

Guide to Buying a Guitar

Guide: 2025-26

Introduction

This short guide has been put together to help students and parents choose the right instrument for lessons. There are many options available, and it can sometimes feel overwhelming to know where to start. The guitars and brands listed here are ones I have personal experience with and can confidently recommend. Whether you're buying new or second-hand, the aim is simply to help you find a reliable, good-sounding instrument that inspires practice and progress.



Recommended Guitars

Over the years I've played and taught on a wide range of guitars, and these are the brands that consistently offer quality and playability at every level:

Electric and Acoustic Guitars

Fender & Squier – classic choices for both beginners and advanced players.

Epiphone & Gibson – excellent quality and comfortable necks, ideal for rock and blues.

Yamaha – every Yamaha guitar I've played has been a well-made, great-sounding instrument.

PRS (Paul Reed Smith) – beautifully made, reliable guitars with great tone.

Tanglewood Northstar series – very good electric guitars starting around the £130 mark

Vintage and Harley Benton – both brands offer brilliant value for money on electric models.

Valencia – one of the best options for younger students starting on guitar; consistently good build and tone. These are classical guitars but a good option for younger starters.

Notes on Guitar Sizes

I don't recommend $\frac{3}{4}$ -size electric guitars, as they tend to have tuning and setup issues.

$\frac{3}{4}$ -size classical and acoustic guitars by Yamaha, Fender, and Valencia, however, are good options for younger players with smaller hands.

Starter Packs

Gear4Music and thomann both offer several guitar starter packs which are perfectly fine for beginners. They include everything needed to get started, they can be a varied quality and less choice overall but are the easier bet to getting started.

Amps

For home practice, small amps are all you need – anything around 10–15 watts will be plenty. Here are some reliable brands to look for:

Boss Katana, Roland, Marshall, Fender, Laney, Orange, Vox, Blackstar, Yamaha

These companies all make compact models that sound great at low volumes – perfect for bedroom practice and online lessons.

Accessories

A few simple accessories can make playing easier and more enjoyable. I recommend:

Capos – Shubb and Kyser make excellent, reliable models.

Picks (plectrums) – Dunlop is a great brand with lots of options for thickness and grip.

Straps – choose something comfortable and adjustable; Stagg, D’Addario and Dunlop make good, affordable straps.

Strings – D’Addario strings are dependable and sound good on most guitars.

For electric guitars, a 9–426 gauge set is a good standard choice – light enough for easy bending, but with a full tone on the lower strings. For acoustic guitars, I recommend 11–52 gauge strings, which balance comfort and projection nicely. For classical guitars, go for normal tension strings with ball ends, as they’re easier to fit and ideal for younger or beginner players.

Recommended Brands Summary

Guitars & Amps: Fender, Squier, Gibson, Epiphone, Yamaha, PRS, Tanglewood, Valencia, Vintage, Harley Benton, Boss, Roland, Marshall, Laney, Orange, Vox, Blackstar.

Accessories: Dunlop, D’Addario, Shubb, Kyser, Lekato, Stagg.

Buying Second-Hand

Buying second-hand can be an excellent way to get a higher-quality instrument for less money. I buy most of my own instruments second-hand through trusted sources such as:

Gumtree, Facebook Marketplace, Cash Converters, eBay & Local community sales or word of mouth

Where to buy

Sadly, a number of local music shops have closed in recent years, but there are still some great places to look:

Local Stores

Ken Stevens, Cambridge & Derose Music, Saffron Walden

Online Retailers

Gear4Music, Amazon, Thomann

9. Final Notes

A good instrument doesn’t have to be expensive – it just needs to be reliable, comfortable to play, and inspiring to pick up. If you’re ever unsure about a particular guitar or setup, please feel free to

get in touch and I'll be happy to offer some guidance or check a listing for you.

 Listen Learn Play – Zachary John Moore