

Step Up Instruments!

At some point in time, EVERY student will outgrow their Student Line instrument. It is highly encouraged to begin looking into purchasing a new instrument during high school, especially the freshman year. There are numerous advantages!

- A student learns more responsibility with a personal instrument
- There is a stronger desire to play on their own instrument due to personal connection
- A Step-up instrument will also provide more room for musical growth
- The student will sound better!
- The student is more likely to continue with music now that the family has invested time and money in them!
- It makes for an EXCELLENT Birthday AND/OR holiday gift!
- A Step-up instrument can help fuel a student to go on to study music in college, and even provide a suitable instrument for said college experience!

There are things to consider before buying a new instrument...

- Parent is unsure if student will stay with music after investing \$\$\$ in a new instrument
- Pending the instrument, it could be pricey...

The benefits outweigh the negatives. I would be happy to speak to you regarding if your student should get a step-up instrument!

There are typically three levels of instrument classification:

- **Novice:** For young musicians in their first few years of study. Provides a basic concept of the instrument, but due to cheaper cost and design will eventually limit the student's growth.
- **Intermediate:** The Step-up we are referring to above. Better quality instruments that will help the student grow as a musician. Generally will last the student a long time. I personally made it through high school and my college undergraduate music studies on an intermediate level instrument.
- **Professional:** The best of the best! Be prepared to spend thousands of dollars on a top quality instrument that will help the musician in the professional field!

*It is not necessarily recommended to jump from a Novice to a Professional level instrument... Think of it like learning to drive in an old reliable VW Bug, and the next car you get is a Lamborghini!

What to look for and other recommendations:

So you are planning on purchasing a new instrument... There are some things you should be aware of!

Test Drive: First and foremost, you are about to spend a large amount of \$\$\$, so it is in yours and the students' best interest that they try out the potential instrument that you will purchase. Contact a music store (I recommend Bertrands) and see if they have the potential instrument in stock at their store. See if they have a couple models in stock or can order a couple to be shipped to them for your student to try out. Again, it's like buying a car... they don't all come off the assembly line exactly alike, and different instruments will handle differently. Plus you test drive the car before you buy it!

What do they play: If you are investing in your student you may want to know more about what types of music they play... Are they a Jazz Saxophonist? They may be limited in potential if you get them a Symphonic instrument... You can better understand what your child plays by being involved with the band program!

Watch out for Bells and Whistles: A music store and ESPECIALLY online music stores are in it to make money. A lesser quality instrument may be featured as a "Deal of the Century" and come with a fancy case, etc... Ultimately that instrument will not have longevity. Watch out for the recommendation from the Music store salesmen. Generally they can be trustworthy and knowledgeable on instruments, but be careful for the "It's *like* the instrument you want to get." A good quality horn will last ten times longer than an okay horn...

What is it made of: Generally a wooden Clarinet will sound better than plastic one, however, that \$2,000 wooden clarinet will not fair well in outdoor weather (say, during marching season) Flutes can be made of nickel or silver plating. As this is a step up, investigate silver. Brass instruments come in lacquer or silver finishes. I recommend silver finishes for trumpets as the sound will be more precise, and lacquer for horns, trombones, euphoniums and tubas as the sound will be warmer and not as piercing.

What brands can be trusted: Budweiser is the "King of Beers" because millions of dollars are spent in advertising to make sure they sell a lot of it. Whether you personally feel that way or not makes no difference. In the next section I will address recommended brands as well as brands to stay away from. Please note, your student may be playing on a recommended brand that they started in elementary or middle school. This is a guide for Step Up Instruments.

Avoid Costco/Walmart/EBay!: If there is anything you take away from this information page, it is this! These cheap instrument shaped objects do not last, fall apart quickly, sound terrible, and most repair shops REFUSE to fix these instruments as they do not have in stock parts easily accessible! This also means you'll have to buy a new instrument AGAIN! If you want to throw money away, by all means disregard this warning!

Recommendations

Flutes:

A Step up would be an open-hole flute, meaning the fingerings have holes in them requiring the fingertips to cover the holes. This increases sensitivity and note response, which in turn makes the musician play better. The Novice models have a C-Foot joint, meaning the lowest note the instrument can play is a low C. Intermediate and beyond should have a B-foot joint, which not only goes one note lower, but that one key helps out amazingly well in the high register of the instrument. There is another attribute called the “offset-G.” This ring finger key is on left side and is adjusted forward for a more natural curve to the hand. A “straight G” means all the keys are aligned. It becomes a matter of physiology (the size of the student’s hand) and personal preference. Another feature is the “Split E,” which I am not personally a fan of based on the way I developed playing, but others may like. Due to the care and maintenance of a silver instrument, oftentimes high school flautists will reserve their open hole for indoor playing only, and have a closed-hole student line instrument (usually their first) for marching season.

