



Purchasing a drum kit can be confusing if you've never done it before. There are several different factors to consider. Hopefully the information provided here will help you!

When considering purchasing a drum kit, the most common question is usually, "Should I buy a new or used drum kit?" Taking the time to do a little homework and shopping will save you so much money in the long run.

Brand New Kits

Brand new drum kits (with hardware and cymbals) can easily exceed \$1,000 for quality brand names, but are usually worth it. A brand new drum kit is something that can be used as incentive for hard work and devotion to practicing. Once your child has shown a strong desire to "stick with" the drums and seems to really enjoy playing, purchasing a better quality set is something to be considered as you see fit.

Used Drum Kits

You'll be pleased to hear that buying a "used" drum kit is perfectly fine! Prices on a used kit can range from \$300-\$800, depending on size, contents and quality/condition. Just make sure to see the listing below of necessary pieces that should come with any drum set to ensure growth and development.

Necessary Pieces For Beginner Drum Kit

It is heartbreaking to spend hundreds on a drum kit and then learn that you didn't buy one with all the needed parts! I recommend starting with the following:

- Bass Drum
- Snare Drum
- Bass Drum Pedal
- Hi-Hat Stand (with a pair of cymbals)
- Ride' Cymbal w/ stand (optional at first, but will need eventually)
- Rack Tom (at least 1)
- Floor Tom (at least 1)
- Crash' Cymbal w/ stand (at least 1)
- Drum 'Throne' (seat)



“Real” Drums (Wooden Shell)

The vast majority of drummers will use “real drums,” a regular wood-shell drum kit. The main downside to “real” drums is that they are loud. A lot of parents and neighbors don’t really appreciate the noise and it can be a problem. There are ways to muffle drums to be somewhat quieter, however, but you usually sacrifice sound quality.

The playing sensitivity, dynamics and “feel” of wood drums are a strong advantage that will weigh heavily with any seasoned drummer.

Recommended brands for good quality: Tama, DW, Yamaha, Pearl, Gretsch, PDP, Ludwig, Premier, Sonor and Mapex.

Electronic Drums

The other popular option for a drum kit is to buy an electronic kit. There are benefits to this option, but there are also downsides. The main reason people buy an electronic kit is for convenience and volume control. Electronic drums are just pads that trigger an electronic sound that either comes out of a speaker or headphones and the volume can be adjusted, just like your stereo or phone. With this option, you can play anytime, day or middle of the night and neighbors won’t be bothered. Electronic drums are also quite popular in churches due to the volume control.

Electronic drum kits will also come with dozens and dozens of different presets for making the drums sound different and also employing special effects to the drums. It can be a fun way to experiment with sounds. Electronic drums used to sound horribly cheesy but they have gotten better over the years.

The main problem with electronic drums is that they don’t “feel” like real drums when you hit them with a stick. You also don’t get the sensitivity to very soft notes and subtleties like you do with real drums. As you play longer and get better at the drums, those will become VERY important factors to you.

Depending on your situation and needs, electronic drums might be right for you. Some drummers have an electronic kit for practicing at home, but play a real kit when on stage.

Recommended brands for good quality: Roland, Alesis and Yamaha.



Buy Locally

Please avoid instruments from retail stores other than music stores. If you see a small drum kit in the toy department of your favorite “mega-store,” don’t do it! These are very cheap and will soon cause frustration. Check local ads, Facebook Marketplace, Craigslist or just ask around. Local music stores are also a great option.

Buy Online

Should you choose to buy a new kit online, the following sites are top-notch and have years of proven reliability: sweetwater.com, musiciansfriend.com & guitarcenter.com.

Quality Level

As with a lot of products, most drum and cymbal manufacturers offer their items at various price points and quality levels. The highest quality and best sounding product lines for drums and cymbals will naturally be the most expensive. Luckily, most brands have mid-tier products that sound reasonably good and are moderately priced. If possible, avoid the cheapest options as they typically won’t sound very pleasing and will just cause frustration.

Cymbals

No drum kit would be complete without a few cymbals. The most common types of cymbals (no matter the brand) are CRASH, RIDE and HI-HAT cymbals. There are many different cymbal manufacturers and each have wide product lines to fit any budget.

Cymbals will require a “stand” to support them as they usually are placed higher in the air than the drums. Stands are sold separately and come in two styles, “straight” and “boom” (angled) stands. The “Hi-Hat” uses a pair of smaller cymbals and has a special stand with a pedal.

Recommended brands for good quality: Zildjian, Sabian, Paiste, Meinl and Dream

Drumsticks

Choosing a pair of drumsticks can be overwhelming because the options are endless. Sticks come in a variety of sizes and thickness, but for a beginner, you can’t go wrong with “5A wood tip” or “7A wood tip” sticks. (The 7A is a bit lighter.) The most common types will have either wood or nylon tips.

Recommended brands for good quality: Vic Firth, Pro-Mark, Vater, Zildjian, and Sound Percussion Labs.



Drum Heads

Drum heads are the part of the drum that gets hit to produce sound. They are typically made of single or multiple layers of plastic. Your drum kit will most likely come with heads, but they will probably be low quality and you'll need to replace them soon. Heads play a large role in the quality and sound of your kit.

There are two main types of drum heads: "Batter (the top head that gets hit with a stick) and "Resonant" or "Reso" (the bottom head that resonates the sound within the drum. It does not get hit). Batter heads will need to be replaced much more often than Reso heads.

Drum heads are measured by diameter (distance from one side of the drum to the other, straight across the middle) in inches (rounded to nearest inch). Be sure to get a correct measurement across the drum so you'll know exactly what size head you need. The size of the head will be shown on the outside of the box.

There are dozens of variations of heads no matter which brand you choose. Heads are usually "clear" or "coated" (solid white). Here are a few of my "batter" head recommendations:

Snare Drum - Remo Ambassador coated or Evans G1 coated

Toms - Remo Emperor clear/coated or Evans G2 clear/coated

Kick Drum - Remo Powerstroke 3 or Evans EMAD

Recommended brands for good quality: Remo, Evans and Aquarian

Tuning The Drum Kit

Once you purchase a drum kit, you will probably need some help getting each drum tuned properly. Luckily, tuning is a fairly easy concept to grasp once someone demonstrates it a few times. If the drums aren't tuned reasonably well then they won't sound good and you (or your child) won't enjoy playing them.

I would recommend asking local drum instructors or music store employees for guidance and recommendations. You may even know another drummer who could come help you out. Finally, YouTube has a world of knowledge to offer and there are many videos which can demonstrate how to properly tune a drum kit.