

Buying your first guitar

by Greg Trotter

Buying your first guitar can be a daunting experience. There are so many different brands, different models and different prices that it can be difficult to know where to start. The purpose of this guide is to make it a lot easier for you to choose the right guitar, even if you have never played one before.

The first question you need to ask yourself is if you want an acoustic or electric guitar. If you like rock, blues, funk, metal or any style similar to that, you would most likely want an electric guitar. For some reason, a lot of people still believe that you need to start on an acoustic and “graduate” to an electric at some arbitrary stage. This is simply not true, and you could be holding back your progress by doing this, as electric guitars are a lot easier to play for the styles listed before.

If you prefer folk, softer rock, pop, or classical then you would likely consider an acoustic guitar.

For all those styles except for classical, you would want to get a steel-string acoustic. For classical, you would buy a nylon string guitar.

The next thing to ask yourself is how much you would be willing to spend. When buying a guitar, it is not a good idea to go cheap. Cheaper guitars are generally poorly made, a lot harder on your fingers, and are not fun to play. I suggest a budget of no more than \$500 for your first guitar. You might be able to get something considerably less than this amount, and still get a great guitar, but it's better to have a realistic figure in mind.

The next question is do you want new or second hand. New guitars are usually good to go when you get them, whereas second hand guitars might need a bit of work to get them playable (they might have a broken string, or the neck might be warped, making it harder to push the strings down). If you're impatient and don't care about the price, go for a new guitar. If you're more budget conscious, a second hand guitar is the way to go, but don't forget to budget about \$100 to get the guitar set up should it need it.

Lastly, people ask me if I think brands matter. The truth is, they do...to a point. There are plenty of good brands that make guitars for people who are just getting started, so I wouldn't get too hung up on the idea of brands. Most good music stores will stock a decent range of good quality brands that you can choose from. If you find a guitar in a store that doesn't specialise in music (say for example, a toy store, or supermarket), I would strongly advise that you do NOT buy that guitar, no matter how cheap it is.

If you're already searching for a guitar and need some help on which stores to check out, and where to get your guitar serviced, feel free to contact me at

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