

SELECTING A VIOLIN THAT IS RIGHT FOR YOU

Buying a violin can be an involved procedure and requires playing many instruments to discover your personal taste in the sound of the violin.

It's also important to select a violin that will help you grow as a player, not just something that will work for your current level.

PROPER VIOLIN SIZING

Properly sizing an instrument is very important. The average body length of a full size violin is 14", but they range from 13.75" – 14.25" which can be the differences between comfort and discomfort for more petite players (though for many with longer arms and fingers, this is not a problem). In fractional instruments, the body lengths are usually very close in the 7/8, 3/4 and 1/2 instruments, but vary quite a bit on 1/4 size and below. A 7/8 violin is a special size between 3/4 and full, that has the sound closer to that of a full size, but is comfortable for petite players who have finished growing. If your full size is hurting you, you may need a 7/8.

The length of the neck of the instrument also varies between makes and this is a factor in comfort. Some instruments also have a thinner neck, which is ideal for smaller fingers to reach into positions.

Teachers have different ideas about sizing depending on method and training, and like many other things, they don't always agree on this subject. In the Suzuki Method, the most commonly accepted sizing method is to make sure that the student can reach their hand completely around the scroll and touch the inside of it where it meets the peg box. In European method schools, teachers may advise on a larger instrument based on the comfort with which the student can obtain different positions. Almost universally though, the instrument must not be so large that the bow loses balance at certain angles. Ultimately sizing is contingent both on arm length and hand size. Both our staff and your teacher will gladly advise you on sizing, though ultimately respect your teacher's wishes on sizing because as your mentor, their opinions should be paramount.

OTHER COMFORT FACTORS

Due to different chin sizes, neck lengths and body types, certain chin rests will not always be the right choice. Foxes will always change the chin rest of a violin that you are considering purchasing at no charge. Your comfort and the happiness of your teacher is our first priority.

The choice of shoulder rest is also important, and we have a fine selection that you may sample including carbon fiber, wood, plastic, metal and inflatable and sponges.

Posture can also be a factor in comfort. There is sometimes a possibility that the student is holding the instrument incorrectly, which may affect comfort and overall technique. It should be noted that private lessons are recommended to help remedy this problem if the student does not have them already.

The setup is the final aspect of comfort that can be addressed. Foxes Music sets up all of their violins with a custom carved French-made bridge, adjusts fingerboards for smoothness, adjusts the nut and installs quality hardware and strings. However, since we do a setup that is ideal for all players, sometimes individuals prefer a lower string height. We can do this in-house and while you wait if you make an appointment.

TIMBRE: THE SUBTLE SOUND DIFFERENCES IN VIOLINS

Sound can be described as bright or dark, smooth or crisp, chocolaty or buttery. Some musicians even describe tone in "color" and even go so far as to describe them as such. The timbre of a

violin uses many of these adjectives and much like the flavors of food or decorations in your home, players and teachers all have different “tastes”. You’ll find however, that even second and third year players are already developing their tastes and will hear differences even between several of the same make of violin due to the total difference of different pieces of wood. When trying out an instrument, listen for these tonal “colors” or “flavors” and take note of which ones are pleasing to your ear. Our staff will make recommendations accordingly.

The sound post and adjustment of setup on an instrument will also change its tonal color and we always check and adjust these important factors before the instruments reach our display cases.

A violin never “wears out”. Sometimes on an older instrument it needs adjustment or replacement of the post to achieve its best sound. Good strings also improve tone. All of our instruments are strung with quality brands like Pirastro, Thomasik, Larsen, Jargar, D’Addario and others. On many nice older commercial instruments, installing a better bass bar can also sometimes improve tone. We offer many antique instruments with this improvement made.

WHAT DO I SPEND ON A VIOLIN?

We have found an ideal way to establish a budget is to figure what sort of caliber of violin will best suit the player for the next 5 years and average that with what you can reasonably afford. If you’re a little over budget, don’t worry, we have flexible payment plans and a nice discount on outfit packages where you save 20% on a bow purchase and receive a free \$100 case (unless otherwise marked).

If you have a choice, buy at the top of your range because a nicer instrument will appreciate in value faster. If you’re in the market for a bow, remember that you typically should devote one fifth of total budget to your bow. (see last page of brochure for bow purchase guide). Remember: you will rarely lose money on a properly maintained good violin or bow as long as your own it for more than five years. They will almost always increase in value once you get beyond this point.

