

## FAQs

Learning to play enriches a whole lifetime by fulfilling the desire to make music. The gradual mastery of vocals or an instrument brings pleasure, strengthens the imagination, builds self confidence and expresses emotions. It encourages self-motivation, rewards discipline and contributes to the development of social skills. A musical instrument isn't just another toy - it might be one of the most important things you buy yourself or your child.

- 1) **Buying or renting an instrument**
- 2) **Do you have concerts, tests or exams?**
- 3) **What about playing in public?**
- 4) **Can I be present during my child's lessons?**
- 5) **Practicing**
- 6) **Should my child learn to read music or study theory?**

### 1) **Buying or renting an instrument**

A beginners drum or recorder is inexpensive. If you don't already own a bass or guitar, renting costs about \$20 to \$30 a month. Some stores have a rent-to-buy option. It's best to avoid buying the cheapest models as they often develop pricey repair problems later on. A better instrument is also easier to re-sell or trade in. Does the store's policy have a one year guarantee and a return or exchange within 3 months? Used guitars often have a guarantee too. Think about the size and weight of the instrument – stores often sell kids inappropriately adult sized ones. Call me for more specifics.

### 2) **Do you have concerts, tests or exams?**

**Concerts.** Every spring those students that want to can participate in our concert. It's an exciting yet relaxed event for those ready to play for friends and family. There's no fee to participate and each musician brings finger food to eat after the show. Performers can play by themselves or with me singing or playing a second instrument with them. Performers choose their own songs and dress how they wish.

**Tests.** I usually don't give tests since I think playing or singing pieces of music well is passing musical tests. I use participation, effort and improvement as yardsticks of success. I can set up tests to assess skills if this is your approach, and some children like a certificate as it provides a sense of achievement.

### 3) **What about playing in public?**

It depends on what's right for you. Some people love to perform, some like it but need assistance managing the challenges, others are happier playing for themselves or in jam bands. Wherever you fall along this scale your music is of value. A comfortable way to start playing for others is to have me help put on a small home show for family and friends.

#### 4) Can I be present during my child's lessons?

For younger students I like the parent to be present for the first lesson or so. For older kids it's distracting and a bit demeaning, so we should work alone. I welcome any questions on the content or nature of lessons and will gladly discuss progress with you.

#### 5) Practicing

The purpose of practice is to get specific physical movements to become automatic enough to allow easy self expression. The musical mind and emotional attitude also need training alongside the body. How much time is needed? 15 to 30 minutes daily is ideal, but it depends on age and other factors. I'll give you practice concepts, routines, playing log charts and discuss more information in detail with you.

#### 6) Should my child learn to read music or study theory?

There's a range of beliefs about **reading music**. On one end of the scale are musicians who insist it's a must, on the other end those who find it a barrier. Teens often don't find it useful, depending on who else they play with. I don't introduce it during the first lessons as it can distract from focusing on the sounds produced and the movements needed to make them. Once I get to know the student's musical direction, personality and work habits, you and I can decide whether to introduce this skill. Other ways of communicating and organizing musical information are sol-fa (do-re-mi), tablature with rhythms, a numbering system and playing by ear.

**Theory** is the name for ways of investigating the elements and structure of music, and describing the way tones behave in relationship to each other. It uses note names, a numerical naming system and listening to intervals, scales, chords and chord progressions. It's useful if you're interested in creating music or exploring and developing existing pieces.