Brands (in recommended order):	Options:	Cost (Approx.):
*Sonare 601 Series	Inline, Offset G, or Offset G with Split E	\$3,200
*Sonare 505 Intermediate Series	Inline, Offset G, or Offset G with Split E	\$2,600
Pearl Quantz 665 Series	Inline G or Offset G with Split E	\$1,600
Yamaha YFL 382 Intermediate	Inline or Offset G	\$1,600

*Sonare flutes come with a Powell head joint, which is a professional level! Verne Q. Powell Flutes are considered the best Professional level flutes.

Piccolo:

Pearl PFP 105 Grenadite piccolo	(combination wood and plastic, durable)	\$1,350
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Professional Level Brands: Powell, Muramatzu, Haynes

(Personally) Not recommended: Emerson, Gemeinhardt, Bundy, Jupiter

*Yamaha make decent instruments, though the sound on the flutes may be too thin over time...

Clarinets:

A Step-up clarinet may have silver keys as opposed to nickel plated. Touch and response will be greatly improved, but as silver can tarnish the student will need to polish more often. Generally the Step-up will be made of wood, or some hybrid. Care of a wooden instrument must be of utmost importance. It is recommended that the student have a plastic one for marching season and the wooden one reserved for indoor playing. A wooden Clarinet (or oboe or bassoon or for that matter violin, viola, cello, bass, or guitar) will change over time as the wood reacts to different temperatures and conditions. It takes an estimated 30 plus years for the wood to finally “settle” into itself. Stradivarius violins made over a hundred years ago can go for literally millions of dollars! Just think of how much that clarinet can be worth if treated properly over the years!

Brands (in recommended order):	Options:	Cost (Approx.):
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Buffet E-12 France Intermediate	Grenadilla wood, silver keys	\$2,600
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*made in the same factory where they produce the R13 Professional model!

Selmer CL 211 Intermediate	Grenadilla wood, silver keys	\$1,800
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Yamaha YCL 450 Intermediate	Grenadilla wood, silver keys	\$1,900
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Professional Level: Buffet R13, sells for about \$4,600

(Personally) Not Recommended: Kohlert, Vito, Amati

Recommended Mouthpiece: Vandoren B45 or 5RV Lyre (try them out for preference)

Recommended Ligature: Rovner Clarinet Dark Ligature

*Yamaha makes decent reed family instruments, though for more bang for your buck I recommend the Buffet.

Saxophones:

For longevity and clarity, I strongly recommend the Yamaha line of Saxes. They are reliable horns that can last a long time. The other brand to research is Yanigasawa. It is recommended to stick with the standard Lacquer finish as it provides the necessary warmth to the sound. Different mouthpiece can change the overall tone, so a good instrument as the foundation will adapt better (such as changing between jazz and symphonic styles of playing)

Brands (in recommended order):	Cost (Approx.):
Yamaha YAS-480 Alto Saxophone	\$2,900
Selmer SAS411 – Alto Saxophone	\$2,900
Yamaha YTS-475 Tenor Saxophone	\$3,400
Selmer STS411 – Tenor Saxophone	\$3,400

*Hold off on purchasing a Bari Sax until college...

Professional Level: Yamaha 52, Selmer Mark 6, Martin, Yanigasawa

(Personally) Not Recommended: Jupiter, Amati, Allora

Recommended Mouthpiece: Altos: Selmer C*, Tenors: Selmer D*

Recommended Ligature: Rovner Dark Ligature (for Alto or Tenor Sax)

Oboes/Bassoons:

The only company I whole heartedly recommend for these double reeds is Fox. Because these instruments are specialized in the modern day music idiom, the investment is pricey, but will have a long life and can even end up being the student's professional instrument:

Fox 330 Oboe \$4,700

Fox 220 Bassoon \$10,400

*There is a HUGE market of used Oboes and Bassoons, so there are definitely used models out there.

*These can function as professional level instruments. If your child is already playing a double reed, you know that it can be a cost demanding instrument.

Trumpets:

When looking at Step Up brass it is important to note the different alloys used in brass instrument construction: yellow brass, gold brass, red brass and nickel silver. Yellow brass is the most common (70% copper, 30% zinc) and is generally used on student models. Gold brass (85% copper, 15% zinc) will produce a broad, rich tone, but can be pricey. Red brass generally contributes to softer mellow tones. Nickel silver (70% copper, 20% zinc, 10% nickel) produces a bright sound and because of the higher percentage of nickel and zinc will make for a more durable horn.

