor horns, baritone horns, euphoniums, and tubas)

Beginner instruments usually have 3 valves. Upgrade and professional instruments may have 4, and may also have a compensating system where extra tubing allows for more accurate pitch. Tenor horns always have 3 valves.

- Alto/tenor horns: key of Eb, treble clef
- Baritone horns: key of Bb, treble and bass clef
- Euphoniums: key of Bb, treble and bass clef
- Tubas: keys of Bb, C, Eb, Double EEb, Double BBb, bass clef

Like all brass instruments the quality of materials and manufacture has a huge impact on the playability and sound of the instrument. For this reason we recommend you stick to the known brands such as Yamaha, Jupiter, and Cambridge for your student lower brass choices.

Reputable secondhand student instrument brands for lower brass

- Yamaha trombones, French horns, and lower brass
- Jupiter trombones, French horns, and lower brass
- Bach, King, and Conn trombones
- Conn French horns
- Paxman French horns
- Student Besson, York, and Cambridge lower brass

Don't worry about a few dents in the bell, this usually happens in spite of the best efforts.

We recommend you stay away from:

- Online auctions unless you are confident of the source (and remember if purchasing from overseas warranty issues will be a problem especially with larger instruments)
- Instruments with no brand name - quality instruments always have a brand
- Instruments without cases - the instrument may have damage and quality cases are not cheap.

- Instruments in unusual colours such as blue or red - the student will soon be told to get another one!
- Instruments available from shops that are not music shops (such as grocery stores)
- Instruments carrying a brand name that seem incredibly cheap or where the brand name is misspelled - they are probably copies. There has been an upsurge in the number of blatant copies of major brands lately so be very careful.

You can always call us for advice!