CONSULT WITH YOUR TEACHER BEFORE BUYING

Students: *please talk with your teacher before you buy.* Your teacher often will give you valuable advise on purchasing a violin. We recommend consulting with them on your choices. It should be noted that you may take up to two violins and four bows to your teacher at no charge for the purposes of trying out the instruments. **We want your teacher to be as happy as you are with your decision**, so if you are trying violins with us today, feel free to ask our staff to let you take an instrument or two out. All we require is photo ID and a credit card. Again, there is no charge for this service.

We also recommend that you **pay your teacher for their time** in helping you to select the instrument. They may never ask, but they will certainly appreciate it. Their expertise may be invaluable in terms of evaluating an instrument that meets your needs. In many string shops, there is a corrupt practice of the shop paying the teacher a comission. Foxes *does not* endorse this practice, but please be aware that many violin shops do including several in the area. We believe that the best way to buy a violin is without a financial bias from your educator.

WHAT LEVEL IS THE VIOLINIST PLAYING?

An instrument should ideally be 3-5 years ahead of the level the player requires. This prevents frequent and unnecessary trade-ups. If you are unsure of the player’s level, ask your teacher or let the violinist play for one of our string specialists. Also, as many of our clients are using Suzuki method, we have conveniently rated all instruments by Book Level. Please note, that if your child is in Suzuki Book 3, it’s ideal to buy an instrument that works well for Book 6 or higher so that you can use it for more than a year.

STUDENT INSTRUMENTS

For *most* beginning and intermediate players, we recommend a modestly priced, but well- made fully-carved instrument. Most of these instruments are from Romania or China and are completely carved by hand with quality tonewoods, and feature a quality setup with good strings and hardware. Fractional instruments start at \$300 and full size start at \$400. These instruments may be rented for \$17 or \$18 per month.

We also stock a variety of step-up outfits which feature upgraded tonewoods and a better case and bow. Some of these instruments in addition to being purchase items can also be a level 2 rental for \$25/month for smaller sized outfits or \$29/month for 4/4 size.

Occasionally for very young and not very careful students, we recommend Plywood back instruments such as Glaesel and Suzuki. They are very difficult to break and *only recommended* for first or second year students who are not careful yet with their violin. . These also have a quality setup and are guaranteed against defect. These rent \$10-16/mo.

INTERMEDIATE TO ADVANCED INSTRUMENTS

For students with experience who demand a higher caliber of instrument without a large budget, we supply a very nice selection of intermediate instruments from Germany, Romania, Japan and China. All of these instruments are nicely hand-carved, feature upgraded tonewoods and have exquisite varnishes of a variety of colors and formulas.

You can also take advantage of our level 2 and level 3 rental programs. We have intermediate violins in almost all sizes. We also have a nice selection of mid priced antiques.

INSTRUMENTS FOR THE ADVANCED PLAYERS AND PROFESSIONALS

Here at Foxes, we are committed to getting you excellent instruments at excellent prices. We stock a variety of small workshop instruments, luthier-made instruments and antiques from Germany, France, Canada, Italy, Japan, America and England.

IS IT IMPORTANT WHERE A VIOLIN IS MADE?

This question comes up more frequently now that so many countries are crafting fine instruments. The origin does not so much impact its quality, but rather its price due to exchange rates. Violins of various qualities are crafted commercially in China, Romania and Germany. The types of wood and how carefully they are crafted determine how they will sound. Regardless of country, we guarantee that all of our violins will be free of defect. We only select instruments made with well-seasoned woods from trusted makers.

You may also benefit from selecting a vintage, antique or well played slightly-used instrument, which has the “played-in” sound that is so desired among violinists.

TIPS FOR FIRST TIME PLAYERS

Our rental program is very flexible, cost effective and 100% of your first year applies to purchase, plus 50% of up any subsequent years. We have three levels of rentals available for a variety of skill levels.

Buying a modestly priced violin, but need a better one later? No problem, we will give you a guaranteed trade in price at time of purchase so that you’ll know exactly what you’re getting towards your next instrument.

Here at Foxes, on a purchase, we always include a free case and give you an extra 20% off on a bow purchased with an instrument. .