The Bach Stradivarius is the Gold Standard of trumpets. This should be the top goal and priority.

It is recommended that the step-up trumpet be made of nickel silver. Not only does this add a bright sound but will also enhance the richness of sound from a student line yellow brass instrument. Because nickel silver tarnishes more than yellow brass, the student will want to take great care in maintenance and polishing. Many individuals will play while holding their polishing cloth, as well as get valve casing wraps for added protection. A silver trumpet is practically a badge of honor in a high school, where the student models are generally composed of yellow brass trumpets. Students wishing to pursue interests in drum and bugle corps will find that many of the top corps will be playing silver nickel instruments.

When shopping for a trumpet, you want to look for a Bb trumpet. There are trumpets in C and D, which are used in orchestra settings, and not used in high school or college bands. Be very cautious of the pawn shop trumpet... many times a beautiful trumpet can be found in a shop for a great price and will turn out to be a C trumpet.

Brands (in recommended order):	Cost (Approx.):
Bach 170 Stradivarius 43 Bb Trumpet	\$2,700
Yamaha YTR-8345 Xeno Bb Trumpet	\$3,100
Bach BTR 411 Series Bb Trumpet	\$2,000
Jupiter JTR700SA Bb Trumpet	\$2,000
Professional Level:	Bach Stradivarius, Yamaha Xeno
Not Recommended:	Blessing, Allora, Amati
Recommended Mouthpiece:	Bach 1 ½C, 3C

French Horns:

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When shopping for a Horn, make sure to get a Double Horn, meaning it has both an F and Bb wrap. This is standard in the modern-day music world. Two brands come to mind: Holton and Conn. These are instruments that will last, sound great and provide a semi-pro level instrument.

Brands (in recommended order):	Cost (Approx.):
Conn 8D	\$6,200
Holton H378 Double Horn:	\$4,700
Conn 6D Double Horn:	\$5,200
Professional Level:	Holton H281, Holton Farkas, Conn 8D
(Personally) Not Recommended:	Blessing, Amati
Recommended Mouthpiece:	Holton Farkas Medium Cup, Holton Deep Cup

Trombones:

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When shopping for a Trombone, look to get one with an F attachment. The student should try out both small and large bore instruments when possible. Small bores will make the air more precise and sustainable. Large bores require more air but contribute to a darker and fuller sound.

When checking instruments out, be sure to check into the open or closed wrap versions where applicable, and make sure you are shopping for a Tenor Trombone. There are also bass trombones that the student should investigate once they go to college.

Brands (in recommended order):	Cost (Approx.):
Conn 88H:	\$3,300
Yamaha YSL-8820 Xeno with F attachment:	\$3,500
Bach 36B Stradivarius Series with F attachment:	\$4,000
King 608F Rose Bell with F attachment:	\$3,100
Professional Level:	Conn 88 series, Bach
Not Recommended:	Blessing, Amati
Recommended Mouthpiece:	Bach 6 ½ AL, Bach 5

Euphoniums:

When looking at Step Up brass it is important to note the different alloys used in brass instrument construction: yellow brass, gold brass, red brass and nickel silver. Yellow brass is the most common (70% copper, 30% zinc) and is generally used on student models. Gold brass (85% copper, 15% zinc) will produce a broad, rich tone, but can be pricey. Red brass generally contributes to softer mellow tones. Nickel silver (70% copper, 20% zinc, 10% nickel) produces a bright sound and because of the higher percentage of nickel and zinc will make for a more durable horn.

When shopping for a euphonium, you want to look at two things: that it has a fourth valve, and what it is made of. The fourth valve provides more clarity in certain valve combinations as well as extends the range of the instrument. The euphonium is a conical instrument, and as such will have a mellower and rounder tone than the cylindrical trombone. Warmth of sound is important. A yellow brass euphonium will sound perfectly fine and is recommended a little more than a nickel silver one. If possible a red brass (sometimes called rose brass) is a strong recommendation as it assists in providing a warm sound.

Make sure you are purchasing a euphonium, not a baritone. Those are two different horns, but the baritone is a cylindrical instrument.

Brands (in recommended order):	Cost (Approx.):
Yamaha YEP 321 four valve Euphonium	\$2,900
Eastman EEP426 four valve Euphonium:	\$3,600
King 2280 Series Euphonium:	\$3,500

Professional Level:	Yamaha, Meinl Weston, Miraphone
Not Recommended:	Amati, Allora
Recommended Mouthpiece:	Bach 6 ½ AL, Bach 5G, Bach 3G

Tubas:

When looking at Step Up brass it is important to note the different alloys used in brass instrument construction: yellow brass, gold brass, red brass and nickel silver. Yellow brass is the most common (70% copper, 30% zinc) and is generally used on student models. Gold brass (85% copper, 15% zinc) will produce a broad, rich tone, but can be pricey. Red brass generally contributes to softer mellow tones. Nickel silver (70% copper, 20% zinc, 10% nickel) produces a bright sound and because of the higher percentage of nickel and zinc will make for a more durable horn.

