

Tips for Acquiring an Instrument

The string orchestra consists of four instruments: **violin, viola, cello, and bass.**

Your student may select any of the four to play in orchestra class at Gilbert Christian School. As it is an elective class, the school does not provide instruments for the students. Instruments can be purchased or rented, based on family preference.

Quality string instruments are not inexpensive to make, as most pieces must be hand-carved and fitted. A quality instrument should be acquired because factory manufactured or plastic-part instruments do not make a pleasing tone, and students who are newly learning need to be encouraged by a pleasant sound when they play it correctly.

Benefits of Renting

- Renting allows families to try an instrument out without committing to the larger expense of purchasing.
- Younger students who are still growing will need to start on a smaller size and move to larger sizes as they get bigger.
- Rent-to-Own programs allow equity to be applied to the purchase of an instrument when the student reaches a full-size.
- Most rental companies will include repairs, new strings, and insurance in the cost of the rent, which makes getting an instrument fixed hassle-free.

Benefits of purchasing:

- Student pride in ownership leads to better care of instrument.
- The gift of an instrument can be an inspiring gift as a result of achievement.
- Personal instruments can be modified for the best fit: new strings, more comfortable chin-rest, wood bow, etc.
- Owning an instrument is a life-long treasure, as is the ability to play for enjoyment.
- A beautiful instrument is a family heirloom.

What to look for when purchasing a string instrument:

- High-quality construction; no open seams or plastic parts.
- Intact strings and correct bridge height.
- Quality brands – ex; Hoffman, Becker, Pfretzner, Knilling, Strobel, Wilhelm, Glaesel, Scherl and Roth, Engelhardt, Yamaha (not for bass or cello), Eastman, Hans Kroger, Klaus Mueller, Werner, Lewis.
- Avoid the brands Cecilio, Breton, Conservarte, Suzuki, Palatino.
- Bows should be made of fiberglass or carbon fiber for beginners, and pernambucco or brazilwood for intermediate players.
- Bows should have real horsehair.
- Always ask to play an instrument before purchasing. Listen for and absence of rattling and for a clear, open tone on all strings. Play with fingers to check for wolf-tones.

- Older instruments sound just as nice and often better than new instruments, and may have a lower rental price point because they do not look as “shiny”. Instruments can last hundreds of years with careful maintenance.
- Make certain the instrument is the proper size for your student. Instruments come in full size through 1/32 sizes.

Where to Rent/Purchase:

- Any local store that has quality instruments; Milano Music, Andrew’s Fine Violins, Arizona Fine Violins, Southwest Strings (in Tucson) and Music & Arts are recommended.
- Find a store that provides rental insurance that is part of the rental cost.
- Check to see if the rental insurance covers all repairs.
- Ensure that your rental program can build equity towards a purchase.
- Ebay, Amazon, and Craigslist are difficult places to find quality instruments; look for local listings that you can test out before you purchase.
- Inquire if rosin and cleaning cloth are included in the purchase or rental of an instrument.
- Some online companies offer free shipping and are reliable and affordable – SHAR and Southwest Strings are recommended.

Your orchestra instructor or violin teachers are always happy to make specific recommendations or to test an instrument before you purchase.

