

## **Buying and Renting Guide for Parents New to Orchestra**

### **Why should I consider renting instead of buying?**

String instruments from the violin family come in fractional sizes. The image below shows the range of different sizes of violins. Just like shoes, students use the size instrument that fits their bodies best.



If you purchase a 1/2 size instrument for 5th grader, you're stuck with an instrument that will be too small for them by the time they're in high school. If you purchase a full size instrument for that same 5th grader, they will have a very difficult time playing it until they've grown. Thankfully, there are businesses that will rent out to you the size of the instrument you need when you need it.

### **What should I look for when I want to purchase an instrument?**

The violin family is hundreds of years old. On average, it takes 250 hours to handmake a violin. That is time is quadrupled for a cello. It is not easy to make a string instrument. Modern factory techniques can speed up aspects of the making process, but a well-designed instrument still needs assembly of some parts by trained hands. There is no such thing as a "cheap" violin, viola, cello, or bass.

If you are buying an instrument in person, insist on having the student try it out! You'd want to test-drive a car before buying it, right?

If you are ordering online, here are a few tips...

1. Only trust reputable sites that specialize in instruments. Steer clear of Amazon.
2. An odd color or especially shiny varnish is often used to cover up the low quality of the wood.
3. Kits that boast lines like "comes with bow!" or "case included!" are dead giveaways of a scam.

### **What kind of future expenses can I expect?**

The instruments of the violin family do need a few accessories and tune-ups over prolonged use. These could include...

1. Rosin, used to make the bow function properly
2. New strings, just like any string instrument
3. New hair for your bow, as the hair will break over time and use
4. Shoulder rests, to better hold violins and violas
5. Endpin straps, to facilitate cello and bass posture
6. Repairs in case of accidental damage

If you are renting your instrument from a reputable shop, payments often include insurance policies that cover repairs and other expenses.

### **Don't hesitate to reach out!**

For most parents new to having students in my program, they've never needed to rent or purchase an instrument before. Making sure you avoid wasting your money and ensuring that your student has what they need to succeed is the goal.

I have driven to shops with parents in the past to test out instruments. I have had dozens of links shared with me before parents commit to a purchase. I have even had a parent with extensive woodworking in their background ask for advice on trying to make their student an instrument. I will do whatever I can to get a nice instrument in your student's hands.

Thank you for reading!  
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