When shopping for a tuba, it is important to understand that this will not be a cheap endeavor. Pending the store you purchase it from you may need to make payments. As far as details go, tubas come in different sizes depending on the make and model. A $\frac{3}{4}$ size tuba, while being cheaper was made and designed for elementary and middle school band sized students. There are also tubas tuned to Bb, C, Eb and F.

For the purposes of band, I recommend a four rotor Bb tuba. Tubas come with either piston valves or rotors. Generally it is a matter of preference to the player. Each has benefits and issues. I personally recommend rotors, based on fingering agility and easier to maintain.

If you are buying your child a tuba, make sure that they are serious about their studies as this is a large upfront investment. Along with that, a good quality tuba will last a lifetime if well maintained!

Brands (in recommended order):	Cost (Approx.):
Miraphone S186 Standard Series BBb Tuba:	\$10,700
Miraphone 282 Series $\frac{3}{4}$ Size BBb Tuba	\$9,700
Meinl Weston 25 BBb Tuba:	\$9,500
Jupiter JTU1110 BBb Tuba:	\$9,300

Professional Level: Meinl Weston, Miraphone

Not Recommended: Cerveny, Amati, Allora

Recommended Mouthpiece: Conn Helleberg Standard

Gifts for Musicians!

Not sure what to get you child musician? Here is a list of suggestions for birthdays, holidays, allowance, good grade incentives, etc.

General:

- **Private Lessons:** invaluable, and worth every penny!
- **Sheet music:** Almost any! It will give them something to play outside of band!
- **Polishing cloths:** you will want to know if they play on a brass, nickel silver, or sterling silver instrument to get the right cloth
- **Music Stand:** You can get a great portable stand with a hard back for about \$20
- **Metronome/tuner:** Korg TM-40 or Boss TU-80 goes for about \$25
- **Gig bag**
- **New Case**
- **Instrument cleaning supplies**
- **Instrument stand**

Flutes:

- **Carrying case with shoulder strap**

Clarinets:

- **New Mouthpiece:** Vandoren B45 Traditional, or Vandoren 5R Lyre
- **New Ligature:** Rovner Dark Clarinet Ligature
- **Reed Guards**
- **Box of reeds:** Vandoren strength 3 or 3.5

Saxes:

- **New Mouthpiece:** Alto Saxes: Selmer C*, Tenor Saxes: Selmer D*
- **New Ligature:** Rovner Dark Alto Sax or Tenor Sax Ligature
- **Saxophone Swab**
- **Reed Guards**
- **Box of Reeds:** Altos or Tenors: Vandoren Strength 3

Oboes/Bassoons:

- **Reeds, Reeds, Reeds!**
- **Reed Cases, and Reed making kit (plus lessons on how to make!)**
- **For bassoons: a new bocal**

Trumpets:

- **Mouthpiece:** Bach 1 ½C, 3C
- **Mutes:** Straight, cup, plunger, Harmon mutes
- **Silent Brass Practice system:** you won't believe how awesome it is!

French Horns:

- **Mouthpiece:** Holton Farkas Medium Cup (MC), Deep Cup (DC)
- **Mutes:** Straight, cup, plunger, Harmon mutes
- **Silent Brass Practice system:** you won't believe how awesome it is!

Trombones:

- **Mouthpiece:** Bach 6 ½ AL, Bach 5G
- **Mutes:** Straight, cup, plunger mutes
- **Silent Brass Practice system:** you won't believe how awesome it is!

Euphoniums:

- **Mouthpiece:** Bach 6 ½ AL, Bach 5G
- **Mutes:** Straight, cup, plunger mutes
- **Silent Brass Practice system:** you won't believe how awesome it is!

Tubas:

- **Mouthpiece:** Conn Helleberg Standard

Percussionists:

- **Stick bags**
- **Practice pads (the more expensive, the quieter they are...)**
- **Drumsticks (check for what they need: Concert, Marching, etc.)**
- **Mallets (all percussionists should begin building a mallet collection:**
 - **Medium Strength Marimba and Vibes Yarn Mallets**
 - **Hard Plastic, Soft Plastic Mallets**
 - **Timpani mallets (Staccato, regular)**
- **A Snare Drum (or even a Drum set)**
- **Drum Key**
- **Metronome**