

# How to Select an Appropriate Level Clarinet

**Student (Beginning) Instrument** - These are the entry level instruments for the student in the first 2 - 3 years of study. They are made of plastic, which is easier to take care of than a wooden clarinet. While there is nothing wrong with giving a wooden clarinet to a beginner, but it just isn't necessary. The plastic instruments will hold up better to the hard use that young players sometimes give. You hate to see someone drop a nice wooden instrument (which can crack), but it's not so bad with a plastic one.

Recommended models of beginning clarinets:

- Buffet B10, B12 or the Accent made by Buffet
- Yamaha 20, 24, 26, 250 or Advantage

The Buffet has the wonderful feel of the Buffet professional model, but the cases do not hold up well. The newer model Yamaha 250 is just like the model 20.

**Intermediate (or step-up) Instrument** - These are wooden instruments that get a more characteristic tone suitable for the advancing player after he or she is no longer in the beginning stages. For most players, an intermediate level instrument is good enough to last through the rest of their playing career. The wooden body creates the characteristic clarinet tone, and they are high quality great instruments. Recommended model:

- New - Buffet E12
- Used – Buffet E11 (the previous model of E12)

**Professional Instrument** - This is for an advanced high school or college player or a professional. They are top of the line and are used by the best professional players around the world. We recommend:

- Buffet R-13, the choice of professionals

There are other professional models as well including Selmer, LeBlanc and Yamaha. The choice is up to the preference of the player. At this level, different players may prefer a different model according to their personal taste.

**New or Used?** New instruments are great, but expensive. Used instruments are much cheaper, but might need expensive repairs. How do you tell? Unless you are a proficient clarinet player, you probably can't tell by looking if an instrument needs work. All the pads must seal perfectly, the action must be smooth, the keys must be properly adjusted, and the body must be free of defects. If you are buying from a reputable dealer the instrument should be in good playing condition with return privileges during the inspection period. If you are buying from an individual, it should be taken to the teacher to make sure it is in good playing condition.

You can often get a good used deal from places like Craig's list, though, as long as you are willing to spend \$50 to \$100 for an adjustment at a reputable repair shop to get the clarinet in good working order. Check with the student's private teacher to determine if you find a used instrument for sale and wonder if it's a good deal.

**Value?** A good quality instrument will retain its value if it is carefully used and kept in good condition. The better the instrument, the more of its value it will retain. Student instruments tend to lose a lot of value, intermediate instruments will lose less, and professional instruments still less. If an instrument is carefully used for a few years and then left in the case, it should still be in good condition. Remember that some technologies advance, so a clarinet won't last forever, and rust and mold will set in